



**Wharton County
Junior College**

NEWS RELEASE

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OPENING DOORS

WCJC and WISD offer ROAR program to help high school students earn college credit

WHARTON, TEXAS – Wharton resident Shirley Cook never had the opportunity to complete her college education. She’s counting on the Realizing Our Academic Reward (ROAR) Academy to ensure her daughter doesn’t face a similar fate.

“I’ve always known she’s a smart girl,” Cook said of her daughter, Zeta Smith. “I’m just glad she’ll have this advantage while she’s still in high school. I have no doubt that she will make me proud.”

Through ROAR, Smith and 24 other Wharton High School freshmen this fall will get the opportunity to begin earning college credit while seeking their high school diploma. A collaborative effort of Wharton Independent School District and Wharton County Junior College, ROAR enables students to earn up to 60 college credit hours during high school.

Although similar to dual-credit programs, ROAR differs in that it begins freshman year and allows participants to take up to 18 hours per semester. Dual-credit programs are only offered to junior and senior level students and are limited to six hours per semester. ROAR is also offered free of charge to participating students.

On March 8, Wharton ISD officials held a “lottery” at WCJC’s Wharton campus to determine the newest ROAR Academy class, which is the fourth one since the program’s inception. Chosen by random selection were 25 students and three alternates. The ROAR Academy’s Class of 2021 includes Dario Flores, Torie Mitchell, Arissa Noguez, Oziel Garcia, Chakaeja Hughes, Emily Vargas, David Rufino, Sterling Harris, Reese Hogan,

Campus locations in ♦ Wharton ♦ Sugar Land ♦ Richmond ♦ Bay City ■ Extension Center in El Campo

Irma Placencia, Ladislado Mendez, Carlos Amaro, Larry Leal, Katherine Sanchez, Zeta Smith, Saralynn Martinez, Gabriel Olvera-Lopez, Tony Morales, Alondra Gomez, Amanda Lopez, Stephanie Alvarez, Briana Mireles, Andrew Cortes, Lana Foyt and Matthew Heffner. Alternates are Ciara Juarez, Leigh Stetten and Bri'yonika Scarlett.

Wharton ISD Superintendent Tina Herrington expressed her thanks to WCJC for helping the district offer such a rewarding program.

“This is an extremely exciting event for us here,” she said. “Through their support, WCJC is making so many opportunities possible for students at Wharton High School. We can’t celebrate this partnership enough.”

Herrington noted that one junior level student at Wharton High School who is currently enrolled in ROAR has already completed enough college credit at WCJC to nearly obtain an associate’s degree. She added that tuition, fees, books – and, in some cases, laptops – are provided to the ROAR students free of charge.

“We are going to give these students all the help they need to be successful,” said Wharton High School Principal Mark Anglin, who conducted the lottery.

“You have a goal, and we have taken the position that we are going to help you achieve that goal,” Herrington added. “ROAR will open doors for you.”

WCJC President Betty McCrohan welcomed the students and noted that ROAR is a fantastic means of getting a jumpstart on higher education.

“We all know how important education is for the future and all of you are getting a fine education with top quality instructors,” McCrohan said.

ROAR Academy launched its inaugural class in 2014. The program's goal is to assist students in furthering their education beyond high school. Although geared toward students who would not traditionally attend college, the program is open to all students.

Students like Zeta Smith, who hopes to be the first in her family to obtain a college degree.

"Taking all of these college classes is going to be hard, but I'm excited to have this opportunity," she said.

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