Lee College, Liberty ISD announce free college for 2020 graduates

Baytown, TX — The Lee College Board of Regents and the Liberty ISD school board approved implementation of a tuition supplement agreement to cover the cost of Lee College fall tuition and fees for the 2019-2020 graduates of Liberty ISD.

The agreement is an extension of the Supporting College Readiness Program developed earlier this summer between Baytown's Goose Creek CISD School District and Lee College. As part of the agreement with Liberty ISD, Lee College will cover the cost of in-district tuition and fees for each participating student, and Liberty ISD will cover the remaining cost of out-of-district fees for each participating student. Those eligible for free tuition include December 2019 or June 2020 graduates who register full-time, or at least 12 credit hours at Lee College in the Fall 2020 semester.

To be eligible, students must:

- Be a 2019-2020 graduate of Liberty ISD
- Enroll in and maintain at least 12 credits at Lee College for the Fall 2020 semester
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA).

This is a last-dollar scholarship program covering the cost of tuition and fees for Fall 2020 at Lee College, meaning the scholarship kicks in after all other grant and scholarship funding has been applied. In the event the student is awarded federal or Texas Public Education Grant money, that financial aid will be applied to the student account first. Lee College will then discount 56 percent of the balance, and Liberty ISD will be responsible for 44 percent of the remaining balance.

"We are incredibly excited to partner with Liberty ISD to help these new graduates succeed in higher education with no out of pocket costs to them," said Lee College President, Dr. Lynda Villanueva. "It's hard for families to justify the cost of attending four-year institutions this fall with all the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic. Especially now, the smart choice is for students to begin their quality education closer to home. With this free tuition program, students and their families have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

The program will also benefit Liberty ISD students who choose to take advantage of it by providing encouragement and motivation for academic achievement as well as College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR), furthering the goal of college readiness. In addition, it will support the goal of creating a local college-going culture.

"This is such an exciting new opportunity for Liberty High School graduates," said Liberty ISD Superintendent, Dr. Cody Abshier. "The Liberty ISD Board of Trustees and district administrators are thankful to Lee College for their continuous efforts to provide practical educational opportunities to our students. We are fortunate to be a partner with Lee College in so many meaningful endeavors, and we fully support them as they are now reaching out to our 2020 graduates with this fabulous offer."

The Supporting College Readiness Program is a shared initiative by Lee College and local school districts to help overcome barriers faced by first-generation college going students to allow greater achievement among these groups of individuals. This program

is intended, in part, to specifically target the barrier of affordability faced by these groups, and its implementation will be reflective of this shared goal.