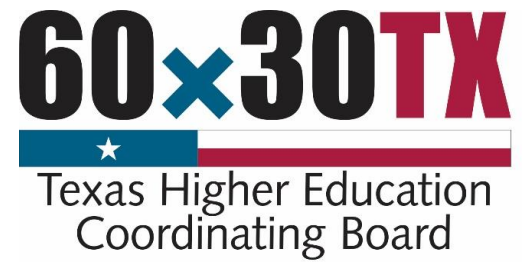


**Academic Quality and Workforce  
College Readiness and Success  
External Relations  
Innovation and Policy Development  
Strategic Planning and Funding  
Student Financial Aid Programs**



***60x30TX*  
2017 Progress  
Report**

**July 2017**

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### Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is to provide leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

### Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

### Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

### The Coordinating Board's core values are:

**Accountability:** We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

**Efficiency:** We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

**Collaboration:** We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

**Excellence:** We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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## Executive Summary

Central to the goals of *60x30TX* is maintaining Texas as a global economic player by having an educated population, making them aware of their marketable skills, and helping them manage their student loan debt. If the 2016 progress report for *60x30TX* was about getting out the word, this report is about expanding that reach and advocating for the plan, establishing frameworks and best practices, realigning local and regional goals and targets, and promoting efforts that champion the success of Texas students in higher education. It also is about looking at the data, building on early gains, and shoring up initial lags for the targets of each goal.

Overall, the data that is included in this report for the second year under *60x30TX* reveals the state is making positive, modest progress toward most of the plan's goals and targets, with a decrease in two targets since the 2015 baseline. While there is progress to celebrate, much work remains to accelerate progress in all areas of the plan.

Because *60x30TX* was adopted two years ago, this report shows just one or two years of data for most measures. It provides breakouts and explanations of the *60x30TX* metrics, and displays goals and targets through 2030. In addition, this report summarizes activities or initiatives that support the strategies listed in the plan. Pursuing those strategies, as well as the ones developed by institutions, will help the state to meet the four goals.



### **The Overarching Goal: By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree.**

This goal focuses on growing the college-educated population for an age group that represents the future of the state, those who have recently completed their education and/or are moving up in the workforce. An estimated 41.0 percent of Texas residents, ages 25-34, had at least a certificate from a higher education institution in 2015, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), supplemented by THECB estimates of certificate holders. That was up from 40.3 percent the previous year. This measure includes the fraction of the population holding a certificate or a higher level of education, i.e., associate, bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degrees.

In 2005, the first year that ACS data were available, just 34.1 percent of Texans, ages 25-34, held a certificate or higher award. While 2015's attainment rate was nearly 7 percentage points higher than in 2005, it will need to increase at almost twice that rate in the next 15 years to reach the 2030 target of 60 percent.



### **By 2030, at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's from an institution of higher education in Texas.**

Students of all ages at Texas public, independent, and career higher education institutions completed 311,340 certificates, associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees (BACMs) in FY 2015, the baseline year for the *60x30TX* completion goal. They completed about 10,000 more BACMs the next year. Bachelor's degrees comprised the largest component of BACMs in FY 2016 (about 129,000), but associate completions had the largest and fastest annual increase in FY 2016, from about 81,000 the previous year to more than 87,000.

The *60x30TX* plan specifically targets Hispanics, African Americans, males (all racial/ethnic groups), and economically disadvantaged students (Pell Grant recipients) for increased completions. Hispanic and male BACMs increased by 7.5 and 3.7 percent,

respectively, between FY 2015 and 2016, but African American completions dropped by 0.4 percent. Economically disadvantaged students saw BACMs grow by 4.7 percent in FY 2016.

The plan also targets direct-to-college-going rates of public high school graduates, since those who enroll immediately in higher education in the fall are more likely to be college ready and complete a BACM. Just 51.9 percent of FY 2016 high school graduates enrolled directly in public or independent higher education in fall 2016, a decrease from 52.7 percent the previous year.



**By 2030, all graduates of Texas public institutions that year will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.**

Higher education institutions have been asked to identify marketable skills – those skills valued by employers – that students should expect to acquire by the time they graduate. The third *60x30TX* goal is that all graduates of Texas public institutions (completing a certificate or any level of degree, i.e., associate through doctoral or professional) will have completed programs with identified marketable skills. Some institutions have begun identifying marketable skills, while others are beginning to develop processes for identification. A target related to this goal is the percent of graduates remaining in Texas and found working and/or enrolled during the first fiscal year following graduation. The target is 80 percent for every year of *60x30TX*.

