

Howard College soars

City campus drives growth

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San Angelo has made Howard College one of the fastest-growing two-year schools in the nation.

Howard College hit the No. 20 spot on the 50 fastest-growing community colleges for the 2,500 to 4,999 enrollment category in the latest issue of Community College Week. The publication is an independent source of in-depth information about two-year colleges.

The publication provides analyses of critical academic trends and issues and vital statistics such as "The Special Report on The Fastest-Growing Community Colleges."

Much of Howard's growth comes from the San Angelo campus and stems from the college's partnership with the San Angelo school district in offering dual-credit courses, said LeAnne Byrd, chief academic officer of Howard College-San Angelo.

Howard also has campuses in Big Spring-its home campus - and Lamesa. The San Angelo campus had 1,884 of the college's 3,409 students in fall 2007.

The San Angelo campus increased 19 percent for fall 2007, Byrd said.

The dual-credit program in San Angelo allows high school students to earn college credit while still in high school.

"Our partnership together is what makes Howard College such a good resource for the community," Byrd said.

While San Angelo has partnered with the West Texas Training Center for several years on dual-credit vocational classes, this is the first year Howard and SAISD have partnered on dual-credit academic courses, said Carol Ann Bonds, the school district superintendent.

More than 380 high school students are enrolled in dual-credit classes with Howard, Bonds said, and she expects that number to increase next year.

Juniors and seniors are eligible for dual-credit courses, and the district is working to make courses available for younger students.

Students can earn between 12 and 24 hours, and that also could increase, Bonds said.

"I'm a screaming believer in this program," Bonds said.

"Students become believers that they can take college courses. It makes them believe they can do it."

The spring 2006 and fall '07 semesters at Howard College respectively broke enrollment records, due in large part to the increase seen at the Howard College-San Angelo campus. This semester, the San Angelo campus increased by 307 students, which is greatly represented by dual-credit programs.

Byrd said she doubts enrollment will continue to increase that drastically, but expects it will grow as more students choose dual-credit courses and more people realize what Howard has to offer.

"I think we are heading in the right place and doing the right things with a great partner in the community," Byrd said. "It's verification that we are doing the right things."

To learn more

For more information on Howard College, visit howardcollege.edu.

- To view the complete report that lists Howard among the fastest-growing two-year schools in the nation, visit ccweek.com.