



**Wharton County
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A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR EDUCATION

WCJC graduates can transfer to UH while staying at Sugar Land Campus

SUGAR LAND, TEXAS – At the University of Houston Sugar Land (UHSL) branch campus, students can take the basics, obtain an associate's degree and then transfer to a university – all at the same place.

Thanks to a partnership between the University of Houston and Wharton County Junior College, the campus is a virtual one-stop shop for most students' educational needs. WCJC provides freshman and sophomore level courses while upper-level courses are offered by UH, UH-Victoria and UH-Clear Lake.

Having both a junior college and four-year university system at the same site is of great benefit to students, said Richard Phillips, UH System's associate vice chancellor for system initiatives. Not only is it convenient, it's cost-effective. Phillips said costs at WCJC are roughly one-third of those at UH for comparable freshman and sophomore level courses.

A semester credit hour at WCJC, for example, currently costs around \$88 for an in-district student. For an out-of-district student, that jumps to \$139. At UH, by comparison, an in-district student would pay around \$300 per semester credit hour while an out-of-district student would pay roughly \$760.

Having a less expensive alternative to college is crucial for WCJC students since most hold down part-time jobs, said Robert Wolter, director of WCJC's Sugar Land campus. Thanks to the partnership between UH and WCJC, those who could not formerly afford to continue their studies now can.

"Our students really like the opportunities available here," Wolter said, referring to the Sugar Land campus. "And they love the atmosphere of this campus."

Students may soon get even more bang for their buck. Efforts have already begun to make UH the sole university-level course provider at the Sugar Land campus. Once that occurs, the Sugar Land site can tap into UH's Tier One designation, which was obtained in 2011.

Only two other public Texas universities – Texas A&M and the University of Texas – have achieved that coveted ranking.

“If a student goes two years to WCJC and then two years to UH, they will obtain one of the lowest cost, Tier One degrees in the nation,” Phillips noted.

Although some students enroll at four-year universities from the get-go, Wolter believes it makes more sense to attend junior college first and then transfer. He said students who attend WCJC – and especially those who obtain their associate’s degree – have a much higher chance of finishing their bachelor’s degree once they transfer.

“Students who transfer from a two-year university to a four-year university have higher graduation rates than those who enter a four-year institution as a freshman,” Wolter said, noting that the freshman attrition rate at major universities is significantly high.

Phillips said WCJC students, in particular, have proven to be well prepared for upper-level coursework. He believes that’s a testament to the faculty.

“WCJC instructors are highly qualified and teach core curriculum to the standards of a Tier One university,” Phillips said. “By the time they (WCJC students) transfer to us, they are proven students.”

The UH System and WCJC have implemented joint admissions programs to help the transfer process run as smoothly as possible. Under these arrangements, WCJC students are guaranteed admission into participating UH System universities provided they have completed an associate’s degree, are in good academic and financial standing and have submitted a Joint Admissions Contract within their first 30 semester credit hours of coursework at WCJC.

These arrangements also include a “2+2” agreement which ensures that WCJC courses match their UH counterparts to the letter. That combats the loss of credits that sometimes occurs when a student transfers.

Phillips said the point is to make higher education more affordable and easier to navigate while providing incentives for students who have a long-term plan.

“I think the process we’ve set up here is a good example of how we encourage students not to waste their time and money,” he said.

WCJC’s Sugar Land campus currently services around 3,000 students. Another 1,500 are enrolled in the UH System. Those numbers are expected to grow once UH takes over as the sole university-level course provider. Part of the planned changeover includes the expansion or creation of 22 degree programs.

Phillips said UH will continue to rely upon WCJC to provide students who are well prepared for university-level work.

“We will depend upon WCJC’s ability to recruit new students,” he said. “The plan is for WCJC to continue to be our campus partner.”

For more information on UHSL, visit: www.sugarland.uh.edu or call 281-275-3300. For more information on WCJC, visit: www.wcjc.edu or call the WCJC Sugar Land campus at 281-243-8447.