# CULTURE OF CARING
## Poverty Summit Handbook

Amarillo College

# Amarillo College
## *No Excuses Culture of Caring Poverty Summit*

*Amarillo College No Excuses Culture of Caring Poverty Summit ~ May 2019*

# BACKGROUND TO AMARILLO COLLEGE'S #ACCULTUREOFCARING

During the 2010/2011 academic year, Amarillo College participated in a community-wide data study to determine why the city of Amarillo was experiencing a decrease in educational attainment and an increase in poverty rates. From this community-wide assessment, the *No Limits No Excuses* project was created to bring together Amarillo's school district, higher education institutions, business and industry, non-profit agencies and community leaders to work collaboratively to address Amarillo's growing poverty trend. Today, *No Limits No Excuses* has an overarching community goal of 10,000 more college degrees, with zero excuses by 2025.

As the community of Amarillo was coming together to address growing poverty trends and less educational attainment for our citizens, Amarillo College was called into action. We started analyzing our own data to determine who our students are, what are their educational dreams, and what is the reality of their educational attainment and completion.

Our local, state, and national data indicated that our populations were increasingly poorer and decreasingly educated. According to the US Census, Amarillo is increasingly poorer with 16.4% living in poverty and 71% of local ISD students qualify for free-or-reduced lunch. The educational attainment for citizens with a Bachelor's degree or higher is significantly lower in Amarillo (22.7%) in comparison to the State of Texas and United States (26.1% TX, 30.9% US).

In Fall 2010, Amarillo College's student body was comprised predominately of low-income, first-generation college students. We enrolled over 11,600 academic students; 43% were minority; 61% were female; 46% received financial aid assistance; 61% placed into developmental education; and, and 71% enrolled part-time. Nearly 80% declared a transfer major; yet, less than 10% transferred to a four-year university. We also learned Amarillo College retained less than 40% of our students from fall to fall.

Just as our city was grappling with the crisis of growing poverty rates for our citizens, we began to understand our students were living in a crisis of poverty. And, Amarillo College believed we could provide the answer to solving our city's growing poverty trend by assisting students and helping them realize their educational dreams.

In October 2011, Amarillo College held a data summit for all faculty and staff. Our data did not paint a pretty picture of student success. Our retention rates were lower than we imagined and our completion rates were barely in double digits. Prior to this time, Amarillo College did not review data in a systematic manner. As we sat together processing the data, we knew we needed to improve. Our

community needed us to improve. Most importantly, our students needed us to improve for their success.

As good, strong academics, we knew what these distressing numbers really meant – we needed more academic support and more effective academic interventions to help students. We began by collecting more data, through surveys and focus groups, to identify the greatest barriers to student completion. We made assumptions about what barriers would be identified – fully expecting tutoring hours, instructional practices, and scheduling to be the greatest barriers to our students success. We were wrong.

> *The five biggest educational barriers identified by AC students are:*
> - Childcare
> - Food
> - Housing
> - Mental Healthcare
> - Transportation

While the academic supports were vitally important, our students identified the Top 10 Barriers to their completion – none were based in academics. Each of the greatest barriers to completion was life related rather than academic in notion. When initially evaluated our student success data, we were so focused on academic success that we failed to realize the more powerful and debilitating barrier - poverty.

---

*Poverty is the single greatest barrier
to student success facing higher education.*

---

At Amarillo College, our emerging philosophical alignment with *No Excuses University* gave us a roadmap forward as advocates to remove poverty barriers. Through the Turn Around Schools organization with Damen Lopez, Amarillo College became the first higher education partner to embrace "no excuses". At the foundation, *No Excuses* means we believe all students hold potential for college and career success. We embrace our responsibility for the "whole" student by setting high expectations for them and then assisting students in reaching these expectations. We aspire to treat each student as an individual with unique challenges and needs.
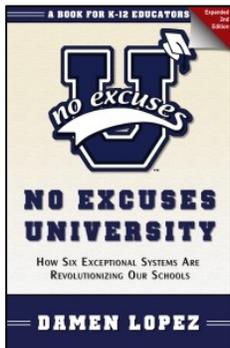
The *Amarillo College No Excuses* philosophy analyzes and evaluates reasons for students' successes and struggles, and does not allow the struggles to become our excuse for lack of success. *No Excuses University* opened the door for Amarillo College leadership, faculty, and staff to recognize and understand that our preconceived notions of what we thought our students would be like does not match the reality of who are students are. We came to the realization we were living through a narrow view of college, believing our students and their college experience was similar to our college experience.

As Amarillo College ingrained the *No Excuses University* philosophy into our courses, programs and initiatives, we began noticing our students rise to the challenge and want academic rigor when given flexibility with their schedules. We learned students want their college professors to simply talk with them.  We need to learn from them as they are learning from us. We learned faculty and employees are meant to advocate for these bright and capable students who bear more on their shoulders than we can imagine. We learned these students inspire us daily.

> *"Change comes from seeing, hearing, speaking and a willingness to adapt to a student's needs."*
>
> Dr. Donna Beegle, Communication Across Barriers

But in order to learn all these things about our students, we had to learn that we were the ones needing to change. We were the ones putting preconceived notions on our students. We learned change comes from within. We learned *No Excuses University* is more than a philosophy; it's an entrenched part of our daily culture at Amarillo College.

With the *No Excuses* philosophical foundation that we are responsible for the whole student and with data showing poverty as the greatest threat to student success, we became advocates to remove poverty barriers for our students. Students were hurting and academic interventions were not addressing the core issue causing their pain. We had to act immediately.

## Theory of Change

In 2011, Amarillo College established its *No Excuses Poverty Initiative*. Today this initiative has evolved into #**AC**cultureofcaring.  And the theory of change behind #**AC**cultureofcaring is simple: *If Amarillo College removes poverty barriers for our students in an accelerated learning environment while providing a deep culture of caring, students will be successful and complete their educational goal.*

As a higher education institution, Amarillo College employees never expected to become



advocates for removing poverty barriers. But because of #**AC**cultureofcaring and its systemic approach to poverty, we know we are impacting the success of all our students. Our systems have changed the lives of our students. Moreover, we know these students are impacting entire neighborhoods in our community.

#**AC**cultureofcaring illustrates that by addressing student poverty barriers students will complete and will graduate/transfer.  By changing our perspectives to higher education, Amarillo College has seen a **60% growth rate increase in our student attainment/transfer rates over the last five years (30% to 48%)**.

Over the last five years, Amarillo College has seen a 75% growth rate in First-Generation students graduating with a degree/certificate (21% growth rate in transfer); and, a 64% growth rate in Pell students graduating (29% growth rate in transfer).

Amarillo College course success rates (A-C pass rates) have increased 110% for Hispanic students, 112% for African-American students, and 108% all students.
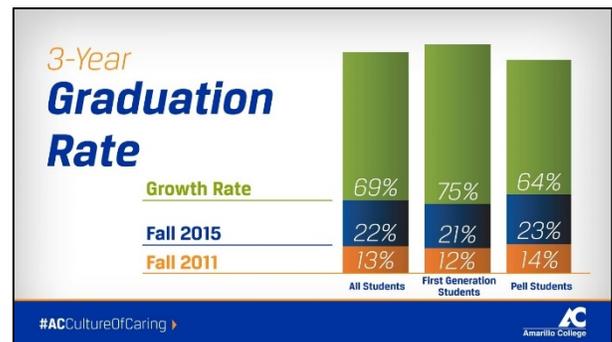


#**AC**cultureofcaring illustrates that by addressing student poverty barriers students will complete and will graduate/transfer. In order to achieve growing student success, Amarillo College and its faculty, staff, and leadership had to change our perspective. By transforming ourselves, we transformed our institution. Today, we embrace the students we have; we love the students we have; and we have truly created an #**AC**cultureofcaring.

In Fall 2018, Angelique Martin, an AC student, sent these words to our president, Dr. Lowery-Hart, in an email:

> *"As an Amarillo College Student, I must say how proud I am to call myself a Badger, the School has been there for me through my mom's passing, not being able to make my car payment, no food at home, lost glasses - not once was I told no! So to my school, I pledge to make good grades, attend class, participate in school activities. And in the fourth week of the second 8 week, I have 92.374% in my Communications in Management course. I have an intellectual disability, but I am stronger than my disability. I'm stronger, because of the ARC, Disability Services, Financial Aid, my Advisor, the Early Childhood Development Department, the AC Foundation, the Business Department, and last but certainly not least our Esteemed President Russell Lowery-Hart – I am stronger. I am Angelique Martin, and I am Amarillo College."*

Angelique, and the thousands of Amarillo College students like her, is why we are driven to revolutionize higher education. Their voices push us daily to make higher education a reality for all. At Amarillo College we know that when we address poverty barriers for students, we are equalizing the attainment of a college degree or university transfer for all students. **A student's socioeconomic status should never hinder their educational dreams.**

Amarillo College's students face significant barriers to success in higher education. Some of those barriers are actually created by higher education itself. Many institutions do not see poverty as an issue demanding action. Most higher education missions focus on changing lives, educating students, meeting industry needs, and serving the community. Yet, fulfilling these missions requires institutions to address poverty directly.

As the issue of poverty rises, many institutions respond in the same way Amarillo College initially responded: "Addressing poverty isn't our mission; educating students is." We create institutional barriers because we fail to understand the full intent of the missions that drive our work. The demographic shifts of college students make poverty central to mission fulfillment in order to educate our students, meet workforce demands, and serve the community.

> *"Only as a collective team can we enrich the lives of our community by changing the lives of our students."*
>
> Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Amarillo College President

Institutional processes are written in middle-class language and are full of confusing acronyms. This middle-class language limits access to college based on experiences and cultural cues rather than abilities and desires for an education. Additionally, many institutions, and Amarillo College was no exception, respond to student needs through silos. Each division within an institution may have unique ways of responding to student needs. Yet, these efforts lack institutional support, limited accountability and effectiveness, and often contradict efforts and practices in other parts of the college. Thus, a lack of a systemic approach to addressing the issue of poverty creates the biggest barrier of all for students seeking success.

