

Lee College a finalist for three national AACC Awards of Excellence

BAYTOWN, TX — Lee College has been honored as a finalist for the 2017 American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Awards of Excellence for Advancing Diversity, Faculty Innovation and Outstanding College/Corporate Partnership. It is the second consecutive year that Lee College has earned national recognition as an AACC Awards of Excellence finalist in three of five total categories — a rare feat among the nearly 1,200 community colleges that are members of the association and eligible for the awards each year.

The AACC presented Lee College with the three finalist award trophies in April at its annual convention in New Orleans. The awards were displayed to the community this month at the regular meeting of the Lee College Board of Regents.

The AACC Advancing Diversity Award recognizes the college that has contributed significantly and over a sustained period of time to advancing diversity in community college leadership, the community and within higher education as a whole. Lee College was honored for the success of the Puente Project, an academic mentoring program that aims to increase the number of educationally under-served students who transfer to and enroll in four-year colleges and universities, earn college degrees and return to their communities as leaders and role models for new generations. Puente students — many of whom are low-income or the first generation in their families to attend college — have presented research at academic conferences, taken leadership roles on campus, advocated for social justice and volunteered their time and talents to serve and uplift the local community. More than a dozen Puente graduates have gone on to pursue bachelor's degrees at universities around the state since Lee College became the fourth community college district in Texas to host the program.

Treva Brown-Askey, chairwoman of the Developmental Education Division, was the college's nominee to receive the AACC Faculty Innovation Award, which recognizes faculty members who have demonstrated leadership in the development and implementation of a campus program that has had positive impact on the learning experience for students. The outcome of the program must result in the improvement of student completion numbers within a course or degree field, and nominees for the award are expected to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to student access and success. Brown-Askey was also nominated and named a finalist for the Faculty Innovation Award in 2016, due in large part to her efforts to make educational opportunities more equitable for all students and create opportunities for students to learn and be successful both inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, she has led and coordinated the "College Bound School" partnership with Drew Elementary School in the Crosby Independent School District, which is part of the ongoing Cradle to Career Network effort to create a college-going culture for local youth by engaging all members of the community in providing wraparound support as students transition into college.

The AACC Outstanding College/Corporate Partnership Award honors local, regional and national collaboration between a college and corporate partner that has achieved demonstrable, multi-year success in advancing the mission of the institution; the economic prosperity of a community, region or the nation; and the learning excellence

of students. Lee College highlighted its longstanding partnership with ExxonMobil, which has provided resources to support the education and workforce needs of Lee College students and the community for 82 years. In just the last 5 years, ExxonMobil has enhanced its support by sponsoring the Lee College EnergyVenture camp for middle-school students exploring careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; continuing to provide 3-to-1 matching gifts from its foundation for donations made to colleges and universities by employees and retirees; providing annual gifts of \$125,000 to help meet the needs of the college's petrochemical and technical studies programs; supporting capstone internships for students; and providing \$1.8 million for the Community College Petrochemical Initiative. ExxonMobil staff members also come to classes to share their insights and experiences with students, participate in panel discussions and serve on college committees.