

QECHS student to graduate with Associate's Degree



Though Quest Early College High School's first graduating Class of 2014 won't flip their tassels until next year, QECHS junior Melissa "Missy" Davenport became the first Humble ISD student to graduate with an Associate's Degree on Saturday, May 10. Davenport completed the 64 credits this spring semester to earn her Associates in arts before completing her senior year and earning a high school diploma.

Davenport plans to spend her last year in high school working toward another degree.

"After my first degree in arts, I will pursue an Associate's degree in science for another graduation in the fall," Davenport said.

Davenport is among a small but growing number of students who have chosen to take advantage of the early college model that was introduced to the Humble ISD community in the 2010-11 school year. QECHS is one of fewer than 100 such schools in Texas, giving students the opportunity to work toward an Associate's degree while concurrently earning their high school diploma. The program is offered through a partnership with Lone Star College-Kingwood and accepts a limited number of students each year through an application process.

In Humble ISD, QECHS students begin their freshman year transitioning to college-level courses, demanding a certain level of focus and dedication. One of the goals, however, is that hard work will pay off when seniors complete high school not only as college ready, but as college graduates familiar with university life. According to QECHS Principal Ginger Noyes, research studies have shown that more than 90% of students in early college model programs go on to complete a four-year degree. Davenport was eager to rise to the challenge, and credits the small environment to her success.

"From any middle school to any high school there is a big adjustment, but at Quest they ask that you jump from middle school to college," she said. "The facilitators are very

helpful and encouraging, and they genuinely care about your education and your future. We have a personalized environment where we know everyone in our academic classes, and all of the teachers know everyone in the school."

Aside from the post-graduation advantages of completing a college degree and a high school diploma at the same time, the QECHS program is free of cost to students and families.

"When I first saw it, I knew it was an amazing opportunity," Davenport said. "I saw the chance to earn an Associate's Degree, and my education is the most important thing to me."

Davenport knew early on that she wanted to go into the field of medicine, and wanted any head start on the years of schooling ahead.

"I have a love for helping people," said Davenport, who is thinking of pursuing a career in psychiatry after she completes a four-year degree and finishes medical school. "I find the anatomy of the human body and mind very interesting, how we all can be so different but so alike."

Davenport believes any student can achieve what she has with the right attitude. She reminds anyone who is looking at the QECHS program that she was able to successfully juggle high school life with the demand of college courses.

"Ironically, I'm graduated on the morning of the same day as my high school prom!" she said. "A lot of people think my life has been nothing but academics for the last three years, but I'm still just like every other teenager. In this program, though, a balance is important for success. You need to be focused on your education."



Melissa Davenport speaks to the Humble ISD Board of Trustees about her experience at Quest Early College High School, and being the first Humble ISD student to earn an Associate's degree in the program.