Lone Star College-University Park’s Chief Strategist for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Michael Mathews was one of several national thought-leaders invited to attend the White House Education Datapalooza in Washington on Oct. 9. The White House Office of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), along with the U.S. Department of Education, invited senior White House executives, entrepreneurs, innovators, and representatives of leading-edge companies to participate in the event which included a national announcement of the MyData Button initiative, which will open public access to student data. Approximately 120 innovators from the U.S. attended the event along with Todd Parks, assistant to the president and the U.S. chief technology officer, and Arne Duncan, secretary of education. Also included were Marina Martin, White House fellow for open data, and James Shelton and Karen Kator, assistant education secretaries.

The MyData Button project, which was introduced in January, is a joint effort between the Office of Educational Technology (OET) and the OSTP to encourage schools and software vendors who hold student data to allow students to download their own data in order to create a personal learning profile that they can keep with them throughout their learning career. In addition, developers are encouraged to create customized services and tools for students based on the information available in their personal learning profile.

Those involved with this project are leaders, Mathews said, who have been innovating and inventing methods, applications, and products to put secure and aggregate educational data into the hands of students and parents. “Even though we live in the 21st century where data abounds in our daily life, students and parents cannot effectively access their education records to help them simulate, navigate, and plan their educational journey and pathways,” said Mathews. “By providing students with ownership of their personal data in a secure manner, their educational journey can be more effectively prepared, planned and navigated.”

Mathews, along with LSC-University Park President Shah Ardalan, has been working with LSC students along with representatives of other colleges and universities specifically with open-data access – first with a national survey that reported how students view technology and data as it relates to their education and completing their goals, and secondly with the development of the National Educational Positioning System (EPS), a GPS equivalent for education. The EPS project was a winner earlier this year in a Department of Education challenge for students, and innovators and advisors, to submit inventions and business plans to help solve some of the nation’s top education issues, including open-data access. Using data from more than 8,000 students across the U.S., LSC-University Park students, with Mathews as the advisor, won first place in the competition while capturing the attention of national leaders.
Mathews and LSC-University Park have since filed a U.S. patent for seven claims of invention around the EPS system to also include career planning. The patent filing has now become the Education and Career Planning System (ECPS) and can be accessed at mydatabutton.com.

In a letter to the winning team at LSC-University Park, Dr. Brenda Dann-Meisser, assistant secretary for vocational and adult education, praised the effort. “The Educational Positioning System’s winning entry shows the promise of tackling tough educational issues when our country’s students are empowered to innovate and meet the challenges of the 21st century,” Dann-Meisser wrote.

Mathews said that the EPS/ECPS could change the way that students (and parents) prepare, visualize, and plan for their personal learning and educational success, no matter what college they attend. Dr. Richard Carpenter, LSCS chancellor, said the ECPS has the potential to be a “game-changer.” “Better enabling students to make informed decisions with their own educational data will help drive student success to the next level,” Carpenter said./

Components of the ECPS are already in place and operational, with the full system set to be completed in 2013, Mathews said. The first components of the ECPS can be accessed at mydatabutton.com.