Amarillo College believes in the tiny pushes of its faculty, administrators and staff, who all work together in the name of student success. #**AC**cultureofcaring centers on humanity for all – students, faculty, and staff.

## *Creating a Culture of Caring*

In August 2014, Amarillo College hired Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart as its 14th President.  As our institutions previous Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Lowery-Hart led our developmental education and gateway course redesign projects; *Achieving the Dream* efforts; our involvement in the *No Limits No Excuses* program; and, Amarillo College's creation of the *No Excuses Poverty Initiative* (now known as #**AC**cultureofcaring).

Under Dr. Lowery-Hart's presidency, Amarillo College has established a dynamic five-year strategic plan, *No Excuses 2020*, with a clear vision of 70% Completion by 2020. At Amarillo College, we have restructured our entire college around our students' needs and removing the barriers to their

success. *No Excuses 2020* reflects our resolve to being a higher education institution focused on meeting students' needs; student success and completion; and creating a data ecosystem to drive change.

In late 2014, Dr. Lowery-Hart led a conversation across the campus to determine the reality of "the AC culture" for students, faculty and staff. He organized a group of 30 Amarillo faculty, administrators and staff to read and discuss *Drive* by Daniel H. Pink over a four-month timeframe. *Drive* guides the reader through a process to learn the truth about what motivates us as individuals and employees. During these conversations, Dr. Lowery-Hart learned employees wanted to see a change in five keys areas: 1) Finding ways for employees to serve students; 2) Improving Communication: 3) Understanding the philosophy of *No Excuses*; 4) Acknowledging and Honor Employees; and 5) Strengthening Employee Relationships.
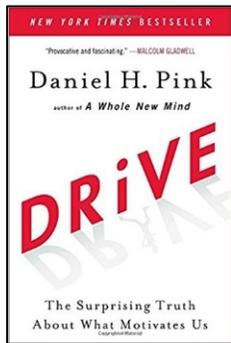
During 2015, Amarillo College set in motion programs and projects to address each of these five areas despite being in the throes of a $3.5 million state-funding cut. Replacing a cost-of-living model, Amarillo College instituted a merit pay system reflecting our new Amarillo College Values. Employees and faculty are evaluated annually on the *No Excuses 2020* Values with merit pay reflecting their efforts. Every employee is invested in #**AC**cultureofcaring and student success.

We host monthly *No Excuses* communication meetings, open to all college employees, to discuss the status of our *No Excuses 2020* strategic plan, retention initiatives, data discussion, etc. Dr. Lowery-Hart also uses this opportunity to rumor-bust any topic floating around campus.

We have an annual AC Cares Day where faculty and staff spend a Saturday morning in October volunteering in our community. Then, we come together to have lunch and spend time together in fellowship. Families are encouraged to participate in the AC Cares Day.

We developed a robust New Employee Orientation, *Camp WOW*, program that clarifies our *No Excuses* movement from philosophy to theory of change in action. During the initial year, all employees and faculty were required to attend a *Camp WOW* session. Today, these orientations throughout the year for all new employees.

In early 2015, Dr. Lowery-Hart hired two dozen first-time students to secretly experience the entire college onboarding process and give him feedback on what worked and what became a barrier. What he learned from these students and Amarillo College faculty/staff began Amarillo College's culture

shift of embracing a culture of caring. **From the parking lot to the graduation stage, first-generation students are afraid they do not belong in higher education.** Their initial experience with higher education is with confusing forms and unfamiliar language. Many of these secret shoppers felt they were the only student who did not understand how to navigate through the higher education processes.

Traditionally, families who experienced college themselves, help their students navigate college admission, enrollment, finances, and social connections. For first-generation students, the lack of cultural capital leaves students with little familial and social support. Because these students do not have a cultural sense of what behaviors and choices lead to classroom and social success, they often experience lower academic achievement and lower degree attainment.

These first-generation "secret shoppers" are 71% of the entire student body for Amarillo College. They often thought they were the only students unable to find a class, understand written instructions for financial aid applications, or anxious when interacting with faculty. As such, these students often felt embarrassed, insecure, and alone.

For Amarillo College, the most powerful *No Excuses* impact on our students is two-fold: culture shift and relationship. Students told us what their "ideal" college looked and felt like. Because they are first-generation students, they wanted a college that served them with the effectiveness of some of our country's greatest companies. These students needed responsive, honoring customer service.
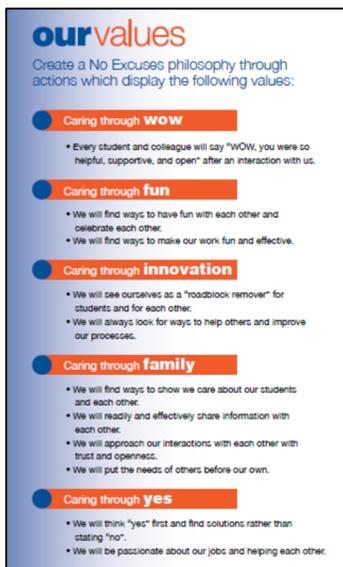


As a college, we knew we needed to embrace a culture of good service and intense caring. We looked at the values of companies known for great service. We asked students to review the list of values from a dozen companies (some local and some national.) Our students identified college values that focused on understanding the first-generation college student experience and responding with a culture of caring and service. The new *Amarillo College Culture of Caring Values* our students chose were not typical "higher education" lingo: *Caring through WOW, Fun, Innovation, Family, and Yes*.

These values are written into every employee job description and merit pay evaluation. The first week of classes, we put these values on significant display by placing employees all over our campuses – from parking lots to classrooms – to ensure students have someone to walk them to their class, take them to the bookstore, guide them through advising, and serve them as if our community's future depends on it. Our most at-risk students receive a "coach" to support them through their first year in college. The *Amarillo College Culture of Caring Values* and relationships are working. Our college retention and

completion rates are improving dramatically because we listened to our students, faculty, and staff.  We looked to our business partners for best practices.

Amarillo College works daily to ensure no student fears enrolling in college or fears failure. We work to ensure student success by connecting students with our faculty and employees; assisting students with available resources across our campus and throughout our community; and, providing them an environment that focuses on encouragement, success, and opportunities.

## #ACcultureofcaring

Amarillo College's #**AC**cultureofcaring has evolved from a theory of change to an action-oriented initiative focused on three key components: Data Analytics and Predictive Modeling; Creating Systems
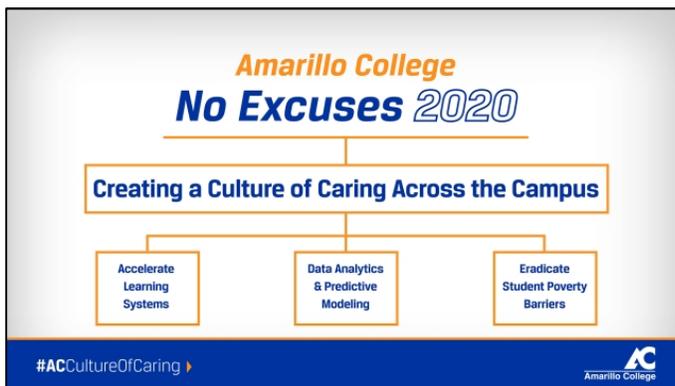


to Eradicate Student Poverty Barriers; and, Accelerated Learning Systems. Each component must work cohesively and across the institution in order to achieve our *No Excuses 2020* vision of 70% completion by 2020.

Through this inclusive three-prong approach, Amarillo College has improved and expanded our *No Excuses Poverty Initiative.*

Today, our *No Excuses Poverty Initiative* has become #**AC**cultureofcaring, a comprehensive, institution-wide approach to loving our students to success.

*"Students attending Amarillo College, and community colleges across the country, define the future of our country, and its capacity for economic growth and prosperity in a global society."*

Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart
US Senate HELP Committee Testimony, Jan. 2018

During the fall 2011 semester, Amarillo College required all faculty to attend a professional development training hosted by Dr. Donna Beegle, a renowned expert addressing poverty barriers in education (http://www.combarriers.com/). Dr. Beegle addressed the systematic and internalized barriers institutions create when working with individuals living in poverty. In order to remove poverty barriers, higher education institutions must be willing to recognize and understand the limitations poverty places upon entire families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Through Dr. Beegle's training, Amarillo College faculty and staff learned to understand the limitations poverty has placed upon our community and thereby our students.  We recognized that our students living in poverty struggle with limited educational opportunities. We understood our students

grapple with daily hardships from understanding the meanings of words and statements (i.e. the use of middle-class language); disbelief surrounding their own abilities and capabilities; and, their own fear that failure is inevitable.

Through the creation of #**AC**cultureofcaring, we opened the doors for faculty, staff and students to engage in meaningful dialogue, programs and support services to ensure student success.  Amarillo College's environment does not shame individuals living in poverty. Instead, we acknowledge the struggles of our students living in poverty and work to assist them with overcoming their barriers.

Through the groundbreaking work of Dr. Beegle, Amarillo College realized that responding to student needs with good will and care would not be enough.  We had to take action, and we had to take it now. As a higher education institution built upon numerous segregated systems, Amarillo College began the process of creating a cohesive, integrated system within our own institution and our community to leverage these caring behaviors with institutional resources, external partnerships, and community support.

> *"Poverty is resolvable; however, making a difference for people who live in the crisis of poverty requires a paradigm shift. A shift that moves us beyond stereotypes and judgement to a deeper understanding of the causes of poverty and its impact on human beings."*
>
> Dr. Donna Beegle, Communication Across Barriers

## *Data Analytics & Predictive Modeling*

Data analytics and predictive modeling are the drivers of Amarillo College's *No Excuses 2020* strategic plan and #**AC**cultureofcaring. We track performance data for all students and then aggregate student data based on demographic indicators. Amarillo College tracks student participation in student success intervention activities, including tutoring, social services, student life, advising, and career and employment services.

