

STATE OF THE COLLEGE

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER | 2019



ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT
Palo Alto College



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

GREETINGS!

Along with my wife, Esther, and our children, Victoria and Robert, I am honored and humbled to have returned to Palo Alto College in September 2018 to serve as the College's seventh president and continue to fulfill our mission, vision, and values. It is truly my privilege to work with the Palo Alto College family to serve our students, faculty, staff, partners, and, most importantly, you – our community.

Service is at the core of my family's beliefs. My father and both grandfathers served in the military, and as a high school student, I believed my journey also included military service. But my family encouraged me to pursue an alternate path toward a college degree and promised to join alongside me if I did. When I enrolled at Texas Southmost College, a community college in Brownsville, Texas, my classmates included my two older sisters, my father, and my grandfather, who was in his 70s at the time. We became a multigenerational community college family, just like so many families at Palo Alto College.

Since 1999, I have been fortunate to work in a variety of roles at Palo Alto College before relocating to Dallas in 2015 to serve three years as president of Mountain View College in the Dallas County Community College District. Since my return to San Antonio, I've continued to work with my colleagues throughout the Alamo Colleges District to learn about the incredible work Palo Alto College has accomplished over the last few years – receiving the Texas Award for Performance Excellence, being a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award finalist, and now as one of 10 finalists for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

Palo Alto College is truly changing lives in our South Side community. For nearly 35 years, we have served over 150,000 students from our community, and we want to do so much more. As we embark on this journey together, I welcome you to visit us to learn how we can be of service to you and your family. Palo Alto College has always been a special place for me and my family, and we look forward to giving back to a community that has given us so much.

In service and PAC proud,

Robert Garza, Ph.D.
President of Palo Alto College

Learn more about Dr. Garza and other college initiatives at alamo.edu/pac/president.





THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN PRIZE

FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXCELLENCE

TOP 10

2019

TOP 1% OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE NATION

From a pool of nearly 1,000 public two-year colleges nationwide, Palo Alto College was named to a list of the top 10 community colleges in the U.S. eligible for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance in America's community colleges. Awarded every two years, the Aspen Prize recognizes top community colleges with outstanding achievements in four areas: learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings; and high levels of access and success for minority and limited income students.

In October 2018, a team of national experts from the Aspen Institute collected extensive data and conducted a multiday site visit at Palo Alto College, interviewing over 60 faculty, staff, and students about our journey to performance excellence. The 2019 Aspen Prize winners will be announced in April 2019 in Washington, D.C.

Learn more about our journey to the Aspen Prize at alamo.edu/pac/aspen.



TEDxPaloAltoCollege

On Sept. 15, Palo Alto College hosted the inaugural TEDxPaloAltoCollege, a locally organized event licensed by the TED organization, to offer a unique opportunity to create dialogue and provide a forum for sharing ideas, passions, and experiences. The full-day event featured innovative ideas centered on the theme "Breakthrough," communicated through a variety of live talks and performances from presenters including the co-CEO of Archie Comics, a forensic psychologist, a breakdancer, and a pioneering virtual-reality game designer.

As the first event of its kind in south San Antonio, nearly 400 people gathered on the rainy day to benefit from the ideas shared at this intellectually-driven event, and attendees were encouraged to meet new people and discuss the thought-provoking ideas shared on stage.

To see videos of the 2018 event and hearing about upcoming events, visit TEDxPaloAltoCollege.org.



OVER \$1 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS DEDICATED TO PALO ALTO COLLEGE COMMUNITY

In 2010, Palo Alto College began hosting an annual scholarship fundraiser to provide financial support for Palo Alto College students to stay enrolled and complete their degrees and certificates; the event raised more than \$150,000 in its first year. This year, the annual scholarship fundraiser – ¡Una Nueva Celebración! – raised a record \$1 million in committed scholarship dollars for Palo Alto College students and employees.

Generous partners, led by title sponsor The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and presenting sponsor Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Texas, Inc, helped raise \$180,000 for the Palo Alto College general scholarship fund. During the scholarship event, the UTRGV committed an additional \$815,000 in additional funds to also guarantee five full-ride scholarships to UTRGV for currently enrolled Palo Alto College students to cover tuition, room and board, books, supplies, and more; five Presidential Graduate Research Assistantships in any of the UTRGV's research-based master's degree or doctoral programs; and scholarships for employees and employee's families to pursue master's or doctoral programs.

The overwhelming support from our partners is a testament to the greatness they see in the work we do. By investing scholarship dollars for Palo Alto College students and for faculty and staff to continue their education, we will be able to continue to change the lives of students in south San Antonio.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM FOR HEALTHCARE IN SOUTH BEXAR COUNTY

Palo Alto College launched a new degree program – Healthcare Administration – designed to support the high demand for occupations in Bexar County's growing healthcare industry. Students completing the Healthcare Administration program can earn a 60-credit-hour associate degree or a 36-credit-hour certificate while gaining extensive knowledge in areas such as current health care trends; and management of financial and personnel operations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare is one of the fastest growing career fields for individuals with associate degrees. Employment is expected to increase 28.8 percent by 2024 in the Bexar County region, with an average entry-level hourly wage of \$30.72 in healthcare services in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, mental health centers, nursing homes, home health providers, clinics, and more.

