



## Coastal Bend College: It's A Tall Mountain

Coastal Bend College (CBC) President Justin Hoggard is building a culture of improvement with positivity, kindness, and a strong focus on accountability. “How hard is it to smile?” he asks. “Or to walk a student to a different building?”

He continues, “All you have to do is act like you care. Just acting like you care goes a long way for people to feel like they can have a conversation, ask questions, and get direct answers.”

Like many colleges, CBC had silos that were hard to break and employees who were protective of both information and their turf. Because real change depends on discussing challenging issues, Hoggard set a goal of changing this culture.

“I agree with our shared governance model, but it also has to include shared accountability and shared responsibility,” he explains. “We have to be able to talk to each other, so we had to get back on track. And I believe the only way you can resolve that negativity is with an abundance of positivity.”

One mark of the changes at CBC: The college was recognized by Great Colleges to Work For in three areas: Compensation & Benefits, Confidence in Senior Leadership, and Shared Governance. Hoggard focused on these areas first because he believes that taking care of faculty and staff is the first step in culture change — and culture change was essential if CBC was going to better serve students. This type of change leadership is central to the Texas Pathways work.

Hoggard also invested time in connecting each college employee’s job to student success. “Everyone has a role when it comes to the learning environment,” Hoggard says. “Our custodial and maintenance staff told me, ‘I’m just a custodian.’ And I said, ‘No, you’re not. You’re a team player. We all have a role to play. And in fact, your role is more important than my role in terms of what people see. People see that we care for our facilities before they ever see the president of the college.’”



Initial change has come quickly at CBC, and Hoggard wants to make sure that everyone at the college continues to work toward improvement. “We’ve reached the middle shelf,” he says. “But we’re reaching for the top-shelf. That stuff way up there. It takes time, effort, and energy, and it’s really expensive. But every day you have to reach just a little bit further because you’re always in a continuous improvement loop.”

For Hoggard, continuous improvement means regular change, even if it is incremental. “If I’m 1 percent better today than I was yesterday, I’m going to see 300 percent growth over the course of the year,” he says. “I will take small successes that we can build on every day because that’s how we build momentum, and faculty and staff can see them adding up.”

He adds, “We’re climbing that mountain. It’s just a tall, freaking mountain.”

Hoggard says the Texas Success Center (TSC) is a great example of what colleges are always told to do: meet your students where they are. Except in this case, the colleges themselves are the students.

“The TSC can take all 50 colleges in Texas, including CBC and Aspen Award finalists and winners, and put us all in the same room and have the same conversation,” he explains. “But the conversation has different meanings based on where your college is. It’s about taking your information and taking a step toward a better you.”

Hoggard also points out that the TSC’s value extends beyond institutes and trainings. “I can call and ask Cynthia Ferrell or Martha Ellis to request data, ask questions, or discuss issues,” he says. “They always help me improve.”

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