



Marketing &
Public Relations
Office of the
Chancellor

Highlights from Chancellor Margaret Ford Fisher's 2024 State of the College Address

About HCC's Role in the World

We see HCC as a critical part of Houston's solution to economic equality. HCC's in-district tuition is 18% lower than the average tuition of Texas' largest two-year colleges, making it the most affordable higher education option for those in metro Houston. Sixty-eight percent of first-time, full-time students receive financial aid support of some kind. Our financial accessibility makes the prospect of higher education possible for our most economically vulnerable students.

Our data shows that, as of 2021, the median income of 22-to-34-year-olds who earned an associate degree at HCC increased from \$28,000 to \$48,000 annually within five years after completion. Meanwhile, the median income of 35-to-44-year-olds increased from \$39,000 to \$54,000. Certificate earners showed similar gains. Truly, education has the power to change our community.

HCC has done an outstanding job fulfilling its mission. Today, HCC is one of the largest community colleges in the nation serving more than 85,000 students annually—students who will fill the in-demand jobs that businesses and industries need. Among our student population are more than 3,400 international students from all across the globe.

We have enjoyed 4 semesters of continual enrollment growth. Our enrollment for the fall semester is up 7.4% over last year.

Among two-year institutions, HCC is number two in the nation in awarding associate degrees to international students. We are number three in the nation in awarding associate degrees to African Americans. Last year, HCC was a finalist of the Excelencia in Education Award, demonstrating our exceptional support and success serving Latino and other underserved student populations. Yes, we are proud of our efforts and our students.

We have built partnerships with some of the nation's leading companies. In recent months:

- The Gulf Coast Apprenticeship Hub was honored with the prestigious exemplary award by the National Council for Workforce Education.
- And HCC received a \$100,000 grant from Johnson Controls to educate future workers in the heating, ventilation and air conditioning, fire and security fields.
- We joined forces with Harris Health System to establish a comprehensive apprenticeship program to train and produce skilled patient care technicians,
- And with the Fracht Group, based in Switzerland, to create an apprenticeship program to address a growing demand for skilled professionals in the global freight forwarding sector.
- HCC also began partnering with the City of Houston to provide training in solar installation,
- And began a partnership with QualComm, one of the world's wireless technology leaders, to support and foster a more inclusive patent ecosystem for inventors and innovators.
- And HCC is partnering with Capital IDEA Houston, a leading community-based workforce development nonprofit organization, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor, to establish a comprehensive workforce development program. HCC will provide training, apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities to as many as 425 participants over the next five years.
- And finally, in partnership with Miami Dade Community College and Maricopa County Community College District, HCC has been awarded \$2.8 million from the National Science Foundation Advanced

Technological Education program to create the national applied artificial intelligence consortium, a groundbreaking initiative that aims to foster the growth of technician-level artificial intelligence professionals across the nation.

About HCC's Immediate Future

One: Given our expanded programmatic offerings from 2-year to 4-year degrees, we are considering a name change.

The process is underway and will include extensive internal and external community input. We anticipate having our findings and recommendations to present to the board of trustees very soon. In the meantime, we are conducting an open and transparent process that allows input from you, our business partners, and the community.

One important reason to consider the change includes clearly defining ourselves to attract students and appeal to an array of constituencies who benefit from the institution's new program offerings. The fact that we are now offering baccalaureate degrees significantly changes the landscape in which we operate and expand employment opportunities for our graduates.

This is an exciting moment in time. I look forward to seeing the recommendations about a name change very soon. Changing the name of a college is not new in higher education. Famous institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, and many others grew as a result of name changes. Many community colleges around the country have also experienced name changes. When an institution's programmatic offerings expand, a name change is in order.

Two: Our Online College is going global.

The world of online instruction has changed higher education. There are very few boundaries. I am sure you have seen television commercials by colleges, large and small, advertising nationally for students who want an online degree. This trend is not going to diminish in the near term; students are very comfortable with online classes.

Now, any student, anywhere, can enroll and take classes from any public or private college that offers courses over the Internet. This is a tremendous challenge as HCC must compete with well-known universities for our own local students. And, while we focus on our community, we must think more broadly and expand our reach much further by building on the foundation of the Online College. We must grow its footprint to include our courses and programs in modalities that can serve our students—and yes, the entire globe.

