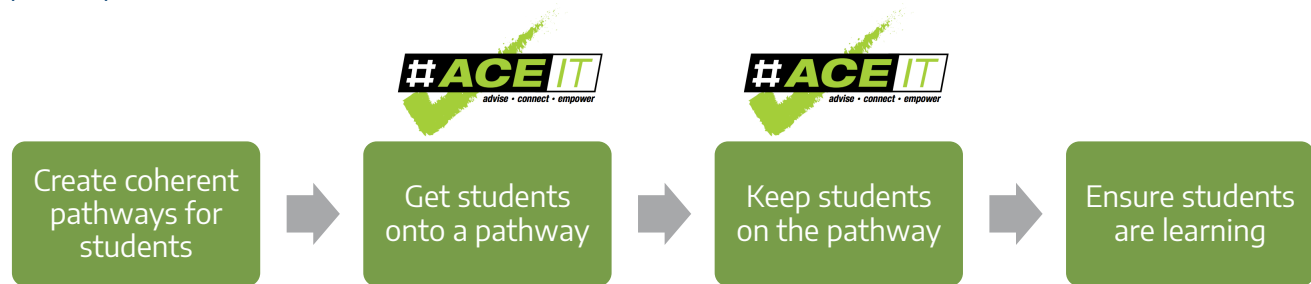




## ACE it at Brazosport College

At Texas Pathways Institute #3, Sasha Tarrant from Brazosport College in Lake Jackson, Texas, gave a presentation about the college's ACE it program to a packed audience during a concurrent session. On the institute evaluation, attendees identified the ACE it presentation as a highlight of the event, describing it as "great," "impressive," "practical," and "interesting."

ACE it stands for Advise, Connect, and Empower. The college describes the program as a "longitudinal learning experience where students will navigate higher education, connect with resources, building professional relationships, and learn to truly be self-advised." ACE it addresses entry and progress along students' guided pathway.



ACE it's mission statement reads, "The ACE it program supports Brazosport College's mission for student success. Through a structured, consistent, and collaborative mentoring relationship, students will become empowered to foster a sense of connectedness and take responsibility for developing their education, career and personal goals."

Participation in ACE it is required for students enrolling at Brazosport College for the first time. Before enrollment, students meet with staff to explore career and educational interests, become familiar with processes and services, and learn about the ACE it program. In the first semester, students are assigned a coach and together they discuss career goals and program requirements and build an educational plan. Every semester, students and their coaches discuss progress, review the educational plan, explore campus resources and co-curricular activities, and plan the next semester's schedule. In the third semester, students and their coaches explore ways students can gain career experience through internships, co-ops, or volunteering. In the fourth semester, students and their coaches discuss next steps and the student transitions to self-advisement for any remaining requirements.

As a result of completing the ACE it program, Brazosport College students will:

1. Advise
  - a. Through self-evaluation and partnering with an ACE it coach, produce an educational plan in an area of study that supports educational and career goals.
  - b. Evaluate course-selection risks with an ACE it coach.
  - c. Articulate knowledge of policies that affect educational pathways.
2. Connect
  - a. Identify college resources and articulate how those resources will assist in reaching educational goals.
  - b. Explain the role coaches, faculty, and staff play in assisting students to achieve success.
  - c. Discuss the importance of co-curricular programs and how participation is related to student success.
3. Empower



- a. Communicate and explain how personal values and interests, in conjunction with strengths and weaknesses, affect educational and career goals.
- b. Articulate and apply concepts of growth mindset to college experiences.

Two Brazosport College students, Jess and Samantha, shared their experience with ACE it and the impact the program has had on their education and their life.

### **Jess**

As a first-time-in-college student, Jess was required to attend ACE it. She did not know what it was, but the hold on her account motivated her to learn more. Now that she has participated in the program for three semesters, she says, “It’s good they have it as a requirement because if it hadn’t have been, I would have missed out.”

