

# Changing the Odds in a Socially Distant Space

How the Santa Barbara Foundation supported Community Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic.



When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Santa Barbara County in March 2020, many Allan Hancock College Community Education students were unsure whether they would be able to continue their education.

Many students had to put their educational or vocational pursuits on hold to provide childcare or family care. Some had difficulty accessing remote classes after the college transitioned to Zoom lectures. Others thought programs were paused until it was safe to attend in-person courses on the college campus or in the community.

Thanks to the generosity of the Santa Barbara Foundation and the Robert O. Dougan grant, AHC Community Education was able to support student outreach and enrollment during a period of great uncertainty and confusion for our students.

“Since 1928, the Santa Barbara Foundation has championed the philanthropic efforts of the people of Santa Barbara County, identifying the areas of greatest need and bringing together generous donors with those who do standout work in the nonprofit community,” said Sofia Ramirez-Gelpi, dean of Academic Affairs. “Allan Hancock College is honored to continually be a recipient for grant funding to advance the hopes and dreams of our community.”

One way the Robert O. Dougan grant helped with outreach was by allowing AHC Community Education to connect with Spanish-speaking students via social media, like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well through traditional print and broadcast mediums.

Community Education was also able to leverage social media marketing and digital interaction to reach more than 90,000 potential students who were interested in learning English as a second language, receiving their high school diploma equivalency, preparing to become U.S. citizens, building important vocational skills, and transitioning to for-credit programs.

The financial award also helped produce larger, more informative community publications and class listings. The expanded publications allowed Community Education to highlight our Career Development and College Preparation programs in greater depth and provide prospective students with important information on our modified operating and enrollment procedures in both English and Spanish.

When opportunities for in-person outreach were available during the later stages of the pandemic, the Robert O. Dougan grant provided the necessary funding to produce targeted outreach material. For example, AHC Community Education was able to distribute class and registration information to more than 10,000 families through our on-campus Emergency Food Distribution site. Later, when the college hosted a community vaccination site, our staff were also able to distribute registration material to farmworkers and other interested community members.

We are grateful for the support of the Santa Barbara Foundation and the Robert O. Dougan grant, which helped AHC Community Education connect to students, families, and our Spanish speaking community in a safe and responsible manner during the height of an unprecedented public health crisis.

To learn more about the Santa Barbara Foundation, a community foundation for all of Santa Barbara County, please visit: [SBFoundation.org](http://SBFoundation.org).

