12th Annual Correctional Conference

The Lee College Huntsville Center hosted the 12th Annual Texas Correctional Conference on Oct. 16, bringing together educational leaders, state agencies, industry representatives and alumni to reflect on six decades of correctional education in Texas and explore opportunities for the future.

The conference highlighted the impact of the college's 60-year partnership with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), emphasizing how access to higher education can help individuals develop new skills, find purpose and build meaningful lives beyond incarceration.

President Jacob Atkin recognized that the partnership represents more than earning a degree, it provides individuals with opportunities to reshape their futures and contribute to their communities.

Current students from the Plane and Wynne campuses joined the event virtually to share how their educational experiences have influenced their perspectives and goals. Former students also returned to share their journeys, including successful businessman and instructor Christopher Avirett and fitness trainer Corey Boyd. Their stories illustrated the lasting influence of education and the role it can play in helping individuals remain successful after release.

Five women spoke about their participation in the Pathways program, which connects educational opportunities at the Huntsville Center with continued education at the main campus in Baytown. Victoria Johnson, Leah Cogswell, Alexandria Torian, Roxanne Eason and Brianna Geuea shared their experiences and discussed their educational journeys. Geuea, a former Huntsville Center and Pathways student, was named Lee College Huntsville Center's Alumnus of the Year.

Additional discussions explored workforce opportunities, labor market trends and the role of education in successful reentry. Entrepreneurs Cheri Chafin Norris and Luis Soberon shared industry perspectives, while Dr. David McCoy and Thomas Boswell of The University of Texas at Austin's Ray Marshall Center presented research on Texas labor market outcomes.

Several college reps from across the state participated in a panel discussion about the Texas Prison Education Program Consortium, including Lee College Huntsville Center Executive Director Donna Zuniga. The discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration among institutions working to expand educational access for incarcerated students.

The conference also showcased the role of employers in supporting successful reentry. Representatives from Spike Electric shared their experiences employing formerly incarcerated individuals, noting that some former Lee College Huntsville Center students have become among their strongest employees.

Through six decades of partnership and continued collaboration, Lee College remains committed to expanding educational opportunities and demonstrating how education can open doors to new possibilities.

Pictured center: Victoria Johnson, Leah Cogswell, Alexandria Torian, and Roxanne Eason were honored for their participation in the Pathways program.