Amarillo College's Board of Regents begin each board meeting reviewing the *No Excuses 2020* key performance indicators. Board members engage in discussions related to student learning and completion, alignment with workforce labor market needs, equity, and financial effectiveness.

Amarillo College's executive leadership team reviews *No Excuses 2020* key performance indicators monthly in its President's Cabinet meeting. Data is presented by our Executive Director of Decision Analytics. Discussions are action-oriented rather than philosophical in nature.  Under the leadership of our President, Amarillo College embraces our data, both the highs and lows.

Predictive modeling led Amarillo College to create an at-risk profile for all incoming first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. Piloted in fall 2017, the at-risk profile project increased FTIC fall-to-spring retention by nearly 10% over previous cohorts. Amarillo College faculty and staff were provided a student's at-risk profile level prior to the start of the term. Faculty then connected students most at-risk (level 3 and higher) to institutional systems designed to eradicate poverty barriers; increase student

learning and completion; and, provide non-academic student support.

Beginning in fall 2017, Amarillo College used FAFSA data to create data profiles for students in the lowest income quintile. The goal was to connect these students to our Advocacy & Resource Center prior to the start of the semester and address a student's barrier before it could hinder a student's academic progress and academic success. Amarillo College's social workers in the Advocacy & Resource Center connected these students to community resources for transportation, housing, and/or childcare prior to the start of the fall term.

Data analytics and predictive modeling has led Amarillo College to embrace a data ecosystem that drives institutional change. Amarillo College and *No Excuses 2020* relies on data to propel our future projects and student success programs.

## *Creating Systems to Eradicate Poverty Barriers*

In 2012, Amarillo College began creating a cohesive system designed to address the Top 10 Barriers to Student Success identified by our students. Reaffirming our 2012 student survey, results
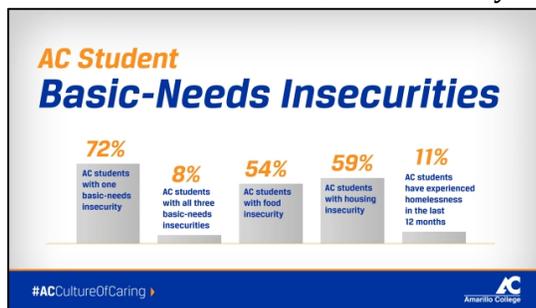


from Amarillo College's participation in the HOPE Lab student survey in fall 2017 reflected 72% of our students have at least one basic needs insecurity (food, housing, or homelessness). **Nearly 8% meet all three basic needs insecurities.** Per the survey results, 54% of Amarillo College students have food insecurities; 11% have experienced homelessness within the last 12 months; and, 59% of our students have housing insecurities.

Trellis Company's *Student Financial Wellbeing Survey* and supplemental components in our *CCSSE* and *SENSE* surveys have comparable results pertaining to Amarillo College student basic needs insecurity, transportation obstacles, and financial barriers.

Over the last seven years, Amarillo College has opened five specialized student support centers to address one of more of our Top 10 Barriers to Student Success and assist a student with overcoming basic need insecurities and life barriers. The student support services centers are Amarillo College's Advocacy & Resource Center, AC
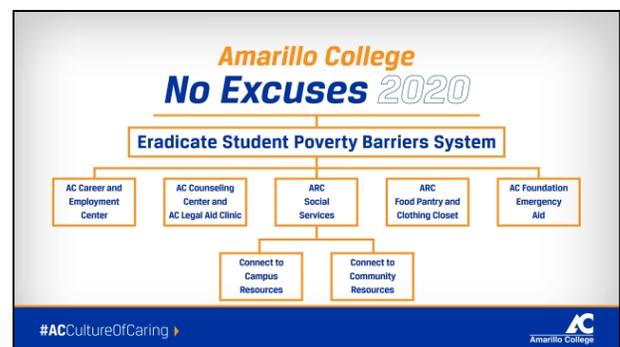


Counseling Center, AC Legal Aid Clinic, AC Career & Employment Center, and the Hagy Childcare Center. We also have developed an intentional relationship and partnership with the City of Amarillo to work together revising the city transit system to better support our students and their transportation needs.

## *Advocacy & Resource Center (ARC)*

In the summer of 2016, Amarillo College created the Advocacy & Resource Center (ARC) to centralize five separate intervention projects: Social Services program, ARC Scholarships Program, AC Food Pantry, AC Clothing Closet, and the *No Excuses Fund Emergency Aid* program. Because relationships are the key to successful interventions for students living in the war zone of poverty, **having one person serve as an advocate to remove poverty barriers is critical.** Students from generational poverty lack the language, experiences, and confidence to navigate the higher education processes.

The ARC is located in the heart of our main campus. Our ideology behind the ARC's location is greater than just serving an increase in students. Amarillo College wants to remove the stigma attached  to our interventions established to remove poverty barriers for our students. With the creation of the ARC, Amarillo College began to utilize our community non-profits and their resources for our students. Amarillo College works with over 60 local non-profits, who have federal/state/ private funds, to help our students meet basic life needs that could potentially stop them from reaching their educational goals. Amarillo College collaborates with local non-profits who provide funds for transportation, housing, utilities and childcare to our students. Without these external partnerships, the college would be unable to eradicate poverty barriers our students are experiencing while attending our institution.

Partners like local optometrists who provide free eye exams for ARC students. Partners like the Junior League of Amarillo who created a Baby Resource Room for the ARC and stocked it with diapers, formula, and baby clothes. Partners like Central Church of Christ and their members who provide food for our pantries when needed. By working together, Amarillo College and our community partners ensure no student has to drop out of school to meet basic life needs.



Due to the growing need to prevent food insecurity, the Amarillo College Foundation spends approximately $8,000 each semester to operate all five Amarillo College food pantries. The foundation accepts donations specifically for the ongoing and increased costs associated with operating the five food pantries. Community members, businesses, and Amarillo College employees (through a monthly payroll deduction system) donate funds to the foundation in support of the AC Food Pantries.

In an effort to minimize expenses, Amarillo College partnered with Amarillo's Snack-Pak 4 Kids program in 2016. Snack-Pak allows Amarillo College to purchase bulk orders of food from our local food

wholesale distributor under their guise. By collaborating with Snack-Pak, Amarillo College has significantly increased our purchasing power and thereby our ability to expand our pantries outreach.

In 2012, Amarillo College created a 100% donation-based clothing closet to provide work attire for students. The clothing closet receives gently used business attire from college employees and



community members. The clothing closet purpose is to assist our students with professional attire as they seek employment during their academic career and post-graduation. Clothing is provided at no-charge to the student.

Each fall, Amarillo College hosts a *Resources Fair* for our students. This on-campus fair brings together campus resources and Amarillo-area non-profits to provide information to our students. The *Resources Fair* began in 2012 with 39 agencies represented. In fall 2018, the *Resources Fair* had nearly 60 agencies. By bringing external partners on-site for our students, Amarillo College is connecting our students to readily available resources and preventing barriers that could hinder their educational attainment.

The ARC utilizes Amarillo College's Perkins state grant funds to provide childcare assistance and transportation assistance to our students. During the 2018/2019 academic year, Amarillo College granted nearly 170 students childcare and transportation awards, totaling $81,450. The final component of the ARC's alignment with our Perkins grant is the purchase of textbooks and calculators for the ARC Lending Library, which assisted nearly 378 students.



One of the key projects in the ARC is its collaboration with the Amarillo College Foundation to provide emergency aid to our students when we are unable to find community assistance. In 2012, the Amarillo College Foundation established the *No Excuses Fund* to support expenses such as housing and utility assistance, transportation, childcare, healthcare needs (eye exams and eyeglasses), and academic needs (tuition/fees, textbooks, and supplies such as calculators

for class). **The purpose of the *No Excuses Fund* is to provide financial resources that will help a student overcome an immediate financial burden.**

The *No Excuses Fund* had initial seed money of $20,000.  And because data shows that students who have received funds from the *No Excuses Fund* have higher retention and persistence rates, the Amarillo College Foundation has continued to grow their support of the *No Excuses Fund*. Since its inception, the *No Excuses Fund* has provided over $350,000 in emergency aid to Amarillo College students in need.

One of the cornerstone elements of our *No Excuses Fund* project is the limited red tape and bureaucracy surrounding the awarding of these funds to students.  We do not require financial proof of need nor multiple levels of Amarillo College approval. The ARC's Director of Social Services recommends the use of emergency aid to support a student's need to the Amarillo College Foundation. Then, one of the two co-Executive Directors of the foundation gives approval for the use of the *No Excuses Fund*. The only requirement for students to receive *No Excuses Fund* emergency aid is a student must be enrolled in a minimum of six credit hours and have a 2.0 GPA.  Once the Amarillo College Foundation approves the request, ARC staff submit a Request for Payment form to the Amarillo College Business Office. Payments are generally completed within three business days.  If the situation requires immediate payment, the Amarillo College Business Office staff will process a payment/check the day of the request. No funds from the *No Excuses Fund* can be paid to a student directly only to a third party entity.

During the 2018/2019 academic year (through March 31), the **ARC assisted 27% of our total non-dual credit enrollment with services**, showing that students who need services welcome the fact that Amarillo College helps them shame-free.  To-date, the ARC has assisted 2,063 students in 5,355 visits with services ranging from social services to food pantry to clothing closet.

Amarillo College is able to expand our Advocacy and Resource Center outreach through a partnership with our local university. As part of a coordinated effort between Amarillo College and West Texas A&M University, we became a field placement site for Bachelor and Master's level Social Work students. Bachelor level students are required to complete 450 clock hours of internship in order to graduate with their degrees. This equates to 28 to 32 work hours each week during the semester. Master's-level students are required to complete 500 clock hours of internship over a three-semester time-period, or approximately 12 to 16 work hours each week.

Amarillo College's coordinated effort with its local university provides us the ability to increase the number of at-risk students receiving intensive case management. Furthermore, this expansion of staff does not cost Amarillo College financially. We only provide office space for the interns as well as oversight by our ARC department leadership that these students have completed their internships as required. With thorough case management services and connection to existing community and campus resources, our students are overcoming barriers preventing their academic success. They are becoming college completers and college graduates.