The state has been close to this target for the last two years. Of about 281,000 completers (certificate or higher) at Texas public, independent, and career institutions in FY 2014, 78.9 percent were working and/or enrolled in higher education at some time in FY 2015. The percentage dropped by 0.1 point, to 78.8 percent, for the next year's cohort of approximately 293,000 completers.



**By 2030, undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.**

Students should not have to bear excessive loan debt to boost the state's educational attainment. The fourth and final goal is to maintain undergraduate debt at a median of 60 percent or less of first-year wages, for the life of the *60x30TX* plan. For graduates of Texas public institutions, the median percentage for FY 2013 graduates (excluding students with no loan debt) was 60 percent, rounded to the nearest percent. For FY 2014 graduates, the median debt percentages (for certificate-, associate-, and bachelor's-level graduates with debt) remained at 60 percent. Ideally, that percentage will remain steady.

In addition to managing and balancing student loan debt, a target under the student debt goal is to limit the proportion of undergraduate students with debt to no more than half. In 2015, that target was met when 49.2 percent of students, who earned undergraduate certificates, associate degrees, or bachelor's degrees from public and independent institutions, had some loan debt. In 2016, the percent dropped to 48.2 percent.

Another way to manage debt is to reduce excess semester credit hours (SCH) attempted by students on their way to graduating. In FY 2015, the average was 20.0 excess SCH for students completing either an associate or bachelor's degree at a public institution. In 2016, that average for both types of degrees, combined, dropped to 18.0 excess SCH the following year. The *60x30TX* target aims to reduce excess hours to just 3.0 SCH by 2030.

**Table 1.** Progress toward goals and targets *60x30TX*.

Goal	Target	Used in 60x30TX Report	First-Year Baseline (2015)*	2016 Progress
<b>60x30</b>	60x30 (Attainment)	38.3%	40.3%	41.0%
<b>Completion</b>	Overall	298,989	311,340	321,410
	Hispanic	89,355	96,657	103,889
	African American	37,658	38,964	38,813
	Male	122,744	131,037	135,849
	Economically Disadvantaged	107,419	114,176	119,490
	TX High School Graduates Enrolling in TX Higher Education	54.2%	52.7%	51.9%
<b>Marketable Skills</b>	Working or Enrolled Within One Year	77.3%	78.9%	78.8%
<b>Student Debt</b>	Student Loan Debt to First Year Wage Percentage	60%	60%	60%
	Excess SCH Attempted	21	20	18
	Percent of Undergraduates Completing with Debt	50.7%	49.2%	48.2%

\*Baseline use 2015 data when possible; otherwise most recent data available are used.

## Introduction

Central to the goals of *60x30TX* is maintaining Texas as a global economic player by having an educated population, making them aware of their marketable skills, and helping them manage their student loan debt. If the 2016 progress report for *60x30TX* was about getting out the word, this report is about expanding that reach and advocating for the plan, establishing frameworks and best practices, realigning local and regional goals and targets, and promoting efforts that champion the success of Texas students in higher education. It also is about looking at the data, building on early gains, and shoring up initial lags for the targets of each goal.

During this important stage of building conversations and foundations, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is continuing to make the case for *60x30TX* because the future of Texas depends on it. The state's prosperity is tied to a dynamic, educated, and skilled workforce that begins with Texas students. That's why the first goal of *60x30TX* aspires for 60 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds to hold some kind of credential past high school by 2030. A credential may mean a Level I or Level II workforce certificate<sup>1</sup> or any degree from the associate to the professional level, and those certificates or degrees may have been earned in Texas or elsewhere. The 25- to 34-year-old target age group provides both a snapshot of the state's future economic prospects and shows its progress toward growing its educated population.

As two- or four-year institutions in Texas can attest, anything worth achieving comes with effort, and the magnitude of *60x30TX*'s goals and targets are no exception. The second goal, for example, focuses on completions and aims for at least 550,000 students to complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's in 2030 from a Texas higher education institution. The goal includes targets for African Americans, Hispanics, males, economically disadvantaged students, and direct high school-to-college enrollment.

