

San Antonio College

CASE STUDY



**SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE CREATES AN INVITING,
YET FUNCTIONAL SPACE FOR MATH ENRICHMENT**



Learning college-level math can be intimidating, especially for students who weren't well prepared in high school. San Antonio College has made this process easier for students with the help of an inviting, yet functional space designed in partnership with School Specialty.

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DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SUCCESS, PATRICIA MEDINA

San Antonio College is a two-year community college located just north of downtown San Antonio, Texas. Recognized as a Hispanic-serving institution by the U.S. Department of Education, the college counts two-thirds of its student body as Hispanic—and 68 percent are first-generation college students.

“Our students come to us with a lot of challenges, because they're not well-prepared for college-level learning,” says Director of Student Success Patricia Medina. Many come from poor neighborhoods with under-resourced schools, she explains, and they don't have strong foundational skills in reading, writing, or math.

One of the key areas of focus for San Antonio College is getting students ready for college-level work, so they can graduate and move on to a four-year college or university. Research suggests these efforts are paying off. “A recent study found that our graduates were more prepared in their junior year at local universities than were students who enrolled in those institutions as freshmen,” Medina observes.

Aided by federal grants, San Antonio College has created two math enrichment labs for students who struggle in that subject, so they can get up to speed and successfully take college-level courses. In these math labs, students learn independently at their own pace using MyMathLab software from Pearson, and tutors are available to help them as well.

The college opened its first math lab in 2015. While the initial lab has met its goal of helping students enrich their math skills, the configuration of the space left something to be desired. When the college received funding to create a second math lab, Medina wanted a space that would be more inviting to students and would function more effectively for both students and instructors.

DESIGNING WITH STUDENTS' NEEDS IN MIND

In creating a second math lab on campus, the college turned to School Specialty for help with the design.

“We wanted the space to be multipurpose, so that students could work independently and also receive one-on-one tutoring,” Medina says. “We wanted the instructor to be able to move around the room easily and interact with individual students. But most of all, we wanted students to feel comfortable in the space. When you have to come in and take a refresher course, it can be intimidating. We wanted students to feel welcome, and we wanted to give them the message: You can get through this.”

San Antonio College worked with School Specialty sales representative Robin Wilburn to equip the lab with furniture that would be both functional and inviting. For instance, AIS Divi Series modular workstations with adjustable-height tables give





students the flexibility to raise or lower the work surface to accommodate their specific needs.

“I didn’t want students with disabilities to feel any different,” Medina says. “With adjustable-height tables, they don’t have to. They can use the same furniture everyone else is using, which makes the space feel more inclusive.”

Each of the tables includes a built-in Dekko Ashley Duo pop-up power supply and USB port for students to plug in their devices as they work. AIS Pierce multipurpose chairs on casters allow students to move around the space easily, so they can work individually, convene in a group, or glide over to a peer to ask a question.

In addition, a dividing wall creates a separate space for students to have conversations with a tutor or with each other that are more private in nature.

“The design helps us maximize the space, so we can accommodate as many students as we can,” Medina says. “It’s conducive to the way students work, with places to sit, study, talk, and engage.”

PERSONAL ATTENTION IS KEY

Medina values the personal attention she has received from Wilburn and School Specialty. More than just a furniture supplier, the company has been a full partner in the project.

“I like my relationship with Robin,” Medina says. “She knows our campus, and so she knows exactly what our standards and our needs are.”

School Specialty also helped with the installation, which went very smoothly—with no punch list of items to resolve when the project was finished.



“We’ve had problems in getting what we were promised from other vendors before,” Medina says. “That wasn’t the case here. School Specialty is so easy to work with.”

With the help of School Specialty, San Antonio College has created a learning space that students can feel comfortable in as they build up their math skills and create a strong foundation for success.

