



THE UNIVERSITY CENTER

NORTH HARRIS MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

FACT SHEET

PURPOSE

The University Center (TUC) has been developed by North Harris Montgomery Community College District (NHMCCD) as a partnership of universities and the colleges of the community college district to provide unduplicated bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and continuing professional studies to the district service area. Partnerships, seamless articulated programs, collaborative governance, shared facilities, interactive telecommunications, and "first stop" student services provide the basis for TUC to serve as the critical link for community development and individual opportunity to over one and one-half million citizens of North Houston, North Harris County and Montgomery County.

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Six universities and the community college district, including five colleges, have joined together to offer unduplicated bachelor's (26) degrees, master's (30) degrees, and four special programs (2 doctoral degrees and 2 post baccalaureate teacher certification programs) for a total of 60 programs.

North Harris Montgomery Community College District:

- North Harris College
- Kingwood College
- Tomball College
- Montgomery College
- Cy-Fair College

Partner Universities:

- Prairie View A&M University
- Sam Houston State University
- Texas A&M University
- Texas Southern University
- University of Houston
- University of Houston-Downtown

NHMCCD local taxpayers and private sector partners built the facility and telecommunications infrastructure at no cost to the state. Universities are responsible for their degrees and support the instructional, facilities utilized, and shared support services costs. Community colleges are responsible for the instruction and student services at the freshman and sophomore levels.

OVERVIEW

TUC is the centerpiece for multi-level instruction of universities and the NHMCCD community colleges. TUC includes a dedicated classroom/laboratory facility of approximately 78,000 sq. ft. as well as an interactive, technology-based extension that connects the colleges of NHMCCD and the partner universities. The Universities began offering classes in September 1997. In recognition of his commitment to making higher education available to the community, the building was named in honor of George P. Mitchell, CEO of Mitchell Energy (which owned The Woodlands Corporation at the time of development of TUC) and founder of The Woodlands.

TUC provides a facility and an interactive telecommunications system for delivery of unduplicated baccalaureate and master's degree instruction, advanced work training, and professional development at the same quality level as the university home base of the programs. Technology is a full partner for all TUC activities. TUC received full approval by The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in April 1996. Groundbreaking occurred in June 1996 using the theme "*common ground for the common good.*" Tellepsen Corporation served as General Contractors and RWS Architects Inc. was the architect. Southwestern Bell Communications was responsible for the interactive technology. Facilities opened in January 1998.

CONCEPT

- TUC is degree driven.
- Partner universities offer courses necessary for a student to complete baccalaureate and master's degree programs at TUC.
- Universities do not offer competing programs.
- Operational costs of instruction, facilities, and services provided are shared pro-rata by the universities based on enrollment.
- Technology and telecommunications are used to interconnect and deliver student support and learning services. NHMCCD colleges offer the freshman and sophomore coursework utilizing seamless, articulated AA, AS, and AAS degrees.
- The standards for the quality of the degrees offered and awarded matches standards at the home campus.
- One-stop student support services. By sharing services, the universities can avoid duplicating services.
- Diverse multi-level higher education institutions work together, gain consensus, innovate, articulate, and make a difference for students, businesses, and communities.
- Facility is designed to functionally promote integration, interactivity, and interconnectivity.

THE FACILITY AND TECHNOLOGY

North Harris Montgomery Community College District was responsible for the funding, construction, and equipping of a permanent facility to house The University Center. The Center is located in The Woodlands, a planned residential and business community in the northern part of metropolitan Houston. The construction was financed with approximately \$9.5 million of tax funds and a gift of \$2 million and ten acres of land from The Woodlands Corporation and Mr. George P. Mitchell. In 1995, voters of the District approved the \$77.87 million bond issue by a three-to-one margin. The \$9.5 million for TUC was one of the listed projects. Construction of the facility was completed in late 1997. NHMCCD, as the owner/operator/landlord of the facility, is responsible for providing the basic support services such as custodial, utilities, security, maintenance, duplication, telephone, and the interactive educational telecommunications system to support distance learning and other instructional and support needs. The equipment includes the telecommunications system to support two-way interactive video, voice, and data for distance education as well as the computers, software, and networking systems necessary to support the on-site instructional program. The one exception to this is the equipping and maintenance of any exclusive use laboratories (computer, learning resources, etc.), which are the responsibility of the partner university delivering the program. The University Center university partners are responsible for the operating budget that is divided among them based on pro-rata share of annual SCH generation at The University Center.