Each of those targets will require tremendous effort to reach. Consider the target for economically disadvantaged students. When the plan was developed and adopted in 2015, the committee looked at data from eighth graders across the state. At that time, if nothing changed and Texas continued business as usual, fewer than 10 of 100 economically disadvantaged eighth graders would go on to complete higher education. This statistic matters because the state's K-12 system is still the main pathway by which students enter higher education, and within that K-12 system, nearly 60 percent of students are economically disadvantaged. Those numbers make clear the need for higher education stakeholders in Texas, including industry, nonprofit, and philanthropic partners, to collaborate extensively and to intervene early in moving students to and through higher education.

Concerted effort also will be needed to achieve the marketable skills and student debt goals. The marketable skills goal aims for all graduates of public institutions to have completed programs with identified marketable skills. The goal also directs institutions to identify and regularly update marketable skills produced by their programs, so students can market themselves to employers. Collaboration between higher education and industry will be needed to achieve this goal. The student debt goal states that student debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions. This goal is a statewide maintenance goal and aims to keep debt to 2013 levels or lower it for students who graduate with debt from Texas public universities.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the THECB's *Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education* (GIPWE)



To reach the four goals, Texas is innovating and broadening its idea of higher education. Whether college takes place in a brick and mortar building or on a device in a student's home, *60x30TX* encourages our state's colleges and universities, as well as other higher education stakeholders, to use their local and regional creativity and resources to support students in reaching their goals. Those efforts, in turn, will help the state to meet its goals.

## **About This Report**

This is the second *60x30TX* progress report issued by the THECB. The first, released in September 2016, included baseline data and an overview of the four goals, but its major focus was on policy, legislative action, and on beginning the conversation about strategies to achieve the goals of the new higher education strategic plan.

Because *60x30TX* was adopted two years ago, this report shows just one or two years of data for most measures. It provides breakouts and explanations of the *60x30TX* metrics, and displays goals and targets, through 2030. Overall, the data that are included in this report for the second year under *60x30TX* reveal the state is making positive, modest progress toward most of the plan's goals and targets, with a decrease in two targets since the 2015 baseline. While there is progress to celebrate, much work remains to accelerate improvement in all areas of the plan.

In addition, this report summarizes activities or initiatives that support the strategies listed in *60x30TX*. Pursuing those strategies at the statewide level, as well as those plan-associated initiatives developed by institutions, will help the state to meet the four goals.

An appendix at the back of this report provides the fourth annual assessment of progress on the most recent plans developed by higher education institutions to improve collaborations with Texas high schools whose graduates have low college-going rates. This report and assessment are required by House Bill (HB) 2550, passed in 2013 by the 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session. The assessment also presents measures of student success, including college-going rates and persistence, which could be influenced by HB 2550 activities. The publication of this information may help identify ways to increase high school-to-college enrollment, a target under the completion goal, as well as support several strategies listed in the *60x30TX* plan.

## Major Efforts that Cut Across Multiple Goals and Targets of *60x30TX*

The sections that follow highlight efforts that cut across multiple goals and targets of *60x30TX*. These highlighted efforts will have a lasting impact on achieving the aspirations of the plan, and in some cases, the efforts will be ongoing through the lifetime of the plan.

### Revision of the Texas Higher Education Accountability System

In 2015, the THECB began the process of redesigning the [state's higher education accountability](#) system to align with the goals and targets of *60x30TX*, which emphasizes an educated population (the 60x30 goal), completion, marketable skills, and student debt. The accountability system provides Texans and their elected officials with information about the effectiveness and quality of the education students receive at individual institutions of higher education. Initially, the system was developed in response to a 2004 charge from former Governor Perry.

The measures included in the accountability system help emphasize the state's higher education priorities and provides stakeholders the ability to track institutional outcomes. In addition to institutional data, the accountability system provides statewide, sector-specific, districtwide, and systemwide summaries.

During the process of redesigning the accountability system, the THECB hosted several meetings with each higher education sector. Institutions were invited to provide input and feedback to revise and streamline existing measures and formulate new measures that are particularly relevant to monitoring progress toward the goals and targets of *60x30TX*. In addition, considerable effort was invested in improving the usability of the system. The redesigned system displays data in a manner that is easier to navigate and that presents data in a more user-friendly format for key audiences, such as legislators and their staff, media, students and families, business and industry, and chambers of commerce. Several measures include filters that allow users to see outcomes for specified categories or groups of students. The website is also now fully compatible with mobile and tablet devices.

