



# Talking SENSE

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## SENSE MEMBER PROFILE

### Lone Star College System Houston, Texas

Located in the North Houston metro area of Texas, the Lone Star College System, formerly the North Harris Montgomery Community College District, serves more than 40,800 credit and non-credit students each semester. Lone Star College System is among the largest and fastest growing community college districts in Texas, with five distinct colleges and seven satellite centers across a 1,400 square mile service area.

Founded in 1972, Lone Star College System serves an increasingly diverse student body. Almost half (49%) are students of color, and the district has experienced double-digit increases this year in Hispanic, Asian, and “other non-white” categories.

#### A Focus on Entering Students

Lone Star College System students faces a number of challenges. A growing percentage are non-native speakers. Among Lone Star College System’s 2007 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) respondents, 24% were non-native speakers, up from 18% of 2003 respondents. As with many other institutions, Lone Star College System students also struggle to fund their education. Roughly 45% of the 2007 CCSSE cohort respondents indicated that working full-time or lack of finances would likely or very likely force them to withdraw from class or college as a whole.

The fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time in-district students is 47% with developmental students being retained at 51%, while students not involved in

developmental courses are retained at 41%. In addition, the credential completion rate for students who entered Lone Star College System for the first time in fall 2003 is 6.18% after three years.

Recognizing the need to address these issues, Lone Star College System joined Achieving the Dream in 2006 and has developed a comprehensive plan to address critical issues in student success, retention, and degree completion, which will be implemented over the next four years.

#### Starting Right: Practices to Promote Entering Student Success

Lone Star College System has participated in CCSSE since 2003. In 2003, Lone Star College System launched a district-wide Student Success Initiative, a three-pronged approach using CCSSE and other data to focus attention on ensuring that students reach their educational and career goals through their experiences at Lone Star College System institutions. The Student Success Initiative includes:

- **Start Right**—ongoing review and revision of placement policies and course prerequisites designed to ensure students are correctly placed to “start their college education off right;”
- **Learning First**—activities to ensure college policies and practices emphasize student learning and success; and
- **Evaluation for Success**—improved instructional evaluation and policy revisions to ensure changes positively impact student success.

As part of the Student Success Initiative, Lone Star College System had particular success with two programs for entering students - The High School Bridge Partnership and Summer Bridge Program.

### **High School Bridge Partnership**

Designed to increase the number of students who aspire to attend college, to accelerate their preparation for college-level work, and to smooth the transition to college entry and success, Lone Star College System's Bridge Partnership works with 3,500 students in 13 Houston-area high schools. Beginning in the 10th grade, students are recruited to take a standard college readiness exam. College advisors meet with each student and high school staff to review assessment results. College-ready students are encouraged to start their college education prior to high school graduation through dual enrollment and/or AP classes. Advisors help students who are not college-ready review and retest with the goal of becoming college-ready in reading, writing, and math prior to high school graduation. During grades 11 and 12, Bridge students are helped to identify a career goal, select a college, and develop a plan for successfully transitioning from high school to college. Bridge students receive college ID cards that entitle them to use Lone Star College System tutoring services and learning resources including the college library.

### **Evidence of Effectiveness**

The first group of Bridge Partnership seniors graduated in May 2006. Of the initial cohort, post-tests showed 94% college-ready in English and 38% college-ready in math. Of those still not college-ready in math, 41% tested into the highest level of developmental math. Additionally, 82% completed at least one class at a Lone Star College System college prior to or in the summer immediately following high school graduation.

In a post-graduation follow-up survey of the first cohort: 76% reported that Bridge advising influenced the courses they selected for their junior and senior years; 41% reported the Bridge Program influenced their decision to go to college; and 100% indicated they had already or would start college the following fall term.

### **Summer Bridge Program**

In the Lone Star College System Summer Bridge Program, graduating high school seniors who test into upper levels of developmental reading, writing,

or math participate in an intensive three-week program that provides mentoring and developmental and study strategies instruction designed to prepare students to enroll in college-level courses in the fall.

Since its inception, the Summer Bridge Program has increased the college-readiness level of a very diverse student population: 54% of participants are Hispanic/Latino; 21% are African American; and 48% are first generation. In fact, about one quarter of cohort parents (27% of mothers and 21% of fathers) completed only elementary education.

### **Evidence of Effectiveness**

Six years of data indicate exemplary results including impressive retention rates: 95% of math students, 92% of reading students, and 97% of writing students completed the program. The average GPA for the end of the fall semester immediately following the program is 2.47 with an 81% re-enrollment rate for the following spring term.

### **Policy & Prerequisite Changes**

As part of the Student Success Initiative, Lone Star College System performed an extensive review of course prerequisites to determine the specific foundational skills that entering students need to be successful. Based upon that analysis, course prerequisites were updated and placement policies were revised. In addition, the district formalized exit competencies for each course in the developmental math and English sequence, creating a common set of outcomes for developmental classes and paving the way for common finals and assessment protocols currently in development. All of these changes are aimed at ensuring that students are prepared for success in the classes they take, every step of the way. Evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies is currently underway.

### **For More Information**

For more information about North Harris Montgomery Community College District's focus on entering students, contact Dr. Lea Campbell, Director Student Success Initiatives at [carol.l.campbell@nhmccd.edu](mailto:carol.l.campbell@nhmccd.edu).

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