



## South Texas College: 70 High Schools, 70 Instructional Plans

South Texas College (STC) shows its commitment to dual credit students through carefully designed, customized programs and a range of support services. The college's work in this area was recognized in 2020, when it was the first college in Texas accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.

“Dual credit students have a unique situation of being in high school and having the opportunity to earn college credit,” says Rebecca De Leon, the college's associate vice president for dual credit programs and school district partnerships. “So we build a college-going culture from the get-go, and we connect with students from enrollment to advising to completion.”

The STC service area includes 21 school districts and 70 high school sites. The college helps each student understand STC's 12 meta majors and the pathways offered at their high school so every student can get on a path toward completing a credential. The college has advising staff assigned to support each high school and a 100-page student guide to college completion.

“We don't have one plan for all of our 70 high school sites,” explains Anahid Petrosian, vice president and provost for academic affairs. “Each high school has a designated instructional plan, so we really have more than 70 instructional plans, each based on the individual high school's capacity and its students' needs.”

### Customized Plans, Tailored Pathways

Each high school offers pathways and credentials that make sense for its unique student population and capacity. Some high schools may offer certificates in addition to associate degree options. High schools survey their students to determine which courses, pathways, and degrees are of interest, and then STC creates an instructional plan based on the content the high school chooses to offer.

“Suppose a high school is interested in offering an associate degree in criminal justice,” De Leon says. “We determine the sequence of courses from ninth grade through the

senior year, what faculty the high school has or may need, and what extra support students may need to be successful. We create a complete plan each time a new pathway is introduced for a campus.”

“We make sure that every course a high school offers will fit with one or more of our pathways,” Petrosian adds. “In this way, we’ve made sure that the high school work is aligned with STC’s meta majors.” This approach also ensures the applicability of credits earned so students do not take extra credit hours that will not contribute to a credential.

High school students can pick from the pathways that are offered by their school. STC also offers independent enrollment for students whose interests may not align with their high school’s pathways.

“A student may tell an advisor that they want to study biology and become a doctor, but biology is not offered at their high school,” De Leon says. “The student can select our independent enrollment option, which may include evening or summer classes at the college or even online options. But first, of course, we have a holistic review as part of advising to ensure that the student will be successful taking independent courses.”

### **Listening and Responding to Students**

STC regularly surveys students, administrators, and counselors, and then the college acts on what it learns. For example, one student survey revealed that students were not aware of the resources STC offers.

“Dual credit students indicated that they didn’t know there was a library or a tutoring center,” De Leon recalls. “So we created a Padlet — a simple resource that shows students all of the available resources and directs them to more information with one click.” As a result, the college is seeing an increase in students using support services.

The college also introduced an early alert system for dual credit students. Three progress checks are built into each term: one within the first two weeks of class; one at the midpoint, typically right before the midterm; and one before the withdrawal date. High school counselors receive the reports and intervene when students need additional support.

### **Improvement, Success, and TSC Support**

STC dual credit students, on average, are more successful than traditional students. In fall 2022, 84 percent of dual credit students had course grades of A, B, or C, compared with 67 percent of traditional students.

Petrosian credits the Texas Success Center (TSC) and Texas Pathways with helping the college improve.

“The TSC and the Texas Pathways have been great for our college,” she says. “The data they provide, the information, and the guest speakers all are in tune with what we need to make significant changes.”

Petrosian also appreciates the time for reflection provided by the Texas Pathways Institutes. “We create an action plan, and we are serious about following it when we come back to campus,” she says. “A million things that can take away our focus happen every day. The TSC keeps us on track.”

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