



# 2014 AHE COMPENDIUM

Fall 2014

Odessa College



The story of **Odessa College** (OC) is part of a compendium that contains case studies of six colleges and universities from across the United States that implemented AVID for Higher Education (AHE) on their campuses. Whether implemented as a First-Year Seminar course or as part of an existing tutoring or mentoring program, AHE is making a positive difference in student learning. *Read more . . .*

# ODESSA COLLEGE

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

**Dr. Donald Wood**, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness

**Diane Acosta**, Associate Dean of Teaching & Learning

**Kristi Clemmer**, Executive Director of Student Completion

## **CAMPUS PROFILE & INFORMATION**

**Type of Institution:** Public, 2-year, comprehensive community college

**Total Enrollment:** 5,059 students

### **Student Population:**

- Undergraduates, age 24 or below: 73%
- Underrepresented minority: 62%
- Federal aid recipients: 27%
- Pell-eligible, first-time students: 45%

**AHE System:** Student Success Initiative (SSI)

**AHE Campus Timeline:** 4th year; started in academic year 2011–2012

**Source of funding:** Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB); Institutional

**Professional Development—Administrators, Faculty, Staff, Tutors:** 694

**Summer Institute Attendance—3 years**

## **SETTING THE VISION**

The implementation of AVID at Odessa College (OC) can be traced to the vision of Dr. Gregory Williams when he became president of the college in 2007. Williams' vision was to improve student success to such a degree that one day Odessa College would be recognized as the finest community college in the nation for student achievement. From its home in rural west Texas in the midst of the biggest and most productive oil field in the United States, it could never become the biggest or most rapidly growing community college in America—but with the right will and determination, it could strive to be the best.

In the ensuing years, Odessa College has embraced strategic plans and allocated resources in line with that determination. A significant step forward was taken in 2011 when the college decided to take advantage of a unique opportunity to develop a partnership with AVID that was, itself, just embarking on a journey into higher education after 30 years of helping K–12 students, instructors, and schools achieve great academic success.

Odessa College's first step toward developing that partnership was in 2011 when a team of eight people from the Arts and Sciences (A&S) division attended the AVID Summer Institute. With the exception of one education professional from the K–12 world who had experienced AVID in an AVID school district, none of the other Odessa College team members had experience with AVID. The Summer Institute was an eye-opener and the team came back from it with a deep appreciation for how AVID for Higher Education's (AHE) five Essentials could help the college move toward meeting President Williams'

vision of becoming the best student-success community college in the nation.

### **INCLUDING CAREER TECH DIVISION**

The first, and in retrospect, most significant step taken following the 2011 AVID Summer Institute was reorganizing and expanding the AVID campus team to include all divisions of the college, including the growing Career, Technical and Workforce Education (CTWE) division. In addition, both deans and associate deans from the A&S and CTWE divisions were appointed to Odessa College's AVID campus team along with faculty and key staff members from those divisions. The A&S dean was elected chair of the campus team, and using the five AHE Essentials as a guide, the AVID campus team began the work of creating and implementing a strategic plan to fully incorporate and institutionalize AVID into the instructional life of the entire college—not just one or two segments of the college.

AVID initiatives were strategically and intentionally institutionalized from the onset as part of the college's strategic plan for improving student success. In the Fall 2011 semester, armed with enthusiasm gained at the AVID Summer Institute, Odessa College integrated AHE strategies into its first-year student seminar course, COLL 0171: Strategies for Success. The course was piloted for two years and in Fall 2011 became mandatory for all first-time-in-college (FTIC) students at Odessa College. An FTIC student is defined as anyone who comes to the college with fewer than 12 college credits.

In 2009, Odessa College had become an Achieving the Dream<sup>1</sup> institution, which involved, in part, committing to developing data-informed decision-making

processes. As part of this commitment and in line with the vision to improve student success, the college was routinely monitoring and tracking student drop-outs and student achievement in both disaggregated and summative detail. It was through such monitoring that Odessa College quickly identified the positive impacts of the AVID-infused COLL 0171 Strategies for Success course. Among the more significant findings, it was discovered that students who received a C or better in the AVID-infused COLL 0171 Strategies for Success course, and who subsequently took courses taught by an AVID-trained instructor, were more likely to be successful than their peers who did not attend the AVID-infused COLL 0171 course.

These data were immediately provided to college leadership and since then, the president, administrative team, and the board of trustees have received regular updates on AHE initiatives and outcome data on the impact of these initiatives on student success.