In reality, HCC is a leader and pioneer in online education. Presently, the HCC Online College offers more than 60 programs fully online, and another 70 that are "hybrid." The Online College has been named among the best in the nation by Newsweek magazine. And, the American Association of Colleges and Universities selected HCC as a member of the Institute on Digital Equity, a group devoted to helping remove barriers to educational technology. Other institutions selected include Stanford University, California State University, Bradley University, and the University of Alaska.

With this expertise, we are now taking our online courses to the world. HCC Global Online College will launch officially next year, providing our outstanding programs first to nations where we get most of our international students, then, to the broader world. Imagine the value for our students: an associate or baccalaureate degree at a community college price!

We have not overlooked our local students. We still serve our on-campus students with wraparound services such as Eagle Pantry, Digital Access Centers, tutorial help, and more. But the same courses we offer to our local residents, including local international students, are beneficial to students in other parts of the world, as well. And we are asking our local partners—represented by member nations of the Houston Consular Corps—many of whom are with us this morning—to help us reach those populations back in their home countries.

There are others who need HCC's online programs, as well—such as military personnel around the globe. The satellite operations of major corporations—like Chevron, Shell, BP, and others—are located abroad and have personnel who have requested our programs. So, you can see, the degree and certificate programs we offer to students locally can serve an even larger audience of students.

We are working to greatly expand the benefits, flexibility, and reach of HCC's online instruction. This semester, HCC Online College launched a 1-NOW program. Students can take one online class at a time in three popular Associate of Arts programs: Business, Multidisciplinary Studies-General and Teaching. More 1-NOW programs will follow.

The program allows students to take one class at a time, 100% online, every five weeks. Classes also provide supplemental instructor support, tutoring, and library services support—all leading to a two-year associate degree.

This approach helps many adults forced to juggle work and family to complete their college degree. And here is another HCC benefit: If HCC does not have the baccalaureate degree a student needs, we can help them transfer to an upper-level institution with the appropriate program without losing their HCC credits. We have articulation agreements with 50 major colleges and universities in Texas and around the country.

Soon, a student who completes a Bachelor of Applied Technology degree from HCC will be able to move seamlessly into a master's degree program with a partner university. Even now, we are working out the details of an articulation agreement at a well-known university, that will allow graduates from HCC's online Healthcare Management baccalaureate program to transfer into an online master's program without losing credits.

Online education has come a long way—and HCC is at the forefront, leading the way.

Our task force is doing the research, building the Global Online College website, developing the marketing material, and preparing for a big “lift-off” in 2025. Stay tuned.

Three: HCC is reinventing higher education by developing programs for tomorrow's workforce.

Here's an example: In the future, Houston's skies will be filled with flying taxi or “air taxis,” thanks to the development of Electric Vertical Take-off and Landing aircraft. These aircraft carry up to five passengers and use electric motors to drive propellers or rotors that enable them to take off vertically, hover, and fly horizontally.

This new mode of urban transportation uses batteries and energy storage systems, and will require a new infrastructure, such as maintenance hangers and parking lots, near central hubs.

Likewise, you are beginning to see autonomous and electric vehicles on the city's streets—driverless vehicles guided by AI-enhanced GPS systems.

These new industries will soon change the city's landscape and provide viable and safe transportation options for Houstonians.

A few months ago, HCC's Electric Vehicle program received a \$200,000 grant from BP America to equip more than 300 City of Houston and Harris County fleet department employees with the knowledge required for repairing and maintaining electric vehicles.

And, with a \$430,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration, HCC is establishing a comprehensive aviation technician program that addresses the growing demand for skilled aviation technicians in the region.

With existing programs for electric vehicles and aviation technicians and with partners such as BP, the FAA and NASA, HCC is poised to move quickly to expand training into both autonomous vehicles and electric vertical take-off “air taxis.” HCC will be a leader in developing the personnel that support these new industries as they make their mark across the Houston landscape.

As you might imagine, these new industries bring together several technologies to be successful—automotive technology, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, computer information systems, and green energy technology. HCC is creating the systems and processes to integrate or “cross-train” students in these different technologies. Watch for more news about these and other dynamic advances at HCC.

Four: We are entering the Metaverse!

In fact, HCC is leading the way in adding this new technology to our instruction. We were the first college in Texas to open a Virtual Reality lab, and now, along with Artificial Intelligence, HCC is considered a national leader in developing virtual and augmented reality applications for the classroom.