### *AC Counseling Center*

In the fall of 2016, Amarillo College opened the AC Counseling Center.  The AC Counseling Center connects students and counselors in order to address a student's mental healthcare needs. The goal of

the AC Counseling Center is to help students grow and develop in ways that allow them to take advantage of educational opportunities at Amarillo College. The confidential counseling services are free and offered in an individual format and group sessions.

During an initial visit to the AC Counseling Center, a counselor works with the student to clarify concerns and make an initial assessment of the student's situation. The student and counselor then set counseling goals based around the concerns identified during the initial assessment.

A student may visit the AC Counseling Center 10 times per academic year. If additional counseling services are needed, AC Counseling Center staff will refer the student to our local mental health-counseling agency. This agency receives state funding to support counseling services at no charge or for a nominal fee.

## AC Legal Aid Clinic

In the fall of 2016, Amarillo College established the AC Legal Aid Clinic. The clinic has two purposes: 1) provide legal services to students and area citizens at no charge; and 2) integrate real- life experience and a service-learning component within our Legal Studies program. Amarillo College collaborates with local bar-certified lawyers, who provide pro bono services to the AC Legal Aid Clinic clients.  The clinic is managed by the Chair of the Legal Studies program, who receives a three-hour release each semester to oversee this project.

As part of their course study, Legal Studies students are required to serve as the primary staff at legal workshops designed to assist low-income Panhandle residents who do not typically have access to legal services or aid. Between five and eight workshops are scheduled each year over a variety of topics, including family/divorce, immigration, veterans' benefits, and housing.  Attendees to the workshops are referred by Legal Aid of Northwest Texas, a supporting partner of the AC Legal Aid Clinic.

## AC Career & Employment Services Center

During the 2012/2013 academic year, Amarillo College expanded #**AC**cultureofcaring to leverage external partnerships in order to maximize resources for our students. Amarillo College's

Career & Employment Services Center already provided students with a variety of programs including financial literacy seminars, resume and job-building skills workshops, career advising, and coordination of job fairs with area businesses and corporations. However, it lacked a focused approach to help our students find employment while in school and then a job matching their career paths post-graduation.
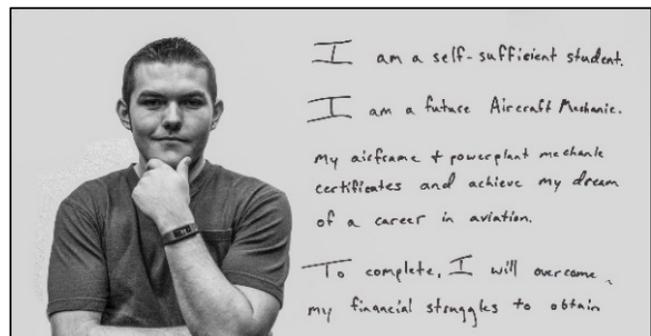
To fulfill this unmet need, Amarillo College partnered with our local workforce agency,

WorkForce Solutions Panhandle, to place a full-time workforce specialist on our campus to assist our students with job search and employment services, labor market information, career planning and training, and financial aid including subsidized or free childcare. The partnership is free to Amarillo College. We only provide office space for the workforce specialist.  To create a seamless integration of services, the Career and Employment Center refers students to our ARC if they need business attire; social services assistance to meet unmet needs while looking for a job; and, emergency aid support.

## *Hagy Center for Young Children*

Finding a solution to childcare can be a daunting task.  However, Amarillo College continues to think outside the box and find innovative solutions to eradicate poverty barriers for our students. In



August 2017, Amarillo College opened the MediPark Campus – Hagy Center for Young Children. This new campus is a community-wide approach to assisting our students in obtaining quality, low-cost childcare.

The Amarillo Area Foundation's Community Health Foundation is leasing the Hagy Center for Young Children to Amarillo College. This facility serves as both a functioning childcare center and lab space for our early childhood program. Serving as a model space for students to help prepare them for real-world experience, the Hagy Center allows for more course offerings and practicum lab space. The Hagy Center operates under a business model of two payment categories. Employees in our local medical community pay the local going rate for childcare services. Amarillo College students pay a reduced rate. By creating this structured business model, we are able to offer superior childcare services to our students most in need.

## *City of Amarillo Collaboration Transit System*

In a 2017 SENSE student survey, Amarillo College learned nearly 15% of our students do not have consistent transportation or any transportation means to/from our campuses. This survey brought

to light our students need for a structured transportation system currently not available by the City of Amarillo.  In collaboration with the City of Amarillo, Amarillo College worked to revise bus routes reducing a student's time on the transit system.  In fall 2019, Amarillo College will pilot a transportation project allowing our students to ride the bus system during the day for free.



I am the first one in my family to attend college.

To complete, I will overcome not having transportation.

I am a future forensic pathologist.
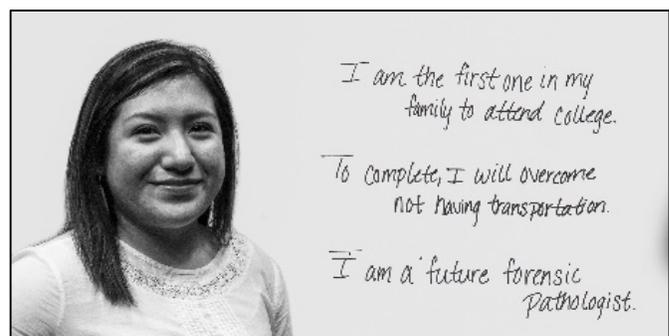
## *Accelerated Learning Systems: Academic & Non-Academic Support Structures*

Amarillo College's *No Excuses* philosophy means we believe all students hold potential for college and career success. We embrace our responsibility for the "whole" student by setting high expectations and then assisting students in reaching these expectations. We aspire to treat each student as an individual with unique challenges. We analyze and evaluate reasons for students' successes and struggles, and do not allow the struggles to become our excuse for lack of success.
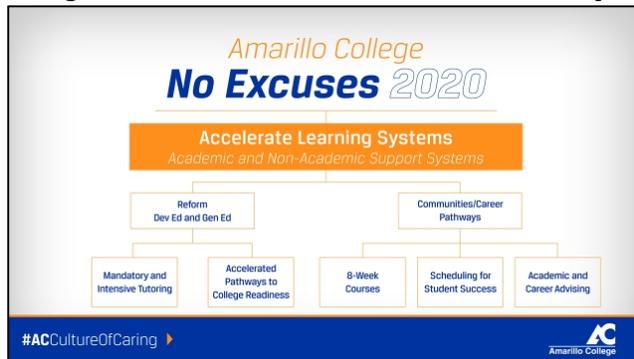
*No Excuses 2020* has a clear vision of 70% Completion by 2020. Three of the five goals focus on academic achievement and excellent.  Goal 1 focuses on objectives designed to achieve Increasing Completion by improving persistence, decreasing time-to-degree, and creating a comprehensive transfer/completion pathway. Goal 2 Aligns Degrees and Certificates with Labor Market Demand by creating structured AC career pathways. And, Goal 3 Increases Student Learning by infusing and scaling high impact teaching practices designed to align programs and courses based on competencies; improve student engagement; and, strengthen performance of student learning outcomes.

In the student profile (shown left), the typical Amarillo College student is predominantly female; attends part-time; receives financial aid; requires developmental education; and, is overwhelmingly first-generation. For the first time in the college's history, we are a minority-majority institution with 55% of our students declaring minority status.
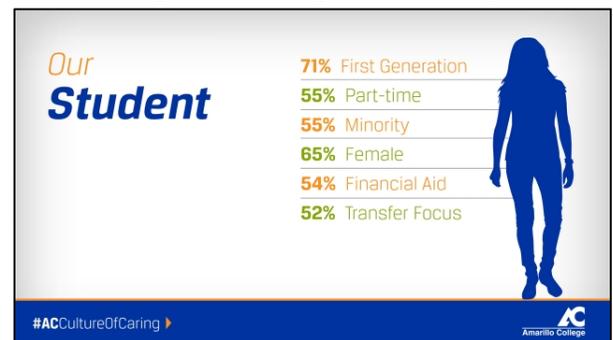
To help this student – who we call Maria – and the thousands like her, Amarillo College has developed structured accelerated learning systems, supporting the educational needs and goals of our students. Systems were designed to rethink our processes, procedures, and policies in both our academic structures and non-academic structures.

## *Developmental and General Education Reform*

Amarillo College's commitment to all students has led us toward a philosophy that seeks to remove life barriers, accelerate time to completion, and create a culture that loves our students to success. Flexibility is a core tenant of our Culture of Caring approaches. Amarillo College knows we must be willing to adapt to the changing needs of our students. We understand that a Culture of Caring environment requires leadership, faculty, and staff to have crucial conversations and make tough

decisions. For example beginning in Fall 2019, Amarillo College will offer Developmental Education courses only through a co-requisite model for those students whose state-approved test scores do not meet college readiness standards. All DevEd prerequisites will be removed from our course offerings. Intensive supports will be embedded, in and out of the classroom, to serve all students who need additional instruction. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has not mandated Amarillo College shift 100% to the co-requisite model. Amarillo College made the decision to put our students first. By starting students early in their college-level courses, Amarillo College is removing the stigma often associated with being labeled an under-prepared or not a college-ready student.

