STRATEGIES FOR MAKING AND MAINTAINING A COLLEGE CONNECTION: THREE CRITICAL AREAS OF WORK

The activities that CCTA and its partner, [**South Texas College**](http://studentservices.southtexascollege.edu/de/), implement to help returning students make and maintain the college connection can be divided into three categories: academic, cultural, and administrative.  All three elements are necessary to ensure the college connection is made and maintained.  The elements are integrated throughout the student’s experience, from recruitment through high school graduation and matriculation into college.

KEY PRINICIPLES OF A COLLEGE CONNECTION

ENSURE ACADEMIC READINESS

At CCTA staff:

* Use [JFF’s](http://www.jff.org) Common Instructional Framework to prepare students for college coursework.
* Provide the required College Success course, which covers college success skills such as study skills and time management and is required by South Texas College for all matriculating students.
* Prepare students for their mini-mesters by using the mini-mester academic course content as “practice” content in the College Success class.
* Make connections between skills gained in CCTA coursework and future college coursework.

ESTABLISH A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

At CCTA, staff:

* Set the tone with recruitment material that focuses on students future successes and not their past failures.
* During Intake:
  + Introduce students to dual enrollment and college readiness while starting related paperwork.
  + Provide information about college to students through the on site, the GO Center, staffed by a combination of current college students, a transition counselor, and CCTA staff.
  + Have students complete the “college interest survey,” indicating courses they would like to take when eligible for dual enrollment.
  + Introduce students to the mini-mester concept: a compressed college-level course taken either at South Texas College or on the CCTA campus.
  + Make sure students attending group intake (rather than one-on-one intake) stop at the intake station devoted to the college transition. In addition to helping incoming students complete the STC registration for dual enrollment, career pathway information is shared and students are introduced to the GO Center.
* Plan for college during weekly mentor classes.
* Fill the visual environment with messages that situate students as college-bound.
* Encourage identification with college students via mini-mester courses.
* Take students on tours of STC campuses.
* Situate a GO Center on the CCTA campus.
* Organize periodic “one-stop days,” run by the STC outreach specialist and held at CCTA.  Representatives from STC admissions, financial aid, and student advising set up at CCTA with laptops in hand to help students complete all documentation needed to enroll as students.

PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE SUPPORTS

At CCTA staff:

* Start the dual enrollment registration process during intake.
* Provide STC with the student interest and student eligibility data they need to set up courses and enroll students in mini-mesters.
* Provide STC with all relevant transcripts and TAKS scores.
* Enable the STC outreach counselor to visit the mini-mester class on the first day to assure registrations are completed.
* Invite the STC outreach counselor to run one-stop registration days on site at CCTA to register graduating CCTA students as matriculating STC students.
* Provide multiple chances for students to get help completing financial aid and other registration forms.