

Sunita V. Cooke

Associate Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development North Harris Montgomery Community College District



Dr. Sunny Cooke currently serves as Associate Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development in the North Harris Montgomery Community College District (NHMCCD) located in suburban Houston, Texas. In this role, she has had the opportunity to lay a foundation for data-driven decision making, research and planning to identify, expand and fund the workforce development offerings within the five college district. The district currently serves some 45,000 credit students and an additional 15,000 continuing education students.

Dr. Cooke has worked at Montgomery College (one of the five NHMCCD colleges) since 1995 following her postdoctoral training at MD Anderson Cancer Center where she explored the role that cell recognition and adhesion play in cancer cell metastasis. She taught biology, microbiology and biotechnology at Universities and Community Colleges for over 13 years. In her role as a faculty member, she founded the Montgomery College Honors Program and was awarded a Teaching Excellence Award in 1999. She has been asked to pioneer new organizational structures and departments within the college and has successfully blurred the lines between credit, continuing education and corporate training, academic and workforce offerings to dynamically meet community needs. She has served as a director, dean and is currently in a vice-president level position at the system office.

Dr. Cooke has been instrumental in engaging business and industry, public education, higher education, economic development and government agencies in community development efforts. These partnerships have resulted in unique laboratory science degree programs within the area, enhanced resources and facilities to expand educational opportunities for students, successful grant efforts and have contributed to the economic prosperity within the region. Most recently she successfully spearheaded an effort to obtain a \$1.6 million grant from the Texas Workforce Commission to support 12 local businesses with skill upgrades for 850 employees within the manufacturing industry and to create 650 new jobs within the area.

Dr. Cooke has had the opportunity to serve on a variety of boards at the local, regional, state and national levels. Her service has benefited local schools, career academies, chambers, professional societies, leadership academies and the Global Corporate College. She was recently named to serve a three year term on the International Chair Academy's Practitioner's Board. Over the years, she has served as a mentor to emerging higher education leaders, taught in community development institutes and graduate programs as well as served on the professional development organization within her college.

Dr. Cooke believes that access without support does not equal opportunity and has directly overseen student support services ranging from career exploration and commitment to early intervention, supplemental instruction, facilitated study groups and use of current technologies. She also realizes that a talented and energized faculty and staff committed to the success of students is essential.

Dr. Cooke is passionate about the impact that community colleges make in the lives of individuals and the role they play in keeping our workforce globally competitive. She brings to her work energy, enthusiasm, vision, humor and an ability to engage others.