Institutions began to access the redesigned system in early 2017, as part of the system's soft launch. Official release of the system is anticipated following THECB board members' review and approval in July 2017. The soft launch period allows for additional user feedback prior to board members' approval. Enhancements to the system have been, and will continue to be, implemented based on this feedback. The redesign of the accountability system to align with *60x30TX* is a major step toward helping higher education stakeholders collaborate with one another and track their efforts toward meeting plan targets and goals.

### Regional Workshops

**Metroplex regional *60x30TX* workshop in Dallas.** This *60x30TX* regional workshop was the last to take place and occurred since the last *60x30TX* progress report. In partnership with the THECB and with support from Lumina Foundation and the College for All Texans Foundation, El Centro College co-hosted the eighth *60x30TX* regional workshop on Dec. 1, 2016, in Dallas. Nearly 150 Metroplex higher education leaders attended the workshop. Participants gathered to discuss the new plan and share suggested strategies for achieving the state's higher education goals and targets within the Metroplex Higher Education Region. The

workshop included leaders from public school systems, community colleges and universities, business and industry, and government and nonprofit education organizations. As with previous regional workshops held across the state in 2016, the Metroplex workshop included keynote speakers and a panel discussion of local leaders who shared their advice and ideas related to the *60x30TX* goals. Afterward, all participants engaged in discussion regarding how stakeholders can best work together to achieve the goals of *60x30TX*.

**Strategies generated from participants of *60x30TX* regional workshops.** Over the course of the eight workshops held across Texas from April through December 2016, more than 800 attendees suggested strategies for accomplishing the goals of *60x30TX*. The *60x30TX* regional workshops helped move the state closer to realizing the goals by bringing together regional stakeholders who have a vested interest in higher education and garnering their support for the plan. Through their participation in the *60x30TX* workshops, attendees laid a foundation for planning and implementing efforts in regions throughout the state.

A review of the suggested strategies from the regional workshops revealed several overarching themes. Among the most prominent were leveraging existing systems, pursuing early intervention, increasing collaboration, and broadening community engagement. Table 2 displays these themes, along with a sample of workshop participants’ suggestions.

**Table 2.** Overall themes gleaned from the *60x30TX* regional workshops in 2016

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leveraging Existing Systems</b></p> <p><b>Completion:</b> Leverage the momentum of engagement in recruitment. We are much more engaged in recruitment, but we have to keep that engagement going throughout our efforts to retain and move a student through to completion, and we need to develop better ways of addressing this.</p> <p><b>Student Debt:</b> Provide financial literacy courses throughout the pipeline – leverage existing courses to get the information across.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Early Intervention</b></p> <p><b>Overarching:</b> Plant the seed of college early. Create a “Got Milk”-type campaign for higher education in the region.</p> <p><b>Student Debt:</b> Require conversations about debt earlier, not at the student’s entrance to higher education. Students need counseling before receiving aid. Knowing what their debt level is will help students to prepare.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Increasing Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Marketable Skills:</b> Work with career services offices to identify these skills. They are a ready pipeline to industry and to other efforts that can help, i.e., NACE. Workplace skills like showing up on time, customer service, and basic professionalism can be taught through career services. This is an opportunity for them to engage students earlier than their senior year.</p> <p><b>Completion:</b> Continue to expand alignment of K-12 and higher education through increased collaboration of TEA and THECB and financial support of K-12 and higher education institutions for rigorous dual credit courses and joint professional development of faculty and counselors/advisors.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Broadening Community Engagement</b></p> <p><b>Marketable Skills:</b> Create a comprehensive community plan that includes business, higher education, and kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12). Identifying and developing marketable skills isn’t just a higher education problem – businesses and students are key stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Overarching:</b> Provide more community outreach and more exposure for students in elementary schools (and their parents) to the many possibilities in higher education. Family attitudes about higher education make a difference.</p>

The THECB staff reviewed the workshop participants' strategies, and after coming to a consensus, highlighted four strategies as approaches that would have a major impact on achieving the *60x30TX* goals (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Four strategies (drawn from workshops across the state) that would have particular impact on achieving the *60x30TX* goals

