

**EDUCATION**

# Bats to Cats: Texas State, Austin Community College announce 'seamless' transfer program

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Texas State University President Kelly Damphousse, left, and Austin Community College Chancellor Russell Lowery-Hart take a selfie at Thursday's news conference to announce a partnership to help transfer students. *Ricardo B. Brazzelli/American-Statesman*

ROUND ROCK — Austin Community College and Texas State University on Thursday announced a “seamless” direct transfer program to ease barriers for students looking to pursue a bachelor’s degree.

The program — called “Bats to Cats,” for the schools' mascots, the Riverbat and the Bobcat — aims to increase the number of successful transfers and graduations by offering guaranteed admission to Texas State and more communication between the two institutions.

Eligible students who apply to the program and are accepted could start at ACC as soon as this fall and transfer to Texas State as soon as the summer of 2025.

ACC Chancellor Russell Lowery-Hart said at a news conference at the college’s Round Rock campus that most ACC transfer students go to Texas State University. But of the 60% of students who enter ACC wanting to transfer to a four-year institution, only about 25% do so.

The program aims to signal to students who want to pursue a bachelor’s that transferring is an attainable option for them and to remove barriers such as cost, time, credit transfer and discomfort, Lowery-Hart said.



News conference attendees cheer as they get details of the new program, which will remove barriers to transferring for a bachelor’s degree. *Ricardo B. Brazzell/American-Statesman*

As an additional incentive, Texas State will award to students who make the leap \$1,000 their first year at the university, renewable for a second. For students who enroll in classes

at the Round Rock campus, Texas State will offer \$2,000, Texas State President Kelly Damphousse said.

“It’s not the student’s fault if they don’t (transfer); it’s almost always our fault,” Damphousse said in an interview. “It’s our job to make it easier.”

This program, combined with ACC’s new [free tuition program](#) for eligible 2024 high school graduates, makes the pathway to a bachelor’s degree even more accessible, he said.

And for Damphousse, this is personal. He said he started his education at a community college. After working as a prison guard, he decided to pursue a degree at Sam Houston State University. When he got there, he felt “lost,” he said.



The Bats to Cats program will help Riverbats from ACC Chancellor Russell Lowery-Hart’s campuses become Bobcats at Texas State President Kelly Damphousse’s campuses. *Ricardo B. Brazziell/American-Statesman*

“If it wasn’t for my roommate, if it wasn’t for my adviser, I never would have made it,” Damphousse said. “I always think about the student who’s coming to Texas State — what are they going through?”

Crispina Harris came to ACC to invest in her education. After developing a strong relationship with her adviser and expressing a desire to pursue biology further, she transferred to Texas State.

She told the American-Statesman that her biggest hope for the program is that it helps establish community and a network of knowledge among transfer students who participate in it.

“The relationships, just getting transfer students together, is going to be great because it can feel isolating as a transfer student sometimes because you just don’t know what you’re doing and you’re doing it by yourself,” Harris said.

Lowery-Hart said as distrust and expenses rise in higher education nationally, he hopes the announcement makes it easier for Central Texas students to know a degree is an option for them.

“I think that Bats to Cats and the free college movement removes some big barriers that allow families to talk themselves out of a four-year degree,” he said. “We’re just giving them hope that we’re going to get it right on their behalf.”