



LEE COLLEGE HELPS STUDENTS SET GOALS and STAY on TRACK with CAREER COACH

ON AVERAGE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS take 22 more credits than they need for an associate degree. This detour can be costly not only to students but to taxpayers as well. The question for educators is: **“How can we help students choose the right classes and graduate on time?”**

Lee College in Baytown, Texas, is answering this challenge through a quality enhancement plan (QEP) that helps students clarify their career goals early on and chart a course for success.

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CAREER COACH

powered by



WITH CAREER COACH, students start by taking an assessment to determine their strengths, then browse through occupations compatible with their results. When a particular career appeals to them, they're only a click away from discovering related academic programs at Lee.

The objective is simple: help students find the most strategic path to their career goals.

Learn more at: economicmodeling.com/student-success/



THE CHALLENGE

Unnecessary community college credits delay completion, waste time, and increase student & taxpayer costs.



THE SOLUTION

Lee College's "Learning Frameworks" course uses Career Coach to help students plan their career path early on.



THE RESULTS

Lee's students choose classes that fit their plans, avoid excess credits and get the most educational value.

LEE COLLEGE HELPS STUDENTS SET GOALS and STAY on TRACK with CAREER COACH

By Mary Claire Miltenberger



At community colleges across the country, **unnecessary credits** have become a problematic norm, delaying completion and costing students precious time and money in the process.



Lee College is working to solve this problem through their “Learning Frameworks” course, a mandatory class which uses Emsi’s Career Coach to **help students plan their career trajectory** early on.

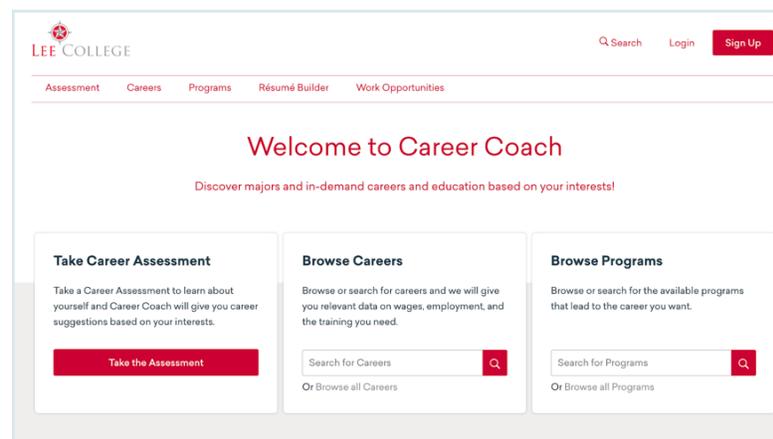


By having a clear plan to follow, Lee’s students can avoid confusion over which classes to take, **escaping the excess-credit trap** and getting the most value from their education.

AN EPIDEMIC

On average, community college students take 22 more credits than they need to for an associate’s degree. This can be a costly detour for students, both financially and—especially for part-time students—in terms of time to completion. Students aren’t the only ones losing out, either. Because many students depend on federal financial aid, these superfluous credits often cost taxpayers as well. The question for educators is: “How can we help students choose the right classes and graduate on time?”

Lee College in Baytown, Texas, is answering this challenge through a quality enhancement plan (QEP) that helps students clarify their career goals early in the game. As part of the QEP, Lee has implemented “Learning Frameworks”: a mandatory class for first-time college students with an undeclared major. The class is designed to help students develop a plan for their future, while learning practical job-hunting skills in the



Lee College’s Career Coach homepage

process. With an end-goal in sight, students can stay on track and avoid taking unnecessary courses that may postpone graduation.

A central part of the Learning Frameworks curriculum is Emsi's own Career Coach. "In the projects they're doing for the class, they're exploring all avenues of Career Coach," explains Dr. LeAnn Allison, former director of the QEP at Lee College. "It's definitely made a huge impact on the students."

COACHING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

With Career Coach, students start by taking an assessment to determine their strengths, then browse through occupations compatible with their results. When a particular career appeals to them, they're only a click away from discovering related academic programs at Lee.

