Community Talk

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STCC Board Approves Policy to Waive Tuition and Fees

STCC's Board of Trustees recently approved a policy waiving all tuition and registration fees charged by STCC for students of cooperating school districts who are participating in concurrent/dual credit classes.

This means that the tuition and fees are set to be waived for students who are enrolled both in high school and at STCC, in which their course credits count towards their diploma as well as a college certificate or degree.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for students to gain college academic credits while still in high school, at either no cost, or at a greatly reduced cost to them or their parents," said STCC Director of Institutional Relations, Nick Gonzalez.

In order to benefit from this policy certain restrictions must be met. For example, the cooperating school district must agree to provide a school district instructor that meets Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) criteria and all qualifications to be employed as an STCC faculty member.

The school district must also agree to follow all curriculum and textbook course requirements of STCC.

With these restrictions met, tuition and fees will be waived in full, whereas, just recently, the cost was approximately $100 per student.



Edinburg High School students participate in the Concurrent Enrollment program.

For those cooperating school districts that require an STCC instructor, including distance learning classes, all tuition and registration fees will be waived provided that the school district agrees to be invoiced and pay mileage and cost of the STCC instructors (at great savings to the school or students.) Most recently, the cost per student was approximately $237.

High schools currently participating in concurrent/dual credit enrollment with STCC and holding classes at their own campus that will benefit in the years to come include:

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Senator Judith Zaffirini Honored as Legislator of the Month

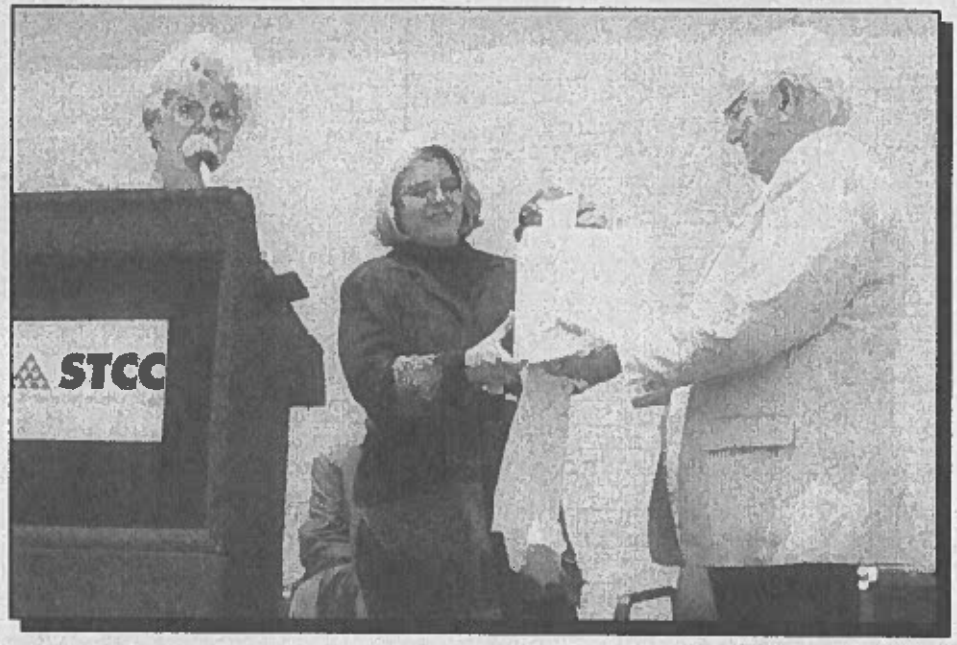
STCC honored Senator Judith Zaffirini as Legislator of the Month at a reception held in her honor on Monday, May 8th at the Starr County Campus in Rio Grande City.

Senator Zaffirini has received more than 300 awards and honors for her legislative, public service and professional work. Texas Monthly named her one of the 10 Best legislators for 1997.

She was also named Texas Heroine and Outstanding Legislator and Friend of Business by the Texas Chamber of Commerce and Legislative Crime Fighter of the Year by the Greater Dallas Crime Commission.

During her legislative career, Senator Zaffirini has cast 18,457 consecutive votes during six regular and 12 special sessions. She has sponsored and passed 289 bills and 43 substantive resolutions and co-sponsored and passed another 123 bills.

Her legislative successes include passing bills to immunize 100 percent of Texas children; fund a statewide system of emergency medical services and trauma centers; suspend the drivers licenses of drunk drivers; keep radioactive waste dump sites out of SD 21; stop the proliferation of colonias; restrict minors' access to tobacco; and reform Medicaid, welfare, nursing homes, adoption and child support, just to name a few.



STCC President, Dr. Shirley A. Reed (left) and Dr. Ramiro Casso (right) present Senator Judith Zaffirini (center) with a gift.

Senator Zaffirini was greeted with a warm welcome extended by STCC President, Dr. Shirley A. Reed, and STCC Starr County Campus Coordinator, Ruben Saenz.

Senator Zaffirini, took a moment to express the importance of education in South Texas, with her primary focus being on the "children" and their futures.

Senator Zaffirini extended her gratitude for all of STCC's support and was then presented with a gift by Dr. Reed and Dr. Casso from the College.

Starr County student, Patricia Gonzalez, also presented Zaffirini with a gift from the entire student body.

A Mexican-style lunch from El Patio Mexican Restaurant was served and was sponsored by David Guerra from the International Bank of Commerce (IBC).

The Roma High School Mariachi performed during the celebration.

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Donna, Edcouch, Edinburg, Edinburg North, Hidalgo, La Joya, Academy for Health Science (Med-High), Mercedes, Mission, Progresso, Rio Grande, Science & Math Academy, Teacher Academy, Valley View, Weslaco, and McAllen Memorial.

Schools also participating in concurrent/dual credit enrollment with STCC, with classes held on the STCC campus includes: PSJA North, PSJA, PSJA Memorial, and Sharyland High Schools.

Over 556 students in the Rio Grande Valley are currently participating in concurrent/dual credit enrollment. Of these, 500 attend dual credit classes at their own high school, and 66 students attend these dual credit classes at STCC.

Unfortunately, the 66 students, independent from their school and earning dual credit, are not exempt from tuition and fees under the policy change, due to the cost of resources required by the college.

"Before we found out about the tuition being waived, we already had 75 students enrolled in this program for next year! With the new tuition waiver, the numbers are sure to go up!" said Edinburg High School Concurrent Enrollment Instructor, Lori Prestia.

"At first, I was a bit apprehensive about it because these kids are taking English IV, and English 1301 and 1302 all at once. But, after working with the students, and seeing their writing ability improve tremendously along with their academic confidence ... I'm sold on concurrent enrollment!" said Prestia.

By next school year, the number of Valley students participating in concurrent enrollment with STCC could very well double due to the new tuition policy.

Upon completion of these dual credit classes, all academic credits are transferable to any other public university or college in Texas.

"Many of my students have already been accepted to in-state colleges; however, I do have some that are going out-of-state where their credits won't transfer, but they say that the experience and knowledge they're taking with them is worth it!" said Prestia.

For more information on Concurrent Enrollment / Dual Credit Classes, please contact STCC's Director of Institutional Relations, Nick Gonzalez at (956) 688-2133.