**South Texas College**

“5 Reasons” News Center article

Sept 2019

***A Smarter Start*: 5 Reasons to Attend a Community College**

Victoria Quintanilla is pursuing a degree at Yale University. Juan Barrera ended up at Harvard. Samantha Salazar stayed local, and is now breaking new ground for women in STEM careers. George Rice also stuck around, drawing on his military experience and business savvy to start his own successful craft brewery.

These four South Texas superstars – and countless others – have combined drive, dedication and good old-fashioned hard work to follow their dreams, and build amazing futures. And while their individual stories are as unique as they are inspiring, they all started in the same place.

“South Texas College gives you the foundation to be able to start and know that there's more to continue on and build on,” says Quintanilla, who credits her community college experience with giving her the confidence to succeed in the Ivy League. “We have a strong community that supports one another. That's something that’s always kind of pushed me to continue to do what I do.”

For 25 years, STC students like Quintanilla have been proving that community college is not only an affordable higher education option, but in many cases, a *smarter start*. It’s more than just saving money and staying out of debt. Community college represents an expedient, outcome-focused, and most of all, *personal* experience on which to build an individual success story.

***Top 5 reasons to start at a community college…***

**#1 A college community…**

A positive college experience is about more than just being accepted. It’s about being *Accepted*…. with a capital ‘A’.

Building connections in college is crucial, and it starts with accessibility. A warm, welcoming environment. A diverse, dynamic student body. Small classes taught by engaged faculty.

Community college students start their higher education journey on familiar ground, with access to family support systems and individualized student services. Basically, they *build confidence*, while their four-year peers are building debt.

*[infographic]*

**Less is *more*…**

22:1

Student-to-faculty ratio,

South Texas College

51:1

Student-to-faculty ratio,

Texas A&M University

*[pull quote]*

“When I started taking my courses at the university setting, I felt very well prepared for the rigor of what was expected, including how to excel and have strong study habits.”

*–Dr. Rebecca DeLeon*

*STC Dean for Dual Credit Programs*

*South Texas College grad*

**#2 Fast, focused futures…**

OK… so a university student, a trade school student, and a community college grad walk into a bar (don’t worry – they’re all 21). The bartender says: “you guys starting a tab?” … and everyone looks sheepishly at the community college grad.

It’s no joke! Community college students earn money *faster*. They’re picking up the tab while their high school buddies are still picking out a major. That’s because community colleges are built for efficiency. They identify workforce gaps and give their students the skills they need to fill them. The only downside to choosing community college? Well, drinks will probably be on *you* … for a while, at least.

*[infographic]*

**In demand. On *command*.**

377,100

*Jobs added in Texas in the 2017-18 fiscal year.*

56%

*Percentage of recent Texas job openings requiring associate degree- or certificate-level education.*

*[pull quote]*

“They’re in it to actually better the community. They don't waste time, and they’re not trying to milk the system. It’s all very fluid. Very streamlined. Very effective.”

*–George Rice*

*Co-Owner, 5x5 Brewing Company*

*South Texas College grad*

**#3 Um… it’s *cheaper*.**

There’s only one thing in the world that makes parents prouder than a college degree… and that’s *saving money*. It’s a scientific fact! *[citation needed]*

It’s no secret that two-year colleges are less expensive than four-year universities. But to really understand a community college’s value, you’ve got to look *beyond* tuition, into factors like housing, course materials, gas, travel time… not to mention capacity to work a part-time job.

Community colleges offer a more flexible, affordable experience, with a higher potential return on investment. After all, the best way to get *out* of debt is to *never get there in the first place*.

*[infographic]*

**Affording the opportunity.**

$3,347

*Average annual tuition and fees,*

*public two-year colleges*

$9,139

*Average annual tuition and fees, public four-year colleges.*

*[pull quote]*

“I believe *every student* in the Rio Grande Valley should have the opportunity to obtain a college degree.”

*–Krystal Flores*

*Doctoral Student, Texas A&M*

*South Texas College grad*

**#4 Exceptional options. Superior support.**

Let’s face it. We don’t tend to stumble out of high school with a fully formed academic and career plan in our heads. Heck, we’re lucky if we make it out with our *yearbooks* in one piece.

Community college is a place to explore options and map out a savvy, sensible blueprint for the future. It’s also a place of *support*. There’s no risk of red tape or getting lost in the bureaucratic shuffle. If you’ve got the drive, your community college is your trusty GPS, guiding you to your ideal life and career destination.

*[Infographic]*

**An exceptional experience.**

7 in 10

*community college students nationwide said they felt supported and encouraged to persist to graduation.*

3 in 4

*community college attendees said they would recommend their college to friends and family.*

*[pull quote]*

“I was able to take a variety of courses that were taught in different styles … and just really explore. That's something I don't think I could have found really anywhere else.”

*–Victoria Quintanilla*

*Student, Yale University*

*South Texas College grad*

**#5 The *flex* effect…**

Responding to workforce demand isn’t like changing a light bulb. In Texas, it’s more like changing *a few hundred thousand* light bulbs… only some of the bulbs aren’t quite bright enough.

Texas is home to six of the nation’s top 25 fastest-growing cities, and while industries are surging, the state is beginning to feel the growing pains of an undereducated workforce. Community colleges are not just *part* of the workforce solution, their agility and versatility makes them our state’s *best hope* for keeping pace with an evolving economy.

*[Infographic]*

**Don't mess with success.**

$5.7 million

*In 2019, the Texas Workforce Commission invested nearly $6 million in grants as part of the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) program .*

#1

*“Middle-skills” job, requiring education beyond high school but short of a bachelor’s degree, represent the fastest-growing job category in Texas.*

*[pull quote]*

“Programs that help students prepare for life beyond high school and the high-demand jobs in Texas are critical to the future of the Texas workforce.”

*–Francisco Gamez*

*Texas Workforce Commission*

*[Additional infographics (space permitting)]:*

*South Texas’ hottest careers:*

*(projected growth by 2023):*

* Wind Turbine Service Technicians **+50%**
* Home Health Aides **+29%**
* Personal Care Aides **+20%**
* Veterinary Assistants **+18%**
* Nurse Practitioner **+25%**

*[pie chart]*

*Reasons for attending community college:*

Earn an Associate Degree: **29%**

Preparing to Transfer to a 4-Year: **36%**

Starting a Career: **24%**

Update Job Skills: **6%**

Personal Enrichment: **5%**

***Sources:***

*\*Interact Communications: National Media Preferences Survey, 2018-19*

*Public University Honors:* [*https://publicuniversityhonors.com/2015/10/20/estimated-class-sizes-more-than-90-national-universities/*](https://publicuniversityhonors.com/2015/10/20/estimated-class-sizes-more-than-90-national-universities/)

*Career Vision:* [*https://careervision.org/opportunities-abound-middle-skill-jobs/*](https://careervision.org/opportunities-abound-middle-skill-jobs/)

*Texas Workforce Commission:* [*https://lmci.state.tx.us/shared/PDFs/Workforce\_Report.pdf*](https://lmci.state.tx.us/shared/PDFs/Workforce_Report.pdf)

*National Skills Coalition* [*https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/2017-middle-skills-fact-sheets/file/Texas-MiddleSkills.pdf*](https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/2017-middle-skills-fact-sheets/file/Texas-MiddleSkills.pdf)

*USA Today:* [*https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/05/09/americas-fastest-growing-cities/39442201/*](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/05/09/americas-fastest-growing-cities/39442201/)