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By **STEPHEN THOMAS** | 0 comments

Many students at Crosby High School and at Hargrave High School are charting their postsecondary futures the way 50-year-olds might contemplate retirement planning. The criticality of the decisions heightens as the prospective transition draws near.

The student who waits until the 11th hour to take higher education seriously - reflecting carefully about careers and preparation - risks losing a college seat to the student who made the right choices in the 7th hour.

Crosby High School junior Kyla Lucas has been one of the prepared ones. She was among hundreds of high school students from both area public school districts who walked into College Day on Oct. 14 focused. Crosby High School hosted College Day in its gymnasium.

Henceforth, Lucas would be in the same boat with other high school students. In today's competitive academic environment, particularly for those with an eye toward one of the professions, the future is practically now.

Lucas feels better informed now because of College Day, which was conceived before this year's participating students were, thanks to the Crosby/Huffman Chamber of Commerce.

McNeese State University, which is based in Lake Charles, La., has her attention.

"I learned that McNeese has a 95 percent acceptance rate into medical school," Lucas said, discussing some of the useful information she received at College Day.

The day's underlying message about the value of higher education was embedded long ago. The junior's aspirations are about seizing an opportunity for her generation.

"My parents did not go to college," Lucas said. "But I want to go because they didn't."

If a school with lofty alumni track records has steep admission requirements, then so be it.

"The more competitive, the better," she said.

College Day resembled a job fair. Recruiters occupied the multiple rows of folding tables set up on a concourse. Hargrave and Crosby students simply walked up to one booth after another, asked questions, and learned about numerous programs, their competitive assets, and academic and application requirements.



STEPHEN THOMAS

Decisions, decisions; Huffman and Crosby College Day informs students

Crosby High School junior Kyla Lucas leaves the College Day forum Oct. 14 with useful career-planning information. Crosby High School hosted this year's event, and students from Crosby as well as from Huffman's Hargrave High School attended. Recruiters from institutions of higher learning were on hand.



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Retired Army Col. Franklin D. Westmoreland, for instance, represented the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets, of which he was a member prior to serving as a commissioned officer for 26 years. Westmoreland retired in 1985.

He spoke to an estimated 150 students at College Day, an event that is important to college representatives as well as to students.

"It is very beneficial to the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M in that we have students come by who are interested in Texas A&M," Westmoreland said. "You ask them, 'What do you know about the Corps of Cadets?' They have no knowledge whatsoever, and you are able at least to tell them something about it in about a 30-second blast. They either say, 'No, that's not for me' or 'I'm interested in that.'"

"We get them to fill out a card, send it back to College Station. People in the Corps contact them, and that starts, at least, a relationship that may end up with the person being in the Corps of Cadets, which obviously is something that I am convinced is important."

There is something unique about today's generation of students who seek additional information about the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets, the colonel said.

"The surprising thing to me," Westmoreland said, "was the number of young women that end up being interested in the Corps. That is kind of a new experience for me."

The Corps is "ROTC-oriented" for the first two years at Texas A&M, Westmoreland said, adding, "Between the junior and senior year, they have a decision point. If they go on, and do the second two years, in the senior ROTC program, they will graduate with a commission in the armed forces. If they elect not to do that, then they simply finish out two years in the Corps, with no obligation for service to the country whatsoever; go on out and do their civilian job."

The chamber started College Day 24 years ago after a Crosby parent told chamber officials that a College Day that encompassed larger schools was so packed that Crosby students could not even squeeze into the room, according to chamber education committee chairwoman Susan Armstrong.

The chamber invited College Day recruiters, paid for the event's hospitality room, loaned the tables that representatives used, and arranged the visitation of College Week motivational speakers who encouraged students to contemplate the utility of higher education.

College Day's undergirding philosophy is that most students need postsecondary training in order to compete in the competitive job market. In every aspect of its involvement, the chamber transmits that message along with the educators.

The organization and its members have long awarded scholarships annually, and thusly have distributed applications for four \$500 scholarships available this year, Armstrong said.

The school districts alternate hosting the annual event.

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