

UNIVERSITY BUSINESS MAGAZINE HONORS  
NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
FOR BEING A “MODEL OF EXCELLENCE”

BENTONVILLE, ARK. (November 19, 2015)—NorthWest Arkansas Community College is one of seventeen colleges and universities nationwide being honored by University Business magazine in its Winter 2015 Models of Excellence recognition program. Sponsored by Higher One, a leading provider of financial services to college and university campuses across the U.S., the Models of Excellence program recognizes innovative approaches to encouraging and nurturing student success on campus.

“NorthWest Arkansas Community College launched a great access program with LIFE,” says University Business senior editor Tim Goral. “It’s unique to the school and community, and the participating high school kids and the institution both benefit.”

An influx of Hispanic residents to northwest Arkansas over the last decade has created an opportunity for NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC). Recognizing that a significant percentage of Hispanic students from outside the area had little experience with the concept of college, including what it is like, how to apply, or even that it was an option for them, in 2012 NWACC developed a program to introduce high school students to the basics.

Named LIFE, for Learning, Improvement, Fun and Empowerment, the program is a near-peer mentoring program designed to connect minority and underserved students in surrounding high schools with NWACC mentors just like them. The eight LIFE mentors are first-generation college students who have already overcome some of the same challenges that high schoolers are facing. As part of the program, they make frequent trips to area high schools throughout the year to build relationships with teens, explains Codie Ryan, director of the LIFE program at NWACC. The high school students are then invited to a three-day program on the NWACC campus during the summer.

During those three days, the peer mentors engage the students in fun activities while also educating them about the college admissions process and college life. NWACC staff members from admissions, student activities, financial aid, and other offices work alongside the LIFE mentors, helping to forge bonds with prospective students, explains Ryan. The LIFE mentors take the lead, however, because “we get such a different response from high school students when college students speak to them,” she says. “We don’t have to break down any barriers” before sharing important information.

This past summer the LIFE program had the largest number of participants yet – 125. Of those, 123 indicated they plan to enroll at NWACC, says Ryan.

In addition to NorthWest Arkansas Community College, Winter 2015 Models of Excellence honorees include: Florida State University (Tallahassee, Fla.); State Fair Community College (Sedalia, Mo.); Miami Dade College (Miami, Fla.); University of San Diego (San Diego, Calif.); Southeast Technical Institute (Sioux Falls, S.D.); Governors State University (University Park, Ill.); University of North Carolina Charlotte (Charlotte, N.C.); Georgian Court University (Lakewood, N.J.); Endicott College (Beverly, Mass.); Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff, Ariz.); University of Massachusetts (Lowell, Mass.); St. Petersburg

College (St. Petersburg, Fla.); Syracuse University (Syracuse, N.Y.); Excelsior College (Albany, N.Y.); University of Minnesota Twin Cities (Minneapolis, Minn.); and Kent State University (Kent, Ohio).

“The Winter 2015 MoX honorees demonstrate insight into their student populations, as well as the ability to innovate in creative ways,” says Andrew Crawford, senior vice president of campus services & operations at Higher One. “We are pleased to recognize their efforts alongside University Business.”

Launched in 2015, Models of Excellence is a national recognition program that honors colleges and universities that have implemented innovative, effective and inter-departmental initiatives that are bolstering student success. The program is sponsored by Higher One, which offers a wide array of technological services on campus, ranging from streamlining the institution’s performance analytics and financial aid refund processes to offering students innovative banking services, tuition payment plans and the basics of financial management. Higher One works closely with colleges and universities by allocating resources more efficiently to provide a higher quality of service and using data to impact success with a focus on empowering students.

#### About University Business

University Business is the leading publication for senior managers at colleges and universities throughout the United States, reaching 75,000 leaders who manage enrollment, technology, business, finance, facilities and academic affairs. More information is available at [www.universitybusiness.com](http://www.universitybusiness.com).

#### About Higher One

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