

AUSTIN COLLEGE
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In his *New York Times* best-selling book *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World*, David Epstein cites various studies which show that three quarters of college graduates, including Math and Science majors, go on to a career unrelated to their major. The world ***demand***s conceptual reasoning skills—critical thinking skills—that can connect new ideas and work across contexts.

Welcome to 2019 and the future of work!

Welcome also to the 171st year of Austin College! A moment when the value of our brand of education has never been greater. I am pleased to tell you that the state of the College is strong.

This fall we welcomed our second consecutive robust incoming class and the third largest incoming class in the College’s history—approximately 410 first year students and transfers. They hail from Texas and 10 other states and three other countries. Their academic profile is strong. Students of color represent 54% of the class. Fifty students have legacy connections, and 119 are first generation college students.

Some of these new scholars will be athletes—38%, actually. Some will be members of our growing esports team, and some will join the ‘Roo Band. ‘Roo Band is our newly formed pep band. It is heightening the excitement at athletic events and allowing for more students to continue their interest in music and contribute to the life of the college.

While our enrollment is growing, so is the value of the college’s endowment. As of the end of the last fiscal year (June 30th), our endowment stood at over \$150 million, an all-time high! It is worth noting that this growth, through thoughtful and deliberate management, has occurred at the same time that we have reduced our risk exposure in the volatile global markets.

The POWER Campaign is progressing well with back to back record years of fundraising since I arrived. We have met 86% of our unprecedented \$125 million goal. We have great momentum but, of course, help is still needed. We all know that last 14% is the toughest. A distinct category of the campaign are gifts to the College’s Annual Fund—those annual gifts that relieve stress on the operating budget. These are also very important. We are operating in a world of extremely narrow margins and tight budgets—such is the state of higher education today—so your help in this area is crucial as well.

As always, advancing the College’s mission is centered on the extraordinary work of all of our faculty and staff to support students and prepare them for meaningful lives and rewarding careers. This year marks the implementation of The Austin College Compass Curriculum. This new core curriculum, grounded in our powerful time-tested liberal arts foundation, is designed to enable students to explore ideas from multiple perspectives, preparing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the challenges of the 21st century.

The College has also successfully hired four new tenure-track faculty colleagues across all three divisions in addition to an Executive Director of Institutional Research and Registrar, Director of Information Technology, and Director of Bands.

The Departments of Business and Economics have developed a strategic plan to ensure our place as a best in class program for years to come. This plan will also help to inform decisions and refine the vision for the new Jack B. Morris Center for Business Studies that we hope to complete over the next few years in the footprint of the now vacant Moody Science Center.

I am particularly pleased to report this next piece of news because it is the launch of an initiative I discussed last year. We are about to formalize an innovative partnership between Austin College and Texas Tech University, two of the finest institutions in Texas, to usher in a new era of collaboration in higher education. Texas Tech will offer a Master of Arts in Mass Communication with courses taught on the Austin College campus, bringing together, in one place, the extraordinary Austin College undergraduate experience with a top-quality graduate degree from Texas Tech University. This program will be of particular interest to students wishing to pursue media and communication fields, journalism, sports communication and entertainment, publishing, advertising, public relations, and other related industries.

This concept speaks to the needs of today's student in Texas and around the nation. The opportunity for students to pursue this educational pathway in an uninterrupted and accelerated fashion makes this truly remarkable and valuable. We are excited to be on the leading edge of higher education innovation with our friends at Texas Tech and are already looking forward to exploring new program offerings in the future.

There are other exciting things happening on campus, some of which involve fencing and dumpsters. Renovations to Wynne Chapel began in June, and I am pleased to report that the contractors are making good progress.

The piers have been poured for the new "flats" style, 133-bed student residence behind the Forster Art Building and Jordan Family Language House. That facility should begin to rise from the ground soon and the contractor has committed to its completion for occupancy at the start of the fall semester 2020.

Our current plan is for the Ida Green Communication Center to go offline at the end of this semester and for the Sally and Jim Nation Theatre and Learning Commons to open next fall.

Craig Hall is in line to receive some needed upgrades to its infrastructure and we hope to begin work on that project in the coming months.

One of our badly needed athletics renovations is to the Hannah Natatorium locker rooms. We have \$400,000 already pledged but we will need additional help to reach full funding for this project.

Last weekend, our annual Tedx Austin College event took place with over 200 people in attendance plus guest students from Sherman ISD and Grayson College. Next week, we kick off

the annual Posey Leadership Series with an event here in Dallas hosted by Austin College's own Ron Kirk, former Secretary of State of Texas and former Mayor of Dallas.

This weekend is an opera production in the Ida Green Theater. Student musical performances will begin very soon. Football, soccer, cross country, volleyball, and men's water polo are all in full swing. Preseason practices for winter sports are only weeks away. Students continue to manage the Todd Williams student investment fund through a period of jaw dropping market volatility—I can't think of a better illustration of the applied learning opportunities our students have. Student Assembly came to our home for dinner a few weeks ago and continues its work as a voice for the student body. Sallie Majors Religious Life Interns and regular chapel goers came to our house for dinner for an evening of fellowship (and games!) just last weekend. Homecoming is later this month—you get the idea. Again, welcome to 2019 and our 171st year! There is vibrancy. There is teaching and learning in every corner of campus and beyond. There is energy. The state of the College is, indeed, strong!

Before I conclude, I'd like to take a moment to bask a little in the glow of some recognitions that the college has received. In May, Austin College was named to *MONEY* magazine's list of top 20 colleges in the country for providing merit-based aid. This recognition is particularly gratifying to me because I have been talking about how accessibility to an Austin College education must remain one of our very top priorities. Accessibility is not just achieved in the form of merit-based aid, but also need-based aid. **99%** of our students receive financial assistance in the form of merit-based scholarships and/or need-based financial aid. It should also be remembered that we out-perform many institutions with multi-*billion*-dollar endowments on this front because of our deeply held commitment to accessibility and affordability and because friends of the College, like you, support this commitment through gifts toward endowed and immediate use scholarships.

Another recognition you may have seen posted on some of the college's social media outlets is that Austin College has received a 2019 Global Citizen award from the Happy World Foundation for contributions to global citizenship, diversity, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding. I was proud to accept that award on behalf of the College just last month at a ceremony in Dallas.

Next, thanks to the work of our new Fellowships and Scholarships Committee, I am proud to remind everyone that Austin College has the distinction of being the largest producer of Fulbright awards per capita of *any* other Texas institution.

Finally, an even more telling recognition is not a formal one bestowed by an outside entity. It is from our students. When asked why they chose to come to Austin College, members of the entering class said that it was, and I quote, because "This is a community that connects *all* students." "Here I am able to engage with thought leaders every day, leading to opportunities of inquiry, discovery, personal refinement, and growth." Because "everyone is welcomed with open arms."

Again, the state of the College is strong!

Across all divisions of Austin College, we are launching strategic initiatives, driven by deep data analysis. These initiatives, ranging from new academic programs to esports, from the formation of a new pep band to enhanced institutional and recruitment marketing, and from retention programming to facility construction and renovation, are all part of a bold strategic vision designed to position Austin College for success for generations to come.

All of us on campus are looking forward to another exciting and successful year. Momentum continues to grow, and, with your continued support, the state of Austin College will grow even stronger. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Thank you.