Jess intended to enter the healthcare field but did not like her anatomy and physiology class, a requirement for health programs. Jess met with her ACE it coach, who advised her to participate in supplemental instruction. After considering the implications of failing the course on her financial aid, Jess decided to withdraw from the class instead. Without a goal, Jess considered dropping out of college.

She informed her coach that she had withdrawn and appreciated that her coach worked with her to identify a program that better fit her interests. Though she wasn’t sure of a career, Jess knew she was interested in psychology and child development and wanted an interactive job with an impact on people. She did not think about becoming a teacher until she talked with her ACE it coach. The college uses an app called BC Connect, which includes a career test. Jess completed the test and teaching was one of the results, validating her shift in focus.

Jess says a big part of ACE it is learning to navigating her educational plan herself. Originally, Jess wanted advisors to reassure her about course selection for registration, but now Jess uses her transfer guide and feels confident making her own decisions. ACE it, a four-semester program, requires fewer meetings with a coach the longer a student is enrolled, though students can meet with coaches more often than required.

Jess and her coach have made a real connection. They have gotten to know each other and have a comfortable relationship, often speaking about topics unrelated to academics. Jess says, “Coaches take everybody’s whole life into consideration. They look at the big picture instead of just the academic pathway, and people are comfortable enough to talk with them about their personal life.”

Jess reports, “ACE it made a profound impact. I was going to drop out. My coach kept me motivated and moving forward. If I did not have ACE it, I wouldn’t be close to my associate degree.” She adds, “When I started school, I didn’t have any idea what I was doing at all. I was walking into it blind. I had no idea what I was in for. It was really overwhelming and my coach helped me feel less overwhelmed.”

To provide feedback and for the college to assess the program, students complete short five-question surveys through the BC Connect mobile app. In addition to responding to scale questions about coaches and quality of advising, students can add comments for more detailed replies.

Reflecting on her time with ACE it, Jess says, “I’ve had a really good experience. It’s been really nice—it’s nice to have a faculty member I’m able to connect to, especially in the first semester. If you have a faculty member you’re close with, if you have a problem with the college, you’re able to bring up that problem. It’s beneficial for the college as a whole. ACE it provides a good faculty-student connection you might not have otherwise.”

### **Samantha**

At 27 years old, Samantha had been out of high school for about 10 years before she enrolled at Brazosport College. She wasn’t sure what she wanted to study, but she had dilly-dallied long enough and needed a change.



During history class, Samantha's instructor, who was training as an ACE it coach, introduced the students to the program and kept talking about it throughout the semester. Samantha decided to sign up for the program and was assigned a coach, who she describes as "fantastic."

Samantha enjoys the time she has with her coach, who has helped her choose a pathway through college. Moreover, her coach has been a genuine counselor and a source of support. Overwhelmed, Samantha has cried in her coach's office, knowing her coach would give her the support she needed if she struggled.

Without ACE it, Samantha would not have chosen classes as effectively. She says, "Choosing my classes was really, really confusing. ...I still was struggling to figure out what I was doing, where I was going. ACE it changed my experience for the positive. Choosing my classes was a really big deal for me. I was out of school for 10 years. [My coach] has helped me with issues with the financial aid office, helped me get on a payment plan for spring semester, helped me get my P's and Q's in order, my I's dotted and my T's crossed. I would have had a very different college experience had I not been in touch with coach. I would still be struggling to pick classes. It was nice to have someone to greet in hallway, stop and chat, not on a professor level, but on a friendship level. It was a familiar face that I knew that I could reach out and say, 'How are you?' and make that connection."

With ACE it, Samantha is comforted knowing she has support from a team to ensure she makes good, informed choices and is not wasting her time and money. She adds, "I'm more knowledgeable now so I feel like I can make better decisions on my own. I feel more empowered, more in control of my college career and my life destiny. It's given me a lot of tools and a lot of knowledge. Not only have they given me those things but they have shown me how to use them."