

Press Release

Houston Community College launches Z-degree pilot program with \$300,000 grant from the Kinder Foundation

Two associate's degrees to be offered with zero textbook costs

HOUSTON [April 20, 2017] – A new partnership between the Kinder Foundation and Houston Community College (HCC) will support the development and implementation of HCC's first Z-degree. The "Z" stands for zero, as in zero textbook costs for an entire two-year associate's degree. Commencing in Fall 2017, the pilot program will target approximately 75-100 college-ready students. The Kinder Foundation pledged \$300,000 to the HCC Foundation to launch the college's Z-degrees in business administration and general studies and to support faculty training in the development of online course resource materials that will replace textbooks in those two degree programs. Funding will also provide for staffing, program promotion, and other activities.

"I commend the Kinder Foundation for this generous grant, which will dramatically reduce college costs for many students," says Dr. Cesar Maldonado, HCC Chancellor. "It gives HCC the opportunity to expand our efforts to create the ultimate student experience in a transformative and innovative way."

Kinder Foundation President Nancy Kinder says, "Houston Community College's reach across the city to offer many paths to earning a degree is remarkable. We support the Z-degree pilot program and join HCC in believing the cost of supplementary materials like textbooks should not preclude Houstonians from receiving a quality education."

Z-degree students would use online open educational resource (OER) materials that are available at no cost. "In some cases, the cost of textbooks exceeds the cost of tuition," notes Dr. Stephen Levey, HCC's Vice Chancellor of Instructional Services. "OER provides freely accessible materials for learning, as well as teaching, assessment, and research."

“HCC will continually evaluate the program to determine the feasibility of expanding it as we move forward,” Dr. Maldonado says. “The Z-degree is a win/win for students and HCC, and I cannot thank the Kinder Foundation enough for its commitment to our institution and our community.”

The Kinder Foundation, a family foundation established in 1997 by Rich and Nancy Kinder of Houston, Texas, provides transformational grants that impact urban green space, education, and quality of life. For more information, visit kinderfoundation.org.

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About HCC

Houston Community College (HCC) is composed of 15 Centers of Excellence and numerous satellite centers that serve the diverse communities in the Greater Houston area by preparing individuals to live and work in an increasingly international and technological society. HCC is one of the country's largest singly-accredited, open-admission, community colleges offering associate degrees, certificates, workforce training, and lifelong learning opportunities. To learn more, visit www.hccs.edu.