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Overarching Goal</b></p> <p>Support approaches that accelerate attainment: Implement strategic scheduling, such as block scheduling and compressed terms, and give credit for experiential learning.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Completion</b></p> <p>Develop a statewide program that can be adapted locally and regionally to help high school students, college freshmen, and sophomores to understand the benefits of on-time completions – “start early, go fast, and complete on time.”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Marketable Skills</b></p> <p>Change the campus culture surrounding marketable skills by adopting comprehensive approaches that begin early, involve faculty, and provide meaningful internships.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Student Debt</b></p> <p>Enhance financial literacy by providing proactive, detailed, and frequent financial aid education and advising to give students a better framework for understanding and managing their debt.</p>

Currently, the THECB staff is working on consolidating suggestions for strategies that will benefit the state overall, as well as those that will benefit specific regions within the state.

### Major Media Activities

**2017 Texas Public Higher Education Almanac.** The THECB launched its seventh annual *Texas Public Higher Education Almanac* in May 2017 as part of the agency’s core function to promote transparency and accountability among Texas public institutions of higher education. The 2017 almanac provides higher education facts and performance data that allow users to compare Texas public higher education institutions. The data provide a snapshot of Texas’ progress in achieving goals of *60x30TX*. The almanac draws from data found in the agency’s accountability system – long recognized as a “best practice” national model for higher education performance data – and soon to be officially launched in July for *60x30TX*.

**Launch of 60x30TX.com.** The THECB received support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help get the word out about *60x30TX* and to share data in a consumer-friendly fashion. Results to date include the 60x30TX.com website and the Data Fellows training, which will begin in mid-June.

In May, the THECB launched [60x30TX.com](http://60x30TX.com), a consumer-friendly website that provides snapshots of data to key audiences, including legislators and their staff, media, students and families, business and industry, and chambers of commerce. The new website offers hot topics, infographics, event information, videos, and many other downloadable resources. The website also features interactive data for each of the *60x30TX* goals. The website is just one piece of a full campaign to promote a college-going culture. The campaign includes the website, yard signs, posters, handouts, and other materials.

**Media stories and mentions.** From April 1, 2016 to May 1, 2017, the THECB has garnered 73 media stories on *60x30TX* and 129 mentions of it in other stories. As part of the *60x30TX* engagement and education campaign, the Texas Tribune awarded the College For All Texans Foundation a 60-day promotional program valued at nearly \$16,000. From May 1 to June 30, 2017, the program promoted the *60x30TX.com* website via rotating banner ads, email blasts to subscribers, taglines, and an opinion editorial in the TribTalk section. The Texas Tribune is a nonpartisan, nonprofit media organization that averages more than 1.1 million unique visitors per month and measures nearly 4.8 million page views per month.

## **Two Regional Efforts to Promote *60x30TX***

**Development of 60x30 El Paso.** In January 2017, members of the Council on Regional Economic Expansion and Educational Development (CREEED) in El Paso announced their own regional strategic plan for educational excellence, "60x30 El Paso." This initiative is designed to double the level of educational attainment in the El Paso region.

As the name suggests, the initiative shares the same overarching goal as *60x30TX*, but with tactics adapted for El Paso. As part of the initiative, CREEED produced a new report, which allows education, business, and civic leaders to target interventions in a way that takes into account demographic and geographic factors that make the region sometimes referred to as the Borderplex unique. For example, the vast majority of students in the region who enroll in higher education attend either The University of Texas at El Paso or El Paso Community College.

The El Paso region was the first in the state to announce its own strategic plan in parallel with *60x30TX*.

**Launch of [60x30netx.com](http://60x30netx.com) in the Northeast region.** In April 2017, the Northeast region of higher education in Texas held a *60x30TX* Day and launched its ongoing efforts to promote the plan. Texarkana College's video on the need for *60x30TX* went viral.

The video featured Texarkana Independent School District sixth graders. The students were targeted because they will be the first group to be 25 years of age in 2030. Chairman Andres Alcantar from the Texas Workforce Commission collaborated with Northeast Texas Community College, Paris Junior College, and Texarkana College to lead the *60x30TX* initiative in the Northeast region, which asked business, K-12 schools, and individuals to support its efforts.

**System strategic planning presentations to the board.** The THECB now has a standing agenda item at every quarterly board meeting on system/institutional strategic planning. Invited institutions will discuss how their system's strategic plan aligns with *60x30TX*. The presentations and associated discussions are webcast statewide.