Learn more about this new program at alamo.edu/pac/healthcare-admin.





ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS' NEEDS

In December 2016, the S.H.A.R.E. Center (Student Health Advocacy Resource and Engagement Center) opened to provide Palo Alto College students with a food pantry, clothes closet, emergency aid, financial wellness, career readiness, social services, health and wellness services, and personal counseling. Since its opening, the S.H.A.R.E. Center has provided over 5,500 services to over 2,500 students, and initial data has shown us that the students who access services from the S.H.A.R.E. Center are continuing to show positive success in their courses.

Palo Alto College invited partners and fellow educational organizations to the inaugural Advocacy Symposium in September 2018 to promote advocacy at Palo Alto College and the surrounding community by discussing the value of services that benefit students beyond the classroom. Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, professor of higher education policy and sociology at Temple University and founder of the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice – the nation's only action research lab seeking ways to make college more affordable – served as keynote speaker, sharing her innovative research on food and housing insecurity in higher education, and applauded Palo Alto College for the efforts made to support students and our community.

Learn more about the S.H.A.R.E. Center and other community resources at alamo.edu/pac/share.



NEW STEM CENTER OPENS

Our 2,200-square-foot STEM Center at Palo Alto College opened in June 2018 to serve as a dedicated resource space for students enrolled in STEM programs and provide a central location for STEM programs, services, and academic support, including peer mentoring, academic advising, career preparation, scholarship information, transfer information, participate in undergraduate research, and more.

In addition to study space, the STEM Center includes interactive screens and laptops for check-out; use of STEM materials like textbooks, models, and samples; and flex space for programming opportunities with workshops and guest speakers. STEM summer camps, like She Code Connect™, a free, all-girls summer camp, will also be housed in the STEM Center – summer camp schedules will be posted online at alamo.edu/pac.

Funded in part from a \$3.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Palo Alto College has been able to develop and implement initiatives to increase the number of Hispanic and/or limited-income students pursuing and completing degrees in STEM fields. Of more than 200 applications submitted for the grant nationwide, Palo Alto College was one of only 14 awardees in Texas.

Learn more about the STEM Center at alamo.edu/pac/STEM-Center.



TRICENTENNIAL PARTNER

As San Antonio celebrated its 300th birthday in 2018, Palo Alto College served as an official community partner during San Antonio's year-long Tricentennial celebration with two special opportunities: PACfest, an official Fiesta® San Antonio event since 2003, and the Oral History Archive, a digital collection of stories gathered by students in HIST 1302 courses. Additionally, the San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department dedicated over 30 trees to Palo Alto College as part of its "Tree-centennial" program in honor of San Antonio's 300th anniversary.

Learn more about our Oral History Archive at www.pac-oha.org.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS NAMED MODELS FOR EXCELLENCE

For the second year in a row, Palo Alto College's college-readiness program, Catch the Next, Inc. Ascender (CTN), was named a finalist for the annual Examples of Excelencia award from Excelencia in Education, a national organization focused on using evidence-based practices to improve educational achievement for Latino students in higher education. The national Examples of Excelencia awards recognize programs that use evidence-based practices to improve educational success for Latino students in higher education. Through a unique learning approach, CTN creates a network for students that combines a literacy-based and culturally-relevant learning across different courses, personalized advising and personal counseling, leadership development, and community outreach.

Additionally, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board named Palo Alto College's Project Access – a program for students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities – as one of five state-wide finalists for the 2018 Texas Higher Education Star Award, which recognizes exceptional contributions toward meeting the THECB's 60x30TX education plan goals. Of 36 nominations and 26 applications for the 2018 Star Award, Palo Alto College was only institution of higher education in San Antonio to be a finalist.

Launched in Fall 2016 with an initial cohort of seven students, Project Access offers an opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities to take college-level courses to earn their 16-credit-hour General Office Level 1 Certificate over three semesters and acquire necessary skills for office employment opportunities. The program now serves 40 students pursuing certificates that can ultimately lead toward a degree – the Associate of Applied Science in Administrative Assistant.

IN THE 2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR



OUR STUDENTS EARNED A TOTAL OF
\$16,051,677
IN FEDERAL GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS



MORE THAN
200
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM THE ORIGINAL FOUR EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS CROSSED THE STAGE IN MAY TO EARN THEIR COLLEGE DEGREE BEFORE EARNING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



PALO ALTO COLLEGE AWARDED

1,713

DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES

THE HIGHEST NUMBER AWARDED
IN OUR HISTORY



MORE THAN

1,800

FIRST-TIME IN COLLEGE STUDENTS