

San Jacinto College to discontinue athletics in four programs effective May 2018

11.07.2016 | By Amanda Fenwick



PASADENA, Texas — San Jacinto College has a long tradition of achievement, both in the classroom and on the athletic fields and courts, with a laser focus on student success. Once dubbed “Harvard on the Highway,” the reputation of San Jacinto College is well-known as demonstrated by being named one of the 10 finalists for the prestigious 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. In order to keep this focus, the Board of Trustees has made the difficult decision to discontinue competitive athletic programs in men’s and women’s basketball, women’s volleyball and men’s soccer, effective May 2018.

The decision was made official this evening, November 7, 2016, at the regular meeting of the San Jacinto College Board of Trustees. The College will continue to offer National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) competitive athletics in baseball and softball.

“This was an extremely difficult decision,” said Mr. Dan Mims, Chairman, San Jacinto College Board of Trustees. “For the last 10 years, the Board has been having difficult discussions around athletics and facilities. The Board is charged with being fiscally responsible and good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Because student success is the core value at San Jacinto College, we need to remain true to our mission around student success and focus our resources on programs and initiatives that impact the broader student body.”

These issues have been discussed for nearly a decade at San Jacinto College through facilities planning, which determines current and future needs. As the 2015 bond referendum was under consideration, critical facility and infrastructure needs were identified and prioritized. Most recently, it was determined that the gymnasiums on each campus require significant capital improvements, and specifically, the Central Campus facility needed a major renovation or to be entirely rebuilt in order to accommodate the competitive athletic programs. While the athletic programs have had many successes, the priority needs to be on the broader student population’s educational goals and what will have the most impact on that broader population.

In addition, the College also considered the operating costs for six highly competitive athletic programs and determined that these costs were not sustainable for the long term.

Over the more than 50-year history of San Jacinto College athletics, hundreds of student-athletes have participated, transferring to four-year universities and colleges on athletic and academic scholarships, and moving into the ranks of professional athletes. To date, San Jacinto College has won 12 national championships and has 17 national runner-up finishes.

“San Jacinto College will honor its commitment to the approximately 150 current student-athletes who are affected by this decision,” said Dr. Allatia Harris, vice chancellor for strategic initiatives, who oversees the athletics programs at San Jacinto College. “Student success remains our focus, and we want these student-athletes to complete the higher education credential they came here to achieve.”

“This was a difficult and painful decision that in no way reflects on the success of the teams, our student-athletes, or the coaches,” said Dr. Brenda Hellyer, Chancellor, San Jacinto College. “We are continually monitoring and evaluating student success, and making decisions based on data and the needs of our entire student body. This decision really came down to looking at the \$2.6 million in annual operating costs and a minimum of \$25 million in facilities needs. We have to weigh the total benefit to the full student body and to our goal of student success.”

Athletic programs are not the only areas with facility needs and operational costs. The San Jacinto College Board of Trustees and leadership have also made the following difficult decisions:

- Closing the San Jacinto College golf course. As announced earlier this year, the golf course will close effective Dec. 15, 2016.
- Combining the auto body collision repair program. As enrollment was declining between two training facilities, one on the North Campus and one on the South Campus, the decision was made to combine the two programs into one that is currently housed on North Campus.
- Custodial and bookstore outsourcing. As a cost-saving measure, the decision was made to outsource the custodial and bookstore services.
- Closing the child care center at the South Campus. The College evaluated options to bring the entire building up to today’s building standards and determined that due to the age of the building and the condition of the infrastructure, it was cost prohibitive.

- Closing the dental assisting program. Due to a lack of enrollment, the College closed the dental assisting program located on Central Campus. The College will no longer offer this program and has provided a teach-out for any student in the program.
- Redefining the core curriculum requirements. In order to meet the state of Texas requirement of moving all associate degrees to 60 credit hours, the College redefined the core curriculum and excluded several courses that would not readily transfer to a Texas university toward a bachelor's degree.
- Combining cosmetology and culinary programs. Due to facility needs identified in the current cosmetology and culinary programs at San Jacinto College, the three separate campus cosmetology programs will be combined into two programs, one on the North Campus and one on the South Campus. In like manner, the culinary programs on the North and Central Campuses will be combined into one program housed on the North Campus once the facilities are constructed.

“Higher education in general is going through transformational change,” added Hellyer. “At San Jacinto College we operate in a continuous improvement cycle where we look at data, operational costs, and facility needs. Difficult decisions are part of the transformational change. It is sad to be at this point; it is a matter of stewardship and what is best for the overall student population and the taxpayers of our district.”

About San Jacinto College

Surrounded by monuments of history, industries and maritime enterprises of today, and the space age of tomorrow, San Jacinto College has been serving the citizens of East Harris County, Texas, since 1961. As a fiscally sound institution, the College currently holds bond ratings of AA and Aa2 by Standard & Poor's and Moody's, respectively. San Jacinto College is a 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence Top 10 finalist and an Achieving the Dream Leader College. Approximately 30,000 students each semester benefit from a support system that maps out a pathway for success. The College offers seven areas of study that prepare a diverse body of students to transfer to a four-year college or university or enter the workforce with the skills needed to support the growing industries along the Texas Gulf Coast. San Jacinto College graduates contribute nearly \$690 million each year to the Texas workforce.

For more information about San Jacinto College call 281-998-6150, visit sanjac.edu or join the conversation on Facebook and Twitter.

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