## *Mandatory Tutoring in Math and Science Courses*

Through the use of predictive analytics, Amarillo College learned students who utilized math tutoring in our Math Outreach Center more than seven hours during the semester were 85% more likely to succeed in College Algebra. Using this knowledge, our math faculty began requiring mandatory tutoring in all math courses. Students are required to take two-hours of tutoring per test if they make below a 70. Today, our College Algebra course, historically a gateway course, has increased its success rates by over 5% (2014 – 67.2% vs. 2018 – 72.3%, excludes dual credit).
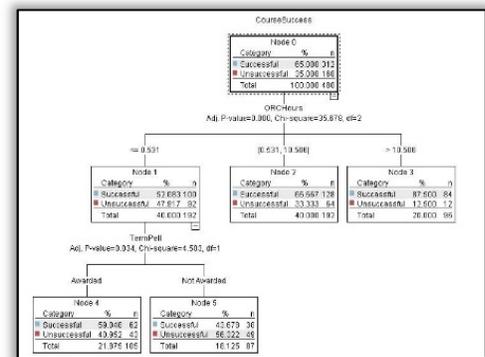


In 2015, Amarillo College expanded mandatory tutoring to include our biological science courses.  Students in courses such as Biology, another gateway course, are required to attend a minimum of six hours of tutoring in the Science Enrichment Center each semester. Biology has increased its success rates by nearly 15% (2015 – 54.5% vs. 2018 – 69%, excludes dual credit).

## *Communities/Career Pathways*

At Amarillo College, we know we must accelerate our students' time-to-degree and hold costs down for them. The longer students, like Maria, take to complete their degree, the more costly it becomes and the less likely they will graduate. With an intentional system to graduate every student in three years, Amarillo College innovatively accelerates a student's learning by instituting academic and non-academic support systems to ensure student success without lowering academic expectations.

## *Eight-Week Courses*

Maria, who is full Pell eligible and works two part-time jobs at 38 hours a week, must take out a loan for her education. After securing Pell grants and student loans, Maria is STILL unable to pay for her living expenses and college. For the budget (shown below) to work, Maria will have to go hungry on some days, forgo some books for classes, potentially drop a course and prolong her time-to-degree, and

ration her transportation. Maria must hope and pray her child does not get sick, her car does not break down, gas prices do not surge, and cross her fingers that her utilities and rent do not increase. **This is not a sustainable model for education attainment. The financial barriers of life do not prioritize the completion of a degree.**

The longer Maria and Amarillo College students like Maria take to complete their degrees, the more costly it becomes and the less likely they are to graduate. With an intentional system to graduate every student in three years, Amarillo College innovatively accelerates Maria's learning.

| Typical Amarillo College Student Budget | Income | Expense |
|---|---|---|
| Pell Award | $6,000.00 | |
| Financial Aid Loans - Reduced due to Pell Award | $8,914.00 | |
| Part-Time Job #1 -19 hours at $7.25/hour | $6,612.00 | |
| Part-Time Job #2 -19 hours at $7.25/hour | $6,612.00 | |
| Tuition & Fees - Fall | | $ (1,335.00) |
| Tuition & Fees - Spring | | $ (1,335.00) |
| Tuition & Fees - Summer | | $ (534.00) |
| Books - Fall | | $ (836.00) |
| Books - Spring | | $ (836.00) |
| Books - Summer | | $ (335.00) |
| 12-Months Rent - $781 per month | | $ (9,372.00) |
| 12-Months Utilities - $150 per month | | $ (1,800.00) |
| 12-Months Food - $550 per month | | $ (6,600.00) |
| 12-Months Childcare - $600 per month | | $ (7,200.00) |
| 12-Months Transportation - $250 per month for gasoline | | $ (3,000.00) |
| Totals | $28,138.00 | $(30,183.00) |
| Net Income/Shortfall | $(2,045.00) | |

Best-case scenario, Maria would graduate in five years. Most students at Amarillo College were taking over six years to complete – if they completed at all. Our data indicates that the overwhelming majority of our students dropped out of school in weeks 10 to 12 as their "life" barriers became too much to bear. They cannot see the finish line to completion and drop out to take additional work and meet their immediate needs.

By transitioning over 80% of our classes to an accelerated 8-week format, Maria is not only completing her degree on time, she is learning more in the process. Maria was taking, on average, six hours a semester, 12 hours a year. Amarillo College has transitioned 20% of our students from part-time to full-time.  In fall 2018, 55% of our students were part-time versus 75% in fall 2015.

Our social services combined with a transition to 8-week learning model changed everything about our student success. Now, Maria is able to take six hours each Fall Term I and II and six hours each Spring Term I and II. By doing so, Maria has become a full-time student, taking 12 hours over a

"semester." Eight-week classes are the same number of hours as the traditional courses. Students go to class every day of the week. Students in our 8-week classes increased their course success rates by over 12% compared to the traditional class. ***When our first-generation, poverty-ridden students can see the finish line, their hope carries them to success.***

Faculty and staff worked together to find solutions to meet our students where they are and help them achieve their educational goals. By creating 8-week courses across our institution, Amarillo College has revolutionized student success and completion. Part-time students are becoming full-time students, taking 12 hours over a "semester."

## *Scheduling for Student Success*

In 2015, Amarillo College established nine academic communities (career pathways) to fulfill Texas House Bill 5 requirements. Communities align with our programs of study and allow students to explore a variety of careers within any given community. Through the implementation of communities, Amarillo College designed programs of study to include stackable certificates (Level I and II) leading to an Associate's degree.

With the implementation of communities and 8-week courses, Amarillo College has taken an intentional approach to course sequencing and scheduling. Approximately 77% of Amarillo College's enrollment is centered around 26 courses. After a thorough data analysis, Amarillo College created a Master Schedule embracing courses offerings in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Class start and end times are standardized to ensure a student can register for multiple courses. Schedules allow a student to register for four 8-week classes each semester (two per term) across all nine communities.

In spring 2018, we launched our Master Schedule guaranteeing a student could enroll in two 8-week courses each term and complete his/her degree within a three-year period. In order to create a Master Schedule, Amarillo College worked across the institution. Faculty in Academic Affairs and staff in Student Affairs collaborated to develop a Master Schedule that supports Maria and the needs of our Amarillo College students.

In prior years, Amarillo College developed course offerings based on the schedule of previous years and faculty wishes. Created to embrace the scheduling needs of our students, the Master Schedule offers courses each semester based on the sequencing needed for our students to complete and graduate. Maria, and all our Amarillo College students, are now on a path to graduate in three-years – **no excuses**.

## *Academic & Career Advising*

During the 2017/2018 academic year, Amarillo College implemented Ellucian's Student Planning module. This module allows Amarillo College to pre-load degree plans and map course

offerings with the courses remaining on a student's degree plan. By utilizing a Master Schedule with Student Planning, Amarillo College is keeping students on-track and on-time for completion.
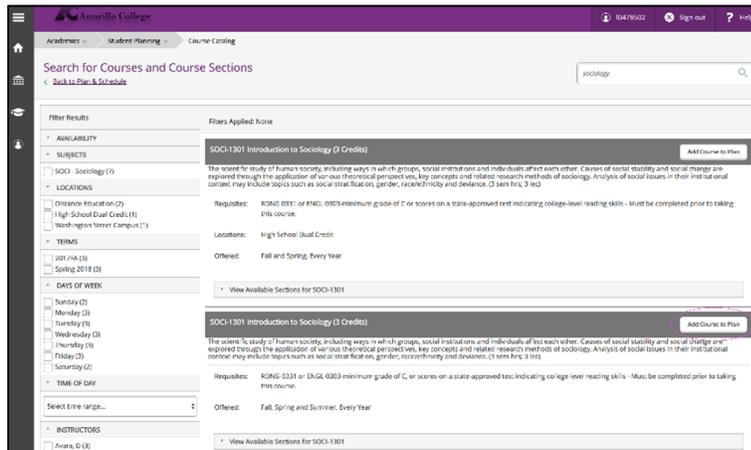


Student Planning shows a progress bar; giving students a visual identifier of how many courses they still need to complete to finish their degree. A bonus of this module is a student can view other degree plans within their community to see if they are closer towards completing another program.

All students are required to meet with their advisor their first semester. However, as a student progresses through their degree plan, they can utilize Student Planning to search for classes on their degree plan, create a schedule that works with their needs, and then register for their courses without seeing their advisor. Because not all students will need to see their advisor each semester, advisors are able to focus on academic and career advising for students who fall off their degree plan.

Student Planning allows a student to register for all the courses they will take during the academic year. Without this module, Amarillo College would be unable to forecast decisions supporting our Master Schedule. Student Planning provides insightful data on the need for courses, number of seats for students, and the number of instructors needed each 8-week term and semester.

## LESSONS LEARNED IMPLEMENTING #ACCULTUREOFCARING

During the last seven years, Amarillo College has experienced the highs and lows of creating a structured, integrated system that addresses poverty barriers in an honest and direct manner. From the beginning, Amarillo College had to recognize the real qualities of its typical student. We had to learn to love the students we have, not the students we wish we would have.  Despite the hard realities of our data and our lack of student success, Amarillo College faculty and staff stepped up to the challenge of redesigning our institution to support our students – **no excuses**.

Because our students are predominantly first-generation students, they needed a college that focuses on caring and personal relationships. For first-generation students, the lack of cultural capital leaves students with little familial and social support. Because these students do not have a cultural sense of what behaviors and choices lead to classroom and social success, they often experience lower academic achievement and lower degree attainment.

> *By thinking innovatively and working together across the institution, Amarillo College is revolutionizing higher education for today's student and the future Marias who enroll at Amarillo College seeking to achieve their educational dreams.*

Amarillo College recognized the needs of our first-generation students and worked across the institution to create systems embracing and supporting their needs. And, #**AC**cultureofcaring works! Our college retention and completion rates are improving dramatically because we listened to our students.

### Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab Case Study & Impact Research Study

During the 2017/2018 academic year, Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab and Clare Cady from the HOPE Center, Temple University, conducted a case study of Amarillo College's *No Excuses Poverty Initiative*. Funded by the Trellis Foundation, the case study determined students who access the Advocacy & Resource Center for social services in combination with emergency aid, designed to assist students meet an unmet need, have substantial higher retention and persistence rates.

