Lee College Fall 2022 Enrollment Sets Record

President Credits New Strategies for Enrolling More than 8,400 Students

Lee College has recorded its highest enrollment in its 88-year history. Numbers indicate the college has enrolled 8,443 students for the Fall 2022 semester. The previous high was in Fall 2018, with slightly more than 8,000 students.

The Fall 2022 number translates to a 9 percent increase in headcount compared to the same time last year at the college's main campus in Baytown, its two satellite locations at McNair (Baytown) and South Liberty County, and the Prison Education Program at the Huntsville Center.

"This enrollment number is very encouraging to me as it demonstrates the strategies we began implementing during the height of the pandemic are bearing fruit," said Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Lee College president. "Our college's greatest challenge has been a decline in enrollment, so to see this new bar set, we are simply ecstatic."

One notable tactic was to establish partnerships with school districts in the Lee College service area, which includes Goose Creek Consolidated, Crosby, Dayton, Liberty, Barbers Hill, Huffman, Devers, East Chambers, Hardin and Hull-Daisetta — to ensure high school seniors make a seamless transition into Lee College.

"Earlier this year, we adjusted our enrollment practices to bring the entirety of student services to partner districts to recruit and enroll students into Lee before they receive their high school diplomas," explained Scott Bennett, associate vice president, Student Services. "Our team also took advantage of the First Time Free at Lee initiative approved by the Lee College Board of Regents. The program offers new students tuition, fees and e-books at no cost. The two approaches gave us the opportunity to interact with students early in the registration cycle and promote the value of coming to Lee College in the fall."

The pandemic produced multiple stresses: emotional, physical, financial, relational, etc., so it became increasingly important to provide services that would keep students on track with their education. The result was shifting the Lee College Student Resource & Advocacy Center into high gear — providing struggling students with personalized support and assistance with childcare, food, housing, transportation and scholarship funds through the Lee Cares program.

Other support efforts include an unprecedented $5 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott to renovate the Student Center and two awards from JP MorganChase totaling $300,000 to support the Lee College Single Parent Success program. Villanueva says the work is not done, and as Lee College moves forward, the attention moves to student retention and keeping them on their educational pathways.

"We know that retaining students from semester to semester can be a challenge, so we've implemented several initiatives to help students be successful starting before their first day of class and keep this momentum of high enrollment going," said Dr. Douglas Walcerz, provost and vice president of academic and student affairs.

Lee College put in place several new academic measures this semester. They are:

- Redesigned New Student Orientation to include online and in-person options
- myPath, an online degree planning and auditing program to help students stay on track and graduate on time
- Enhanced course delivery options, Lee*Stream*, My*Flex* Hybrid and Face-to-Face, designed to fit a student's schedule
- my*Books*, an all-access course materials program allowing students to have their materials by the first day of class

This semester Lee College also became the *first* higher education institution in the greater Houston area to launch TimelyCare, a virtual health and well-being platform offering students free, on-demand medical and mental health services 24/7.

"Our record enrollment could not happen at a better point in time as it is crucial to receiving funding from the state lawmakers for the next two years," Villanueva added. "But records are made to be broken, and we will continue to work hard to enlarge our footprint and services to all our communities in the coming year."