The implementation of AHE for faculty development began with the creation of the AVID campus team, which included a faculty member from each division. After returning from the 2011 AVID Summer Institute, the campus team faculty members began meeting with cohorts of eight instructors from each instructional division to introduce AVID strategies for the classroom. During the Spring 2012 semester, the AVID campus team faculty members began training additional colleagues. Word-of-mouth enthusiasm for AHE quickly spread and by the end of the semester, faculty members across campus were expressing a desire to join the AVID training sessions. The administration immediately responded to these requests and provided both resources and encouragement to expand AVID training to all full-time instructors. The first campus-wide

training took place during the professional development week that was held at the start of the Fall 2012 semester.

### **SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS**

Odessa College received an AVID development grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that allowed the college to send eight more professionals to the 2012 AVID Summer Institute. Again, faculty from both divisions attended, and this time included a student success coach who taught COLL 0171 as well. By this time, CTWE division faculty were looking for ways to infuse AVID into courses that required a lab and skills demonstration. Conversations with former AHE National Director Eileen Friou, who was both supportive and encouraging, led to innovative approaches for tailoring AVID strategies to fit all CTWE courses at Odessa College. The success of this program at Odessa College led to the development of the first AVID career and technical education (CTE) strand offered at a Summer Institute. Several CTWE faculty members have served as AVID CTE strand trainers for the AVID Summer Institute.

### **DESIGNING 'TEACHER TUESDAYS'**

During the Fall 2012 semester, the associate deans from Odessa College's A&S and CTWE divisions collaborated on the creation of professional development workshops called Teacher Tuesdays with the goal of improving student success. These workshops shared the common theme of including the use of AVID strategies to convey information to students, and they also served to reinforce the use of AVID to create an engaging learning environment. In addition to offering workshops, the associate deans

began conducting class observations throughout both divisions to assess the degree to which AVID strategies were being incorporated into the classroom. After an observation, a feedback session included an evaluation of the instructor's effectiveness in using AVID strategies. Outside of the classroom, the two associate deans led campus-wide supervisor training sessions that modeled AVID strategies to engage faculty and staff engage with reading and discussing leadership principles and applications.

### **INSTITUTIONALIZING AVID**

By Spring 2013, AVID was fully institutionalized at OC. Today, AVID strategies are not only taught at the college; they are also incorporated into the culture of the college, including in supervisor training sessions, at leadership retreats, and in virtually all instructor-related sessions held during professional development week. Moreover, all new faculty hired since Spring 2013 are required to attend AVID 101 and 201 training sessions before beginning their first full-time semester with OC. These sessions introduce AVID and provide new faculty with an opportunity to experience how AVID strategies can be used to learn. The idea behind using strategies in all of OC's workshops and meetings is to ensure instructors and staff truly understand what it means to be an engaged learner.

At the end of Spring 2014, the administrative team decided to create a position dedicated to improving instruction: Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning. This person provides faculty support through professional development workshops, one-on-one consultation, and instructional review through class observations, all of which focus on the use of AVID strategies to actively engage students in the learning process. Providing faculty support to improve

instruction has been a priority of the instructional division, and this has played a key role in introducing and reinforcing the use of AVID strategies in the classroom. In Fall 2014, for the first time, the college hosted an adjunct faculty orientation that also included AVID methodology. Adjunct faculty are encouraged to make use of recorded AVID workshops, resources, and presentation notes.

As part of the college's continued implementation of AVID, administration sent eight more campus members including a dean, associate dean, faculty members from both divisions, executive director from Student Services, and student success coaches to the 2014 AVID Summer Institute. Three Odessa College employees led the AVID CTE strands at the Institute. Because of the college's strong commitment to AVID implementation, we will continue to send different faculty, staff, and administrators to the AVID Summer Institute.

Since embarking on the journey to become the nation's top community college, OC has received state and national recognition for its efforts and improvements, including an award from the THECB for the Drop Rate Improvement Program, Achieving the Dream Leader College status in 2013, AVID-certified campus status, and, most recently, a finalist for the Star Award from the THECB.

### **GROWING AHEAD FOR INSTITUTIONAL SUCCESS**

Throughout the last three years of implementation, Odessa College has found that the key to successfully implementing AVID reforms and advancements is that the college started with a small AVID program and allowed it to grow into a campus-wide AVID culture of teaching and learning. It was also important that the administration provided support in all aspects of the

AVID implementation. This included support from the Board of Trustees to the full administrative team.

Without strong leadership on campus, implementation would have been challenging for everyone involved.

Owing to Odessa College's support structure, AVID has been institutionalized and instruction now drives the process.

### **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> **Achieving the Dream**—the national, nonprofit leader in championing evidence-based institutional improvement. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, Achieving the Dream now leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history. Together with a network of over 200 institutions of higher education, 100 coaches and advisors, 15 state policy teams, and numerous investors and partners working throughout 34 states and the District of Columbia, this organization is helping nearly 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.