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NWACC'S LIFE Program Receives 2018 Closing the Gap Award

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (Oct. 31, 2018) - During Arkansas Department of Higher Education Coordinating Board meeting on October 26th, NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) received the 2018 Closing the Gap Award for its LIFE program that supports underserved minority high school students.

Closing the Gap 2020: A Master Plan for Arkansas Higher Education is a five-year plan to increase post-secondary attainment rate in Arkansas to 60%, increasing from the current estimate of 43.4%, by improving college readiness, reducing remedial enrollment, focusing on adults and underserved groups, and improving college affordability.

Part of the implementation of the Master Plan is developing best practices consortia. The objective of these consortia is for institutions to share ideas about successful programs that can be implemented on a broader scale and to generate innovative strategies which respond to the goals and objectives of the plan.

As an effort to bring these best practices to the forefront, Presidents and Chancellors were invited to submit their campus's best efforts for tackling the measures. The department received over 75 submissions in the categories of: Increased Student Completion, Support for Adult Learners, Increased Institutional Efficiencies, and Support for Underserved Minority Students. Entries were judged on innovative implementation, creative solutions, increased outcomes, and delivering value to stakeholders.

NWACC received the award for Supporting Underserved Minority Students with its LIFE (Learning, Improvement, Fun and Empowerment) Program. LIFE, now in its seventh year, is an educational empowerment program for area high school students based on a near-peer model. Eight NWACC students are selected to serve as volunteer mentors to students from area high schools. Although LIFE is not exclusive to students that identify as Hispanic or Latino, all of the current program mentors, and 91% of the students that participate, identify as Hispanic.

"We are very excited about our LIFE Program being a recipient of the Closing the Gap Awards. We appreciate our college's board, administration faculty and staff for their tremendous support of our efforts. We remain committed to continuing our partnerships with high schools throughout Northwest Arkansas who share in our commitment to student success," said NWACC Vice President for Student Services Todd Kitchen.

Arkansas Tech University received the award for Support of Adult Learners for its Distance Learning Service Expansion, the University of Arkansas Cossatot received the award for Improving Institutional Efficiencies with its new Textbook Program and the East Arkansas Community College received the award of the Increased Student Completion by implementing the first Concurrent Convocation.

About NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC):

NWACC is an accredited, public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities by helping students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction, workforce training and personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu

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