Based on this case study, the Trellis Foundation has expanded the case study into a long-term impact research study. Dr. Goldrick-Rab and the Hope Center at Temple University launched a research impact study in fall 2018 to demonstrate that systemically addressing poverty barriers *increase academic success and educational attainment.* This study will analyze and develop a playbook for other institutions by focusing on two key components of AC's *No Excuses Poverty Initiative*: 1) Eradicating a student's poverty barriers leads to academic success; and, 2) Education is the path to economic revitalization.  Results of the impact research study will be available in summer 2020.

## *Lessons Learned*

The theory of change behind Amarillo College's #**AC**cultureofcaring is three-fold: (1) if Amarillo College removes a life/poverty barriers for our students (2) in an accelerated learning environment (3) through a deep culture caring, our students will be successful and complete their educational goal. As Amarillo College progressed through our intentional process to develop and implement #**AC**cultureofcaring , we learned valuable lessons that can guide colleges as they design institutional systems to address student poverty barriers.

## *Foundational Training*

Institutions ***need to have the full support of its leadership and governing boards*** when developing a poverty-training program for faculty and staff. The support of these key leaders is

instrumental in opening doors and allowing difficult conversations to happen among faculty and staff. Because individuals often have preconceived notions associated with the word poverty, an institution ***can't be afraid to say the word poverty out loud and say it constantly***. Furthermore, institutions must be willing to acknowledge negative stigmas related to poverty, break through

mindsets, and make real change. If an institution is willing to confront poverty without fear or reservation in order to create a system removing barriers for their students, it will be able to fundamentally change its culture and institution from the inside.

## *Leveraging Campus Resources*

Institutions have to be willing to ***rethink procedures, policies and programs in a manner that acknowledges the non-academic needs of their students***. They need to be willing to reimagine programs with only one driving question in mind: *how does this program support our students and led to their educational success*? Programs must interconnected in a seamless manner that transitions students across the institution without burdens. Programs should not report to any one division or department, but instead report to the institution as a whole. By removing silos across campuses, organizations remove barriers for students and fulfill their mission of helping students graduate.

## *Leveraging External Partnerships*

Institutions should connect to external partners in a meaningful way that focuses on removing student poverty barriers. The ***partnerships need to enhance, not replace, on-campus efforts***. Institutions should partner with area non-profit agencies to maximize readily available community resources that can assist students. Moreover, institutions should partner with workforce agencies and

business/industry leaders to ensure students are connected to career opportunities that are in demand and pay high wages.

Institutional leadership will be key to establishing these external partnerships and relationships. Without the full support of leadership, an institution will have limited community connection possibilities. Without the connection to external partners, an institution misses an opportunity to help students find financial resources available in their community. Resources that ease their financial burdens each month. Resources that open the doors for students to complete their educational dreams.

## *Institutionalization*

In the current political and fiscal environment of the United States, most state-supported community colleges are losing state funding at a rapid rate. And with state-funding and enrollment revenue declining annually, an institution may be discouraged from establishing a social services component to address student poverty barriers. Yet, now is the right time for institutions to create a systemic structure addressing their students' poverty barrier. ***Now is the time for action***.

Amarillo College has increased our fall-to-fall retention rates by 10%. We have increased success rates in completion of developmental education and gateway courses. We have increased graduation attainment rates and student transfer rates to a four-year university. Without #**AC**cultureofcaring, we would not have been able to increase our success rates. We would not have been able to have more students return each year and ultimately complete their certificates or degrees, and/or transfer to a university.

***Increased retention rates and success rates translate to more revenue*** and more state funding. The financial gain may be years away, but if an institution commits to systemically addressing student poverty barriers, it will see a return on that investment. And more importantly, it will be truly fulfilling its mission to educate citizens and help them achieve their educational goals.

## *Closing the Loop*

Institutions ***must be willing to constantly rethink and reimagine their procedures, policies, and programs***. Institutions must adapt to the changing needs of their students and close the loop when needed. Institutions need to embrace innovation and the ideas of their faculty and staff to address student poverty barriers. Institutions have to create a culture that thrives on student success foremost. ***All employees need to be invested in solving barriers to student success***. All employees should be invested and actively engaged in solving problems and finding solutions to student needs caused by poverty.

## AMARILLO COLLEGE'S DATA ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

Amarillo College's ***data-centric environment*** ensures all our employees, regardless of classification, understand who our students are and their needs. We believe in sharing student demographic and success data with all employees. We believe data should be reviewed consistently so employees have an accurate picture of how our institution is performing and fulfilling our mission. To determine the effectiveness of #**AC**cultureofcaring, we use key performance indicators established by our *No Excuses 2020* strategic plan. Key performance indicators gauge the success of our institution.

The key performance indicators are:

- Completion rates of developmental education courses;
- Completion rates of gateway courses;
- Retention rates for all students: fall-to-spring and fall-to fall;
- 3-year Graduation rates for all students; and,
- 3-year Transfer rates to a four-year university for all students.

Our student management system, *Ellucian*, tracks individual student demographic and success data. Amarillo College's Office of Institutional Research is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating student success data.

With a clear vision of a 70% completion rate by 2020, Amarillo College takes an active approach in data science. ***We engage employees (faculty and staff) in data discussions and data decision-making.*** *No Excuses 2020* data is provided to all employees during our annual general assembly. In addition, faculty review course and program-specific student success data each semester.

Amarillo College tracks student participation in student success intervention activities such as tutoring, social services, career advising. Amarillo College uses an ID scanning system to track these engagement activities. A student scans their AC Student ID Badge each time they participate in an intervention activity. Data collected is integrated within our *Ellucian* system. This integration ***allows Amarillo College to use predictive analytics to create profiles of at-risk students***.

Below is Amarillo College's key performance indicator data over the last five years. All cohorts are tracked based on their entering semester and first-time-in-college status. Data reflects the rate of change (percent growth increase) from the baseline data to the most-recent data set.

## Student Completion Data

| 3-Year Graduation Rate for entering FTIC cohort | Number | Percentage | % Growth Increase | First Gen - % | % Growth Increase | Pell Status % | % Growth Increase |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2011 Cohort | 1702 | 13% | | 12% | | 14% | |
| Fall 2012 Cohort | 1661 | 13% | | 13% | | 14% | |
| Fall 2013 Cohort | 1607 | 15% | **69%** | 14% | **75%** | 15% | **64%** |
| Fall 2014 Cohort | 1529 | 20% | | 19% | | 20% | |
| Fall 2015 Cohort | 1393 | 22% | | 21% | | 23% | |
| **3-Year Transfer Rate for entering FTIC cohort** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **% Growth Increase** | **First Gen - %** | **% Growth Increase** | **Pell Status %** | **% Growth Increase** |
| Fall 2011 Cohort | 1702 | 16% | | 14% | | 14% | |
| Fall 2012 Cohort | 1661 | 17% | | 15% | | 14% | |
| Fall 2013 Cohort | 1607 | 18% | **25%** | 15% | **21%** | 15% | **29%** |
| Fall 2014 Cohort | 1529 | 20% | | 17% | | 19% | |
| Fall 2015 Cohort | 1393 | 20% | | 17% | | 18% | |

## Student Retention Data

| Completion: Fall-to-Spring Retention for entering FTIC cohort | Number | Percentage | % Growth Increase | First Gen % | % Growth Increase | Pell Status % | % Growth Increase |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2013 Cohort | 1607 | 71% | | 71% | | 75% | |
| Fall 2014 Cohort | 1529 | 74% | | 73% | | 76% | |
| Fall 2015 Cohort | 1393 | 73% | **10%** | 71% | **10%** | 75% | **9%** |
| Fall 2016 Cohort | 1401 | 75% | | 75% | | 77% | |
| Fall 2017 Cohort | 1213 | 78% | | 78% | | 82% | |
| **Completion: Fall-to-Fall Retention for entering FTIC cohort** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **% Growth Increase** | **First Gen - %** | **% Growth Increase** | **Pell Status %** | **% Growth Increase** |
| Fall 2013 Cohort | 1607 | 52% | | 50% | | 52% | |
| Fall 2014 Cohort | 1529 | 55% | | 53% | | 53% | |
| Fall 2015 Cohort | 1393 | 55% | **12%** | 54% | **14%** | 53% | **10%** |
| Fall 2016 Cohort | 1401 | 55% | | 55% | | 54% | |
| Fall 2017 Cohort | 1213 | 58% | | 57% | | 57% | |

Below is course completion data for all students, first-generation students, and Pell recipient students. Data reflects the rate of change (percent growth increase) from the baseline data to the most-recent data set. Course completion data is provided for our 16-week courses and new accelerated

course model, 8-week classes. Course data is provided for all courses, developmental education courses, and gateway courses (general education core classes).

## *Student Course Completion Data*

| Course Success Rate - 16 Week Courses | Number | Percentage | % Growth Increase | First Gen % | % Growth Increase | Pell Status % | % Growth Increase |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Year 2013/2014 | 44293 | 72% | | 72% | | 71% | |
| Academic Year 2014/2015 | 40845 | 73% | | 71% | | 71% | |
| Academic Year 2015/2016 | 35428 | 75% | **21%** | 74% | **21%** | 74% | **21%** |
| Academic Year 2016/2017 | 20732 | 77% | | 77% | | 77% | |
| Academic Year 2017/2018 | 6336 | 87% | | 87% | | 86% | |
| **Course Success Rate - 8 Week Courses** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **% Growth Increase** | **First Gen - %** | **% Growth Increase** | **Pell Status %** | **% Growth Increase** |
| Academic Year 2015/2016 | 7115 | 77% | | 77% | | 76% | |
| Academic Year 2016/2017 | 24080 | 79% | **3%** | 79% | **1%** | 78% | **1%** |
| Academic Year 2017/2018 | 23352 | 79% | | 78% | | 77% | |
| **Gateway Course Success Rate - 16 Week Courses** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **% Growth Increase** | **First Gen - %** | **% Growth Increase** | **Pell Status %** | **% Growth Increase** |
| Academic Year 2013/2014 | 9601 | 65% | | 64% | | 63% | |
| Academic Year 2014/2015 | 9569 | 66% | | 65% | | 64% | |
| Academic Year 2015/2016 | 8373 | 67% | **11%** | 67% | **9%** | 67% | **17%** |
| Academic Year 2016/2017 | 3408 | 61% | | 60% | | 61% | |
| Academic Year 2017/2018 | 336 | 72% | | 70% | | 74% | |
| **Gateway Course Success Rate - 8 Week Courses** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **% Growth Increase** | **First Gen - %** | **% Growth Increase** | **Pell Status %** | **% Growth Increase** |
| Academic Year 2015/2016 | 1568 | 72% | | 72% | | 74% | |
| Academic Year 2016/2017 | 6857 | 76% | **4%** | 75% | **3%** | 75% | **0%** |
| Academic Year 2017/2018 | 6505 | 75% | | 74% | | 74% | |

*Amarillo College No Excuses Culture of Caring Poverty Summit ~ May 2019*

## FUNDING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Amarillo College's #**AC**cultureofcaring makes financial sense for any institution committed to increasing student success and attainment rates. For every institutional dollar Amarillo College spends supporting #**AC**cultureofcaring, *we receive nearly $16 back in tuition, fees, and state support revenue*.