Since January 2016, the chancellors of five university systems have provided formal presentations and engaged in discussions with the board of the THECB regarding their system's strategic plans. They include:

- Chancellor William McRaven, The University of Texas System (Jan. 21, 2016)
- Chancellor Brian McCall, Texas State University System (Apr. 28, 2016)
- Chancellor Robert Duncan, Texas Tech University System (Jul. 21, 2016)
- Chancellor John Sharp, Texas A&M University System (Oct. 20, 2016)

- Chancellor Renu Khator, University of Houston System (Jan. 26, 2017)<sup>2</sup>

Leaders from two single-campus systems, Chancellor Carine Feyton of Texas Woman's University and President Austin Lane of Texas Southern University, will present at the July 2017 board meeting. Future scheduled presentations will include the leaders of the University of North Texas System (Oct. 26, 2017), Stephen F. Austin State University (Jan. 25, 2018), and Midwestern State University (Jan. 25, 2018). Being planned for 2018 are presentations by the leaders of the Texas State Technical College System, the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas, and the Texas Association of Community Colleges.

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<sup>2</sup> Because of the need to focus on matters related to the 85th Texas Legislature, there was no strategic planning presentation to the board at the April 2017 meeting.

## Progress Toward Reaching the Goals of *60x30TX*

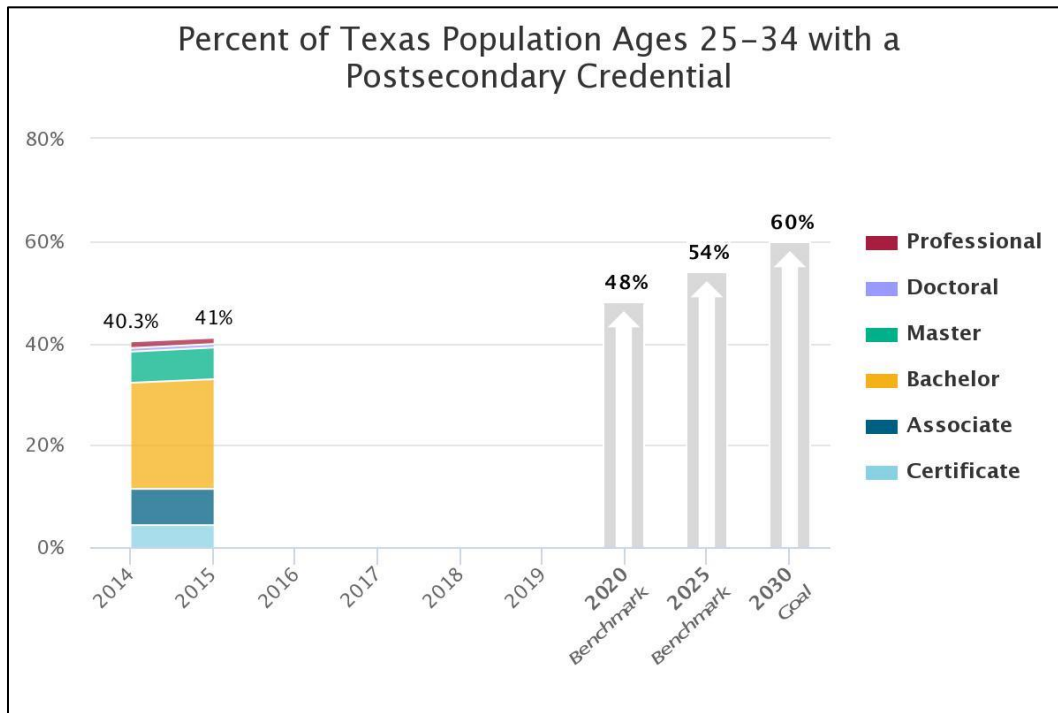


**THE OVERARCHING GOAL: 60x30**  
 At least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree.  
■ *Supports the economic future of the state*

### Overarching Goal, Progress by Data

The overarching goal of the *60x30TX* plan is to grow the college-educated population so that, by 2030, 60 percent or more of Texans ages 25-34 will hold a certificate or higher. Figure 1 displays progress between 2014 and 2015, as well as benchmarks for 2020 and 2025 (48 percent and 54 percent, respectively) that could provide a pathway to the goal. In 2015, the percentage stood at 41.0 percent of Texas residents,<sup>3</sup> 25-34 years old, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s monthly American Community Survey (ACS).