In the Learning Frameworks class, students start the semester by using Career Coach to find five different career paths that interest them. They then write about each career, detailing the steps they would need to take in order to get there. As the students explore where degrees can take them, faculty encourage them to consider what they want their future to look like. Each student works on a vision board, where they answer the

"The students just brag on how much they enjoy doing the career exploration project, how it opens their eyes to new possibilities,"

questions: "Where do I want to be 5 years from now? What about 10 years? What about 20?" This type of project is designed to get students thinking carefully about what they want from their future, and how they will go after it.

In addition to introducing Career Coach, the class also coaches students on practical job hunting skills. Students create a LinkedIn profile and reach out to Lee graduates or graduates from their high school. They create resumes, practice writing professional emails, and learn how to take notes and manage their time well. At the end of the class, students do a presentation about their chosen career and why they're a good fit for it before fielding questions from their classmates.

What do students think of the class? "The students just brag on how much they enjoy doing the career exploration project, how it opens their eyes to new possi-

The screenshot displays the 'Chemical Technicians' page on the Career Coach site. At the top, there's a 'Save' button. Below are navigation tabs: Overview, About, Wages, Employment, and Live Job Postings. The main content area features two summary cards: one for Median Salary (\$62,465) and another for Annual Job Openings (246). A photo of a student in a lab is shown. Below that is a 'Region Selection' map highlighting the Houston area. At the bottom, there's an 'Available Programs' section with 'Chemistry AS' and 'Process Technology' listed, each with its own 'Save' button.

A career page from Lee's Career Coach site

bilities," says Allison. This is obvious in students' feedback for the course: "I was undecided on exactly what path I wanted to follow, but the projects in the class helped me decide on a course of action," one student wrote. "It's helped me expand my interests in different fields that I never thought I would be interested in," wrote another.

A CURE FOR CONFUSION

Many students find their assumptions about career paths challenged in the classroom. Sometimes they find that they have an aptitude for careers they didn't know existed; or that a job that looks glamorous on TV actually looks very different in the real world; or that a degree they had never considered before could open doors to multiple exciting jobs.

Throughout this thought process, Lee College faculty and staff are there to guide the students. "We ask them questions. 'Is what you're planning to do influenced by your parents? Is it influenced by the salary of the job?'" explains Allison. "We get them talking about it, so that they can see that maybe there's an outside influence, and maybe they should take a look at something that's still related to the career, but will be more fulfilling to them."



Lee College graduation

Allison recalls a memorable conversation with one bright high school student planning to pursue a degree in chemical engineering. As the first family member to attend college in three generations, her family was encouraging her to aim for a high-salary career in the oil and gas field, but she wasn't so sure. Using Career Coach, she discovered six different careers in chemical engineering that appealed to her much more.

"That's what it's all about: finding what they want to do, and getting them from point A to point B, instead of pushing them into a job that they're going to hate their entire lives," says Allison. "There are all kinds of options they haven't considered. For example, you can be a chemical engineer hired to make beer at a brewery. We're able to expose them to things they haven't seen in the past."

SERVING THE BROADER COMMUNITY

College and dual credit students aren't the only ones Lee is helping with Career Coach. Lee's QEP staff present at local feeder high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools, walking students through Lee's Career Coach page and answering students' questions about different careers and degrees. These activities support the State of Texas's Foundation High School Program, which requires students to select a career pathway, called an "endorsement," before entering high school.

Career Coach is also an important component of Lee College's participation in Guided Pathways, a

national initiative aimed at boosting student success by implementing curricular pathways that are aligned with specific target careers or transfer degrees. This means not only helping students select the right pathway for them, but also supporting students on that pathway to ensure that they complete on time and achieve the desired academic and professional outcomes.

The objective is simple: help students figure out what they want to do early on, and then find the most strategic path to get them there. By helping students stay on track with their goals, Lee College saves many students from the excess-credit epidemic and works to ensure that they follow their selected pathway. .!*

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To learn more about Career Coach or Emsi's other solutions for higher education, please contact us at economicmodeling.com/contact. We'd love to learn more about your institution's mission and explore how our data can help.

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