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**College Readiness Month Encourages Students to Plan Now for the Future**

*October 16, 2013* – It doesn’t matter if your child is 4 or 14, it’s never too early to start planning for college.

That’s the message Houston Independent School District College Readiness Manager Yolanda Norman is spreading this October as the district celebrates College Readiness Month.

College Readiness Month is designed to get students thinking about college and prepare them to not just gain admission, but complete a degree and graduate. The goal, Norman said is to get students thinking critically about their future and long-term plans.

“People often focus on the application and getting into college, but we have to start the conversation now about persisting,” Norman said, pointing to national statistics that show an alarming number of first-generation college students get into college but don’t graduate. “It’s about graduating, not just going.”

The number of HISD students who graduated from high school jumped by 18.5 percent — or 1,512 students — from 2005 to 2012, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Student Tracker service.

According to Student Tracker, which studied data from 2005 to 2012, about 60 percent of HISD students were enrolled in college within a year after their high school graduation. Data from 2005 to 2007 shows that nearly half of those students went on to graduate from college within six years.

The district’s efforts to prepare more graduates to succeed in college are paying off:

* HISD’s graduation rate of 78.8 percent is the highest it’s ever been.
* The number of HISD students taking the SAT college entrance exam has doubled since 2007.
* HISD graduates scored well enough to earn college credit on 7,106 Advanced Placement exams in 2012, a 64 percent increase from 2007.
* College scholarship offers to HISD graduates reached $185 million in 2012, a 128 percent increase from 2007.

HISD’s College Readiness Department has several activities lined up throughout the month to help highlight Norman’s message of persistence.

Throughout the first two weeks of October, HISD high schools hosted campus-based college fairs to give parents and students the opportunity to speak with representatives from various colleges and scholarship programs, as well as the chance to get essay writing tips.

**Ivy + College Night featuring admissions representatives from the top colleges across the nation is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 29 at Davis High School, 1101 Quitman Street.** Hosted by HISD’s EMERGE program, the event includes a college fair from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and a college panel discussion from 6:45 to 8 p.m.

**Students and parents can learn about universities in Texas the following week at Texas College Night, scheduled for Wednesday Nov. 6 at Reagan High School, 413 E. 13th Street.** State Sen. Rodney Ellis will serve as the keynote speaker, and college representatives will be on hand to share information about admissions requirements, automatic admission policies and scholarship opportunities. Guests can visit booths from 5:30 to 6 p.m. Universities will hold presentations from 6 to 8 p.m.

In addition to college fairs, Norman said the College Readiness Department also is hosting weekly “Coffee Talks” throughout the month to help employees across the district understand the role they play in college readiness.

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The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 282 schools and 210,000 students. The 334-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area with more than 25,000 employees.
**For more information, visit the HISD Web site at** [**www.houstonisd.org**](http://www.houstonisd.org/)**.**

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