The facility and technology consists of a 78,000 sq. ft. 3-story structure housing:

- 10 2-way voice/video interactive classrooms and seminar rooms
- 15 classrooms with ceiling-mounted LCD projectors, instructor workstation, and large TV's
- 14 classrooms with instructor workstation and 2 large TV's
- 4 seminar rooms
- 4 computer classrooms with 20 to 40 computers per room
- an 84-seat tiered "smart" lecture hall with data, internet, and power at each seat
- 32 workstation open computer lab
- 24 workstation library connecting to all partner libraries via internet
- all rooms connected by broadband cable
- entire building fiber optic cabled
- all classrooms pre-wired to convert to two-way interactive voice, video, and data use
- 3 satellite dishes with ability to distribute signals as desired throughout the building
- 1 Madge 200 switch and 1 Accord MGC 100 MCU (Multipoint Control Unit) providing hub connectivity for video conferencing throughout the district, with the universities, and through the public switch network
- shared Student Services area to support advising, admissions, financial aid, and other student services
- shared faculty support area with access to computers and other technical equipment to support course development and delivery

CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS ENTERING TUC

- Transfer from NHMCCD with AA, AS, or AAS
- Transfer without full 60+ hours from NHMCCD
- Transfer from other community colleges/universities
- "Shoebox of Transcripts" from a variety of universities/colleges
- Transfer from a TUC university to another TUC university
- Transfer from "home base" university to TUC
- Mix of courses from "home base" and TUC (same university)
- Transfer from "home base" university to another "home base" university
- Military experience and licensure
- "Dislocated" professionals with one or two degrees desiring to complete another specialty or a new degree
- Individuals with bachelor's degrees pursuing a master's degree
- International students with some prior college coursework or degrees
- "Fresh Start" - based on Texas Law
- Veterans
- Non-Degree Seeking Status (Bachelors; Masters)

ARTICULATED PROGRAMS, AIRWAVES AND SERVICES

- 26 Bachelor's Degrees are seamlessly articulated vertically with the community college programs and laterally among the universities for course equivalencies to expedite the students' achievement of their degree. All of these plans are in compliance with the home university for the degree and their related academic policies.
- 30 Master's Degrees are unduplicated and cooperatively offered
- 2 Doctoral programs in Pharmacy and Educational Leadership
- 2 Post-baccalaureate teacher certification programs
- Faculty, department heads, deans, and administrators are continuously involved in the initial development and continuing review of these agreements, shared services, and compatible systems. Each program has been approved by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and accrediting agencies.

MANAGEMENT

The University Center Council (16 members, including two appointed by each partner) provides guidance for planning and delivery of programs at TUC. The Council is assisted by five subcommittees: finance, academic programs, student services, technology and marketing. NHMCCD is responsible for day-to-day management of TUC and its facility. The administrative staff consists of twenty-one full-time personnel, nine part-time personnel, and five university coordinators.

FINANCIALS AND FEES

- The day-to-day operating budget for The University Center is paid by the participating universities; NHMCCD is responsible for the debt service on the building. Related shared costs for participation at The University Center have been made based on semester credit hours (SCH) of courses offered to achieve the degrees. The shared cost includes facilities utilization, shared support services, and shared laboratories.
- Annual review of budget, financials, costs, and revenues is made by the Finance Committee.
- A Financial Aid Consortium has been established among the six universities and the community colleges to allow for students to fully utilize their financial assistance for degree completion when courses are taken at more than one school. The "home" university offering the degree is responsible for the financial aid package.

SHARED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES -- COMMON AND CUSTOMIZED

- TUC universities and colleges are committed to providing (as much as possible) a "one-stop" seamless approach to the applications, registration, fee collections, calendar, financial assistance, transcript analysis, advising, student information, and student learning support. Common electronic data transmission standards and information technology are used to complete these processes.
- Common application data elements are utilized for the first stop that the student makes. The student completes an application only one time and pays only one application fee. The University Center facilitates transfer of data to partner institutions when a student cross-enrolls in classes with more than one partner using the SPEEDE system based on EDI standards.
- The University Center Student Services staff provides gateway/intake advising to prospective students, reviewing transcripts, and assisting them in determining the program which best meets their needs. The staff then assists the students in getting admitted and beginning the registration process.
- Additional overview and advising sessions are offered with the universities providing intake sessions for orientation, transcript analysis, and degree planning. These are offered at The University Center twice each semester. Additionally, university program advisors come to The University Center on a regularly scheduled basis to advise currently enrolled students.
- Library Services are provided utilizing internet technology to provide links to each partner university library. TexShare and the University partners provide access to commonly used databases and TExpress provides overnight delivery of books and articles from partners to TUC. Library services are managed by a full time librarian on-site at The University Center.
- All computer workstations in the library and computer lab provide students with access to Microsoft Office 2003 software, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. Partner universities provide additional software to support unique program needs. Additionally a multimedia lab is available for students needing access to advanced computer technology. Computer technicians provide support and training for students in using the equipment.
- Faculty orientation is provided for all faculty teaching at The University Center to familiarize them with the equipment in each classroom, the procedures and policies, and the services available for the students.

EARLY STARTUP AND ENROLLMENTS

- Sam Houston State University and The University of Houston offered the first courses following Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approval.
- Prairie View A&M University followed with the Bachelor of Nursing Degree program connecting new opportunities for ADN/RN nurses to continue with their careers. First graduates were in December 1997.
- In Fall 1997 there were 65 classes, 855 enrollments, and 374 actual students.

CURRENT STATUS

- By Spring 2007, there were 232 classes with 3,940 enrollments and 2,372 actual student headcount.
- Since TUC was opened in Fall 1997, total student enrollment is 69,462 and total actual student headcount is 46,359.

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