In fiscal year 2019, Amarillo College will spend approximately $300,000 to support the personnel costs (salary and fringe benefits) for our Advocacy & Resource Center, the AC Counseling Center, and the AC Legal Clinic. While this can be a large sum of money during tight budgetary times, Amarillo College supports the costs of #**AC**cultureofcaring through the increase in revenue from student retention and state performance budget funding.

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT 16:1**

By *collaborating with external agencies, Amarillo College saves approximately $275,000* in personnel costs. Savings are a result in part from our partnership with our local workforce agency, which places a workforce specialist on our campus at no charge to our institution to assist students with career advising and job placement services. Savings occur due to our partnerships with two state universities. Amarillo College serves as field placement sites for student interns from university social work and psychology programs. These students assist our staff in the Advocacy & Resource Center with student case management at no cost to the institution.

Amarillo College systemically removes poverty barriers our students face each day. And because we have removed the barriers that often cause our students to drop out of school before they complete their degrees/certificates, we has seen significant improvements in student success rates over the last five years: *Fall-to-Fall Retention* – 10% growth rate increase; *Graduation* – 69% growth rate increase; and, *Transfer to 4-Year University* – 25% growth rate increase.

Amarillo College's retention calculator values each student retained at $4,650. By increasing our retention by an estimated growth rate of 10%, we retain approximately 1,000 more students annually. In fiscal year 2019, we *increased our operating revenue from tuition/fees by an additional $4.65 million.*

Amarillo College started #**AC**cultureofcaring with federal, state and local grants. These grants provided us with initial program start-up costs and personnel funds in the early years. But today, we have institutionalized all components of the initiative. Amarillo College was able to absorb the increased personnel costs solely because retention rates and student completion rates have grown each year and provided additional revenue for the college.

**Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, President**
Amarillo College
PO Box 447
Amarillo, TX 78178
806/371-5123
rdloweryhart@actx.edu


**Dr. Tamara Clunis, Vice President of Academic Affairs**
806/371-5226
ttclunis@actx.edu


**Cara Crowley, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives**
806/345-5518
cjcrowley@actx.edu


**Jordan Herrera, Director of Social Services: Advocacy & Resource Center**
806/371-5439
jaherrera@actx.edu


**Ernesto Olmos, Director of Advising**
806/371-5447
efolmos@actx.edu


**Frank Sobey, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs**
806/371-5472
fesobey@actx.edu


**Collin Witherspoon, Executive Director of Decision Analytics & IR**
806/371-5142
ccwitherspoon@actx.edu

# No Excuses 2020 Strategic Plan

## MISSION
*Enriching the lives of our students and community by helping learners identify and achieve their educational goals.*

## VISION
We will ensure a **70%** Completion Rate by 2020

## VALUES
**Create a No Excuses philosophy through actions, which display the following values:**

**1.** Caring through *WOW*
- Every student and colleague will say "WOW, you were so helpful, supportive, and open" after an interaction with us.
- Every Student will be "WOW'd" by engaged, learning-centered classroom experiences.

**2.** Caring through *FUN*
- We will find ways to have fun with each other and celebrate each other.
- We will find ways to make our work fun and effective.
- We will find ways to enrich learning experiences with joy and application.

**3.** Caring through *INNOVATION*
- We will see ourselves as a "roadblock remover" for students and for each other.
- We will always look for ways to help others and improve our processes.
- We will develop and implement original and creative teaching methods.

**4.** Caring through *FAMILY*
- We will find ways to show we care about our students and each other.
- We will readily and effectively share information with each other.
- We will approach our interactions with each other with trust and openness.
- We will put the needs of others before our own.
- We will enhance learning by creating an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**5.** Caring through *YES*
- We will think "yes" first and find solutions rather than stating "no".
- We will be passionate about our jobs and helping each other.
- We will promote critical thinking and problem solving skills in curriculum.

| INSTITUTIONAL GOALS | ACTION FOR IMPACT |
|---|---|
| **1) Increase Completion** by improving persistence, decreasing time-to-completion, and creating a comprehensive transfer/completion pathway. | ***Comprehensive Transfer/Completion Pathways***<br><br>A. Accountability for student success<br>• Exercise a data-driven approach to improve key student success metrics<br>• Systemize a team-based approach to problem-solving and enhancing key student success metrics<br>• Implement a drop-rate reduction and expanded early alert initiative |
| | B. Career/transfer focus for all advising<br>• Leverage technology to simplify career and transfer pathways to completion<br>• Integrate financial aid, academic advising, and career pathways<br>• Optimize academic advising impact by adopting "success coach" model. |
| | C. Program for student success with more responsive and purposeful scheduling<br>• Accelerate program time to degree<br>• Implement block scheduling aligned with pathways<br>• Increase evening, summer, and alternative course offerings and schedules |

| INSTITUTIONAL GOALS | ACTION FOR IMPACT |
|---|---|
| | • Stackable certificates aligned with high school offerings and credit for prior learning<br>• Enhance and expand tutoring across all programs |
| | D. Revise & Contextualize Developmental Education<br>• Develop contextualized learning communities in blocks with supplemental instruction and co-curricular resources<br>• Centralize developmental education advising, processes, and scheduling<br>• Shorten sequencing for completion of requirements for college readiness through bridge programs and creative pedagogical approaches |
| 2) **Align Degrees and Certificates with Labor Market Demand** by creating structured Amarillo College career pathways. | *Align All HB5 Endorsements with AC Career Pathways*<br><br>E. Intentionally Focus Programs for quality, productivity, and viability<br>• Align all degrees with Pathways<br>• Intentional and purposeful program review<br>• Align programs with labor market demand and pathways<br>• Define employment data for students |
| | F. Cluster degree programs by endorsement<br>• Catalog organization of degrees by endorsement<br>• Website organization of degrees by endorsement<br>• Market and recruit terminal degrees by market demand |
| | G. Focus transfer students on a "transfer pathway"<br>• Align program offerings with transfer institution degree<br>• Intentionally drive a holistic transfer process |
| 3) **Increase Student Learning** by infusing and scaling high impact teaching practices designed to align programs and courses based on competencies; improve student engagement; and, strengthen performance of student learning outcomes. | *Infuse and Scale High Impact Practices*<br><br>H. Enhance the use of learner-centered pedagogy and high impact practices across the curriculum<br>• Offer a series of faculty development workshops on learning centered pedagogy and high impact practices<br>• Revise faculty performance review to include use of learner-centered pedagogies and high impact practices<br>• Develop international experiences linked to program outcomes |
| | I. Leverage program outcomes for improved learning<br>• Require all programs to develop goals and outcomes with embedded general education competencies and references high impact practices<br>• Require programs to complete curriculum maps to assess outcomes<br>• Implement analytics in key courses |
| 4) **Increase Equity Degree and Certificate Attainment** by building systems supporting increase in minority enrollment and completion. | *Build Systems for Equity Gains*<br><br>J. Redesign courses for equity gains<br>• Develop faculty to address achievement gaps<br>• implement at-risk student profile and intervention plan system |
| | K. Systemically remove barriers of poverty<br>• Scale systemic approach to poverty through policies and practices<br>• Expand ability to connect students to community services |
| | L. Scale NO Excuses "culture of caring" programs and training<br>• Student Success certification for all employees<br>• Embed student-centered service into all employee trainings and job descriptions |

| INSTITUTIONAL GOALS | ACTION FOR IMPACT |
|---|---|
| | M. Integrate whole families into enrollment and completion <ul><li>Intentionally include and communicate with families about progress to completion</li><li>Broaden definition and intentionally collect information about first generation status</li></ul> |
| | N. Ensure equitable access to college and its resources <ul><li>Make college more financially feasible for students</li><li>Link block scheduling with child specific Continuing Education offerings</li><li>Systemically strengthen partnerships with community based programs for underserved populations</li><li>Provide specialized advising/registration events for key area high schools</li><li>Strategically increase financial aid applications and award</li><li>Increase employee and community participation in the AC Coach/Champion program</li><li>Develop greater employee diversity</li></ul> |
| **5) Build Systems for Financial Effectiveness** by creating innovative procedures supporting financial responsibility, fund-raising, and entrepreneurial approaches. | ***Build Systems for Financial Viability and Fund Raising*** <br><br> O. Build smaller and more responsive budgets by leveraging technology and strategic alignments <ul><li>Align budgets, tuition and fees, assessment/outcomes, and institutional goal through program review</li><li>Establish 5-year budget models</li><li>Streamline organizational structure to optimize employee base</li><li>Simplify and streamline the student enrollment and recruitment policies and processes</li></ul> |
| | P. Construct an organizational structure for fund raising <ul><li>Increase donations through on-line targets by program</li><li>Define policies and processes for fund raising</li></ul> |
| | Q. Ensure grants support and extend institutional goals <ul><li>Conduct cost-benefit analysis for every grant</li><li>Maximize grants for cost sharing within the institution</li></ul> |
| | R. Define and build equitability for employees <ul><li>Industry specific stipends for high demand fields</li><li>Competitive employee compensation</li><li>Develop systems for robust employee development</li></ul> |

# NO excuses 2020

**NO EXCUSES 2020** is focused on completion, labor market demands, learning, equity, and financial effectiveness.

It requires a comprehensive system redesign – from students walking in the front door to students walking across the graduation stage.

