The History of South Texas College

The 1990’s – Origins and Early Years

South Texas College’s initial planning efforts can be traced to December 1992 when the Steering Committee for the proposed College commissioned Dr. Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr. to prepare a proposal for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) for the creation of a community college in Hidalgo and Starr counties.

South Texas Community College (STCC) (now South Texas College—STC) was created on September 1, 1993, by Texas Senate Bill 251 to serve Hidalgo and Starr counties, which are located in deep South Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border, and Dr. Shirley Reed was named as the first President of the College. STC is the only community college in Texas to have been legislatively established because of the compelling need for a comprehensive higher education institution to serve the over 655,000 residents of the region. Over 96% of the county residents are Hispanic and previously did not have access to such an institution.

In November 1993, STC began its formal planning process with the establishment of a Blue Ribbon Committee charged with developing a mission and purpose statement for the College. And, in a confirmation election, held on August 12, 1995, the voters of Hidalgo and Starr counties established a taxing district to fund the newly created community college and approved the issuance of $20 million in bonds to fund the initial construction of the campus.

The 2000’s – Exponential Growth

Due to the unexpectedly rapid growth of the College, on September 29, 2001, the voters authorized an additional $98.7 million bond issue to fund the construction of expanded facilities
at five campuses and centers, and an additional three cent tax levy to fund the operation of the College, which generates approximately $10 million annually in additional revenue for operation of the College.

In March 2001, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), which conducts Institutional Effectiveness reviews of all community colleges every four years, awarded eight exemplary program recognitions and two commendations during their site visit. STC was the first community college in Texas to receive a “No follow up report” from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board because of its exemplary review by the visiting team.

Upon completion of the process to revise the Mission, Core Values, and Institutional Statement of Purpose in 2003, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) noted the need to change the name of the institution to appropriately reflect the baccalaureate degree granting authority of the institution. In 2004, SACS reviewed and approved STC to be accredited as a level II baccalaureate degree granting institution. In accordance with these changes, the Board of Trustees officially approved the name change to South Texas College.

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) granted membership to South Texas College at the December 1995 meeting and then granted a ten-year reaffirmation of accreditation at the December 2000 meeting. STC is presently accredited by the Commission on Colleges to award the Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Arts, Associate of Science degrees, and certificates. The College is also approved for veteran's educational training in Certificate and Associate of Applied Science Degree programs by the Texas Education Agency. In September 2009, STC had a successful SACS on-site visit, and in July 2010, STC received SACS reaffirmation of accreditation for another 10 years.
**The 2010's – Looking to the Future!**

In August 2011, STC launched a sixth campus – a virtual campus called e-STC. Starting from Fall 2011, e-STC has been offering online degrees and certificates. A total of 5,633 students enrolled in the eSTC virtual college in Fall 2013.

In February 2013, STC was awarded the prestigious Leah Meyer Austin Award at the annual Achieving the Dream National Conference. This distinction was bestowed on STC for the great strides in introducing systematic changes resulting in student success. STC has been able to raise its three-year graduation rate, expand its dual enrollment program, improve college-readiness of incoming students, and increase completion rates in developmental and gateway courses. In addition to participation in Achieving the Dream, South Texas College is actively involved in Texas Completes, the Puente Project (an initiative of Catch the Next, Inc.), and other initiatives to increase student success.

STC began in 1993 as an institution with 10 certificate programs and less than 1,000 students. By Fall 2013, enrollment had grown to 31,232 and the college offered 111 degrees and certificates to its students: three Baccalaureate degrees, an Associate of Arts Degree in 18 fields of study, an Associate of Arts in Teaching in three fields of study, an Associate of Science Degree in eight fields of study, 28 Associate of Applied Science Degrees, and 51 Certificates.

STC commitment to creating a college-going culture in the Valley is evidenced by work with local secondary schools. Since 1997, STC has been offering dual-enrollment programs, and delivering college academic and WECM courses to well qualified juniors and seniors at no charge to them or their parents. In 2005, STC began offering Dual-Enrollment Academy programs that allow eligible high school participants to complete a two-year Associate of Science degree in Biology, Engineering, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, or Welding by the time they graduate from high school. Additionally, STC has led the region in promoting the innovative
Early College High Schools since 2007, and the College now works with 15 Early College High Schools. As of Fall 2013, STC partners with 21 school districts at over 68 high school sites.

Since the early days of the College, STC has continued the strategic planning process and has developed an institutional effectiveness cycle for each department. Ongoing planning efforts have included planning workshops and retreats and professional development activities across all areas of the college. All planning efforts are led by the Office of the President and the Planning and Development Council, and are subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees.

The new 2013-2018 STC Strategic Plan is a product of college-wide conversations, studies, and input. This new strategic plan is unique in that incorporates elements of institutional responses outlined in American Association of Community College’s “Reclaiming the American Dream” and the pathways to credentials and employment set forth by the “Texas Complettes” state-wide student success initiative. STC believes this new Strategic Plan will bring together all elements of the College to increase student success.

In November 2013, Hidalgo and Starr Counties approved a bond & maintenance election that provides $159,028,940 for construction of new buildings on all campuses and provides funds for the maintenance and operation of the college as it faces enrollment increases and the expansion of installations.

**Looking Forward**

Fall 2013 marks the 20th anniversary of the College, and the future looks bright! South Texas College looks forward to the path into the future and to where the educational opportunities now available will take the Hidalgo and Starr County residents and area communities in the years to come.