



## SUCCESS STORY

# A community college implements GRIT to increase student success

Lone Star College–Tomball



Pearson

# The Challenge

Community colleges across the country are concerned about low graduation rates. For the 2010 cohort, the two-year graduation rate was 11.3 percent and the four-year graduation rate was 26.7 percent.<sup>1</sup> “Students aren’t finishing what they start,” observed Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, president, Lone Star College–Tomball (LSC–Tomball).

To address its low graduation rates, LSC–Tomball decided to take a new approach in 2014. “We began looking at college completion, persistence, retention, and success through a more focused lens,” Nutt explained. Working with the college’s leadership team and faculty, she implemented a “GRIT, Growth, and Greatness” initiative.

GRIT stands for growth, resilience, instinct, and tenacity. It also includes robustness, which is the ability of individuals to understand their personal resource levels and capacities, and make good decisions on how to deploy them strategically and effectively. According to Paul G. Stoltz, Ph.D., a leading authority on the topic, “GRIT is your capacity to dig deep and do whatever it takes—even sacrifice, struggle, and suffer—to achieve your most worthy goals in the best ways.”

## A Partnership Solution

LSC–Tomball partnered with Stoltz and Pearson to implement a pilot program to train faculty in GRIT, integrate GRIT into select courses, and measure GRIT’s impact on students. Over the summer of 2015, Stoltz conducted professional development sessions with the faculty while Pearson staff worked with selected professors to embed GRIT into their assignments.

In addition, the college divided its courses into two groups, those with GRIT (including the Student Success course, which teaches students the skills they need to thrive in college) and those without it. Faculty teaching courses with GRIT were required to show a video on the subject and infuse GRIT concepts into at least one assignment.

### PROFILE

#### City/State

Tomball, Texas

#### Institution Type

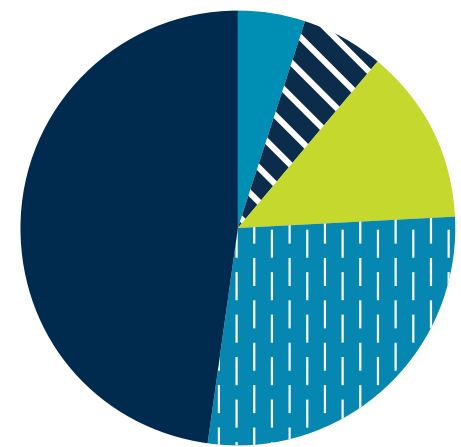
Community college

#### LSC–Tomball Enrollment

8,880 students

#### Ethnicity

- 48% Caucasian
- 28% Hispanic
- 13% African American
- 5% Asian
- 6% Other



1. “A larger window shows more student success,” *Community College Daily*, January 4, 2016, <http://www.ccdaily.com/Pages/Campus-Issues/A-larger->

In the fall of 2015, students were invited to take the GRIT Gauge™ assessment at the beginning and the end of the term. Students enrolled in the college's Student Success course were required to take both tests. The assessment introduced students to the concept of GRIT and helped them identify their strengths and weaknesses. After completing the assessment, students earned an Acclaim digital badge from Pearson, which they could share through social media or on their digital resumes to show that they had made progress on their GRIT scale scores.

Sean Tiffée, a professor of speech communication, whose courses included GRIT, became more flexible in working with his students after attending the professional development sessions. "Infusing GRIT into the classroom can often take the form of small, but important, changes from the instructor," he noted.

"For example, I give weekly online quizzes and a student approached me asking to be able to take the quizzes multiple times. 'I use the quizzes for studying,' she explained. 'But when I am allowed to only take them once, they don't help me as much.' That request was showing tenacity—the desire to keep pushing and challenging oneself. I realized that I was inherently limiting my students in growing their GRIT by letting them only take the quiz a single time, so I opened the quizzes to every class to be taken as often as they wanted. I also noticed a marked improvement in my students' class discussion and exam grades, which suggests the change was helping many of them."

Other professors who taught courses with GRIT integrated it into their class assignments and discussions. Alexis Kulik, a first-year communication studies student, recalled her history professor explaining that Sam Houston demonstrated good GRIT when he came to Texas. "It was really nice hearing about GRIT in dramatic historical figures and amazing literature and being surrounded by it," she commented.

## The Results

Since the initiative was implemented, LSC-Tomball has seen a positive impact on students.

Tiffée, who is an advisor to LSC-Tomball's National Model United Nations (NMUN) Program, attributes part of LSC's strong performance at the 2016 NMUN Conference in New York to the GRIT initiative. Competing against four-year colleges and universities from around the world, the LSC team earned an "Outstanding Delegation" award.

“GRIT helped  
me grow as an  
instructor, and  
it helped the  
students grow  
as students.”

—Sean Tiffée, Professor of  
Speech Communication,  
Lone Star College-Tomball

The GRIT initiative gave participants insight into themselves and each other, which improved their NMUN performance. Kulik, who participated in the NMUN program, explained, “My partner and I had an understanding of our own weaknesses, each other’s weaknesses, and how to go about working with others because we knew ourselves so well. I’m not the best when it comes to tenacity, so I needed to focus on it when we did our research. And I’m not the most resilient because I’m really thin-skinned when not everyone likes me. My partner was able to help me out with that.”

Academically, the college observed a correlation between higher GRIT scores, term GPA, cumulative GPA, and cumulative credits earned, supporting its expectations that higher GRIT is associated with better performance. In addition, preliminary data shows that the student success rate—the percentage of students completing the course with an A, B, or C—was three points higher for those who participated in a course with GRIT than for those who did not participate in a course with GRIT. Additional details on the college’s findings can be found in the [case study](#).<sup>2</sup>

LSC-Tomball is pleased with both the students’ NMUN performance and the overall results from the pilot GRIT initiative. Plans are underway to expand the initiative throughout the campus and to continue monitoring and measuring its impact on student success and, eventually, graduation rates.

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2. <http://www.pearsoned.com/results/lone-star-college-tomball-infuses-grit-strengthen-mindset-capabilities-increase-persistence-career-readiness/>

For more information on how GRIT can help your students succeed, visit [pearsoned.com/grit](http://pearsoned.com/grit)

**Learning  
makes  
us**

**Learning is a journey** of discovery, challenge, and wonder. Along the way, we are transformed.