**Our goal is 70 percent completion rate by the year 2020.**

**Data Sources**: AC Office of Institutional Research, THECB Almanac, AC CCSSEE

# completion

## FIVE YEAR COMPLETION GOAL

### 70%

**3 YEAR COMPLETION RATE**
2014 - 2016

**45%** We are well on track with close to two-thirds completion to goal in only three years.

## INCREASE
IN CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES
2008-09 to 2016-17

**176%** ALL STUDENTS

**229%** HISPANIC STUDENTS

**134%** AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

## GROWTH IN ASSOCIATE DEGREE AWARDS
2014 - 2016

**60% | 2030** The state of Texas has implemented a goal that 60 percent of "Generation Texas" will have a postsecondary credential or degree by the year 2030.

**TX**

**AC**

**70% | 2020** AC has set a goal of 70 percent completion by 2020 — a larger percentage in less time than the state. We are currently out-performing the state by 2 percent.

9.1%

7%

**2%** ABOVE STATE
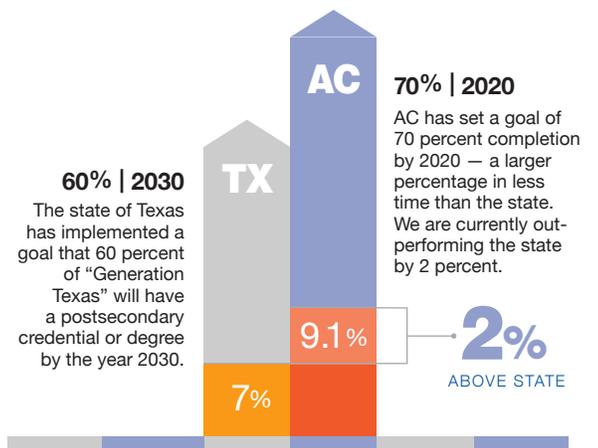
# labor market demands

## TOP 5 AREAS OF OCCUPATIONAL GROWTH
Texas Panhandle Per Texas Workforce | 2014 – 2024

## TOP PROGRAMS ALIGNED WITH LABOR MARKET DEMANDS

| % | Area | # | Program |
|---|------|---|---------|
| 124% | Healthcare | 1 | Associate Degree Nursing | Emergency Medical Services |
| 115% | Transportation | 2 | Truck Driving |
| 114% | Education | 3 | Education |
| 112% | Computer Science/Information Technology | 4 | Business Management |
| 110% | Environmental Science | 5 | Horticulture |

## student success

### demographics

71% First-Generation

60% Part-Time

54% Minority

65% Female

67% Designated Developmental Education

21% Enrolled in Developmental Education

51% Transfer-Focus

60% Financial Aid
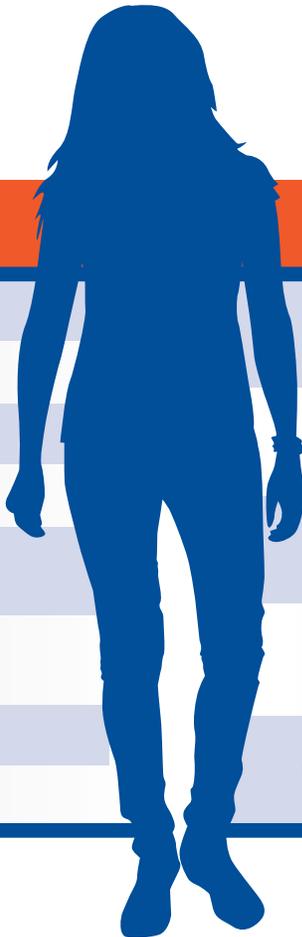
### success rate

INCREASE IN OVERALL COURSE SUCCESS **105%** ⬆

INCREASE IN HISPANIC COURSE SUCCESS **107%** ⬆

INCREASE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN COURSE SUCCESS **110%** ⬆

INCREASE IN GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE SUCCESS **107%** ⬆

INCREASE IN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION COURSE SUCCESS **112%** ⬆

2012-13 TO 2016-17

## financial effectiveness

### AFFORDABILITY

⬇ **71%** BELOW NATIONAL AVERAGE

Annual Tuition Cost 2017
**Amarillo College — $4,799**
**National Median — $16,300**

AC Foundation Scholarships Awarded
2016 – 2017
$1,250,000

### AMARILLO COLLEGE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

**$660.1** MILLION **TO LOCAL ECONOMY** FY 2013

**$71.6** MILLION OPERATIONS SPENDING IMPACT

**$274.8** MILLION STUDENT SPENDING IMPACT

**$588.2** MILLION ALUMNI SPENDING IMPACT

VERSION 1.0

FEBRUARY 1, 2012

**Amarillo College**

# STUDENT SUCCESS PROFILE

BARRIERS TO STUDENT SUCCESS

# STUDENT SUCCESS PROFILE

## PURPOSE

What are your main reasons for reenrolling at Amarillo College?

1
2
3
4
5

## WHAT IS YOUR LONG-TERM PROFESSIONAL GOAL? *(1-2 sentences only)*

## YOUR SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

When reflecting on your experiences here at Amarillo College, what are the top 5 reasons for your classroom success?

1
2
3
4
5

## YOUR STRUGGLE IN THE CLASSROOM

When reflecting on your experiences here at Amarillo College, what are the top 5 reasons for your classroom struggle/failures?

1
2
3
4
5

## AMARILLO COLLEGE EFFECTIVENESS

What are your top 5 most positive experiences with Amarillo College?

1

**What are your top 5 most positive experiences with Amarillo College?**

2

3

4

5

## AMARILLO COLLEGE INEFFECTIVENESS

**What are your top 5 most negative experiences with Amarillo College?**

1

2

3

4

5

## AMARILLO COLLEGE IMAGE

**When you think "Amarillo College," what words would you use to describe this college?**

1

2

3

4

5

## HOW MAY WE HELP YOU SUCCEED?

**If you had all the power to make anything better, what would you change to improve our college?**

**Date:_____**

## Social Services Referral Form

**The Referral Is:**

☐ Emergent (intervention within 1 calendar day)
☐ Urgent (intervention within 3 calendar

**Additional Programs:**

☐ Adult Students Program
☐ Other (HUD, SNAP, WIC, WIA, etc)

**Student Information:**

_____
First Name                     Last Name                      AC Student ID#

_____
Date of Birth                  Ethnicity                      Race

_____
Primary Contact Number         Secondary Contact Number       Email Address

_____
Major                          GPA                            Proposed Graduation Date

**Referring Professional's Information:**

_____
Name                           Position                       Contact Number

**Reason for Referral:**

☐ Career      ☐ Child Care  ☐ Clothing    ☐ Counseling  ☐ Financial Aid

☐ Budget Information    ☐ Food    ☐ Housing    ☐ Legal

☐ Medical          ☐ Mental Health      ☐ School Needs (Books, Tuition, etc.)

☐ Transportation    ☐ Utility    ☐ Other:_____

**Please provide detailed information to assess the situation:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Social Services Appointment:**

_____
Date                                                                          Time

**Referred student to receive services from:**

**Amarillo College Campus Resources:**

☐ Adult Students Program ☐ AC Foundation ☐ AC Food Pantry

☐ No Excuses Specialty Coach  ☐ No Excuses Funds  ☐ Emergency Gas Card

☐ Career & Employment  ☐ Financial Aid  ☐ Student Money Management

☐ Other:_____

**Community Resources:**

_____
Name of Agency                    Contact Person                    Phone Number

_____
Name of Agency                    Contact Person                    Phone Number

_____
Name of Agency                    Contact Person                    Phone Number

_____
Name of Agency                    Contact Person                    Phone Number

**Follow up dates/phone calls:**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

**Additional information:**

**Repeat Client:  ☐ Yes   ☐ No**

☐ **Student Accepted Services**          ☐ **Student Declined Services**

# No Excuses Culture of Caring Poverty Summit Pre-Conference Planning Worksheet

| CULTURE OF CARING ACTION ITEM | REFLECTION |
|---|---|
| | *What steps will be taken to understand your institution's current culture? Who needs to be involved in a culture change? Who should lead the culture change? What challenges might we encounter? How will we overcome these challenges?* |
| **Explain your institutional mission, vision, strategic plan goals:** | |
| **Explain how your institutional values and mission align with your strategic plan:** | |
| **Explain your institution's Theory of Change. How does it align with your institution's strategic plan:** | |
| **Explain your institution's current professional development approach for Faculty? Staff? Administrators?** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Explain your institution's current onboarding approach for new employees:** | |
| **Explain how your institution would assess its current culture:** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| *What steps will be taken to address poverty barriers? How will we make it happen? Who needs to be involved? Is there a cost involved? When will we accomplish this goal? What evidence will demonstrate our success? How will this support the mission, vision, and strategic plan? What challenges might we encounter? How will we overcome these challenges?* | |
| **Explain why your institution will focus on addressing student poverty barriers:** | |
| **Identify existing on-campus resources that can support a poverty informed Culture of Caring:** | |
| **Identify existing community partners & resources that can support a campus social services program:** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Identify external funding opportunities & community partnership that could assist your institution with developing and supporting a systemic approach to addressing student poverty barriers:** | |
| **Identify key student demographic data (Minority, Enrollment, Gender, First-Generation, Avg. Age, and Dev Ed Status):** | |
| **Identify key student demographic data reflecting student poverty barriers (IE: % of Students on Pell, % of Students On Need Based Assistance, Survey Determining Student Basic Needs etc):** | |
| **Identify course completion data for gateway and dev ed courses (IE: A to C pass rates broken down by demographics in high enrollment courses):** | |