

The Keller Citizen

Programs help KISD track grads' progress

Posted Tuesday, Mar. 16, 2010

BY SANDRA ENGELLAND

Keller district officials are getting better information on where graduates are going to college and how well they are doing thanks to two new programs.

"This is great data that we get to look at for the first time," said Superintendent James Veitenheimer. "This catches most of our kids, not just a sample like we used to get."

At the March 11 board meeting, administrators and trustees discussed college enrollment for district graduates.

Keller is paying the National Student Clearinghouse about \$600 per high school campus to get statistical information on how many are attending college, whether they stay in college, and where they attend, said Deana Lopez, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

The clearinghouse tracks students who attend 3,300 colleges and universities, or 92 percent of those enrolled in higher education, according to the group's Web site.

The report tracked KISD graduates from 2005 to 2009. During the four-year period, the percentage of those who enrolled in college the fall after graduation peaked at about 63 percent in 2008 before dropping about 2 percent for 2009.

"The drop was probably related to the economy," said Lopez.

Despite the decline, the number of students enrolled in post-secondary studies is significantly higher than it was in 2005, when fewer than half of those who graduated attended college in the fall.

The report also examined the percentage of students enrolled in college at any time during the two years following graduation. The number ranged from about 60 percent in 2005 to 70 percent in 2008.

In the past, district officials have relied on students to report where they are enrolling in college, but those figures can be somewhat higher than those who actually attend, Lopez said. "It's good to see how many get in and how well they are doing."

Back in the fall, officials began receiving data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board about student grade point averages. That report was part of a mandate from the Texas Education Agency and pertains only to those enrolled in public colleges and universities in Texas.

For Class of 2007 graduates, the most recent data available, about 45 percent of Keller High graduates attending Texas colleges earned a GPA of 3.0 or better; Central had 36 percent with "B" or better averages; and Fossil Ridge, 34 percent. All three schools had an average of about 20 percent who earned 2.0 or lower.

District officials can also better track where students are enrolled. The most popular college for KISD graduates in their freshman year is Tarrant County Community College. The second most common is the University of North Texas. The third through sixth choices are the same institutions, although their popularity differs in the three high schools. Texas A&M University is the third most popular school for Keller grads but ranks fifth at both Central and Fossil Ridge. The University of Texas at Arlington is the No. 3 choice for Central and Ridge while Texas Tech University is fourth across the board. The University of Texas at Austin is fifth at Keller and sixth at the other two campuses.

The state's largest university draws fewer KISD students with good reason: only about 45 percent of those who apply to UT Austin are admitted, according to figures from College Board.

Lopez said administrators would use the data to help understand how well district students are prepared to get into college and perform once they are there. "Now we can track all of our students who attend college except for a very small percentage who attend institutions not included in the clearinghouse."