**Figure 1.** Progress based on 2014 and 2015 data for ages 25-34 in Texas



The overarching goal is the only measure in the *60x30TX* plan that is based on a sample survey, so estimates have a margin of error, expressed as a confidence interval.<sup>4</sup> For

<sup>3</sup> When *60x30TX* was adopted in 2015, it used 2013 data and 38.3 percent of Texans ages 25-34 held a certificate or degree.

<sup>4</sup> “The ‘90 percent’ in the confidence interval represents a level of certainty about our estimate. If we were to repeatedly make new estimates using exactly the same procedure (by drawing a new sample, conducting new surveys, calculating new estimates and new confidence intervals), the confidence intervals would contain the average of all the estimates 90 percent of the time. We have, therefore, produced a single estimate that, if repeated indefinitely, would result in 90 percent of the confidence intervals formed containing the true value.” (Source: U.S. Census Bureau website)

<https://www.census.gov/did/www/saige/methods/statecounty/ci.html>

2015, the 90 percent confidence interval was 41.0, plus or minus 0.5 percent, or 40.5 to 41.5 percent. That was up from 40.3 percent in 2014, but the 0.7 percentage-point increase was not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.<sup>5</sup>

THECB staff derived this goal's data for 2014 and 2015 by first using the Census Bureau's ACS estimates of the number of 25-34-year-old Texas residents whose highest level of education was an associate, bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degree. For estimating certificates, THECB staff had to calculate the number of residents whose highest credential was a certificate because the ACS does not collect data for certificates. Staff determined the annual ratio of certificate to associate degree completions (using data collected annually from higher education institutions by the THECB) for students ages 25-34 graduating from Texas public, independent, and career institutions and then multiplied the ratio by the annual ACS estimate of 25-34-year-old Texans with an associate degree level of attainment.<sup>6</sup>

Historically, educational attainment (ages 25-34, certificate or higher) has increased significantly in Texas since the ACS was first implemented in 2005, from 34.1, plus or minus 0.7 percent in 2005, to 41.0, plus or minus 0.5 percent in 2015, a 10-year rise of about 0.7 percentage point a year. That pace will need to almost double, to about 1.3 percentage points a year, to reach 60 percent attainment by 2030.

## **Overarching Goal, Progress by Strategy**

### **Strategy, Overarching Goal: Respond to the needs of the changing population of Texas so students are supported into and through higher education.**

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Promote college attainment, develop and implement education and curriculum delivery systems such as competency-based programs, provide high-quality programs for educationally underserved adults, encourage stop-outs with more than 50 semester credit hours to return and complete, and collaborate with Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to identify critical fields.*

Since the last progress report, the initiatives and activities that follow have sought to address the strategy of this goal.

#### **Working with Accelerate Texas (ATX).**

Accelerate Texas is an integrated career pathway, instructional, and student-support model that combines contextualized, basic skills support within an entry-level career technical education program on a career pathway. As of Feb. 2017, 29 college systems had enrolled 6,742 students into ATX programs that led to Occupational Skills Awards (54%), level I certificates (25%), or local certificates (16%) offered among 70 careers. Among credentials offered, an estimated 82 percent supported a living wage for a single adult in Texas (\$10.20/hr.), with the median wage at \$12.49/hr. The highest reported median wage for ATX credentials was in mechanic repair technology at \$23.00/hr. This program was not funded for the 2018-19 biennium, but a comparable program at the TWC supports attainment for a similar population of adult learners.



<sup>5</sup> The data THECB collects and reports for the other goals and targets of the *60x30TX* plan reflect the full population – not a sample – that participates in higher education in the state, so confidence intervals are not required.

<sup>6</sup> This approach assumed the ratio of certificate to associate completions was a good proxy for the ratio of certificate to associate attainment.



**Working with State Board of Educator Certification staff.** To increase the college ready competency of K-12 leadership, instructional staff, and counselors through data examination, professional development, initial certification, and micro-credentialing, the College Readiness and Success (CRS) staff at the THECB is working with the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) staff to insert the following revisions into the Texas Administrative Code, Section 239:

- Define the roles and responsibilities of a comprehensive school counseling program that emphasizes college and career readiness and postsecondary options for all students, including college admissions, college financial aid resources, application procedures, and workforce and career opportunities;
- Integrate school counseling programs and the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards;
- Use varied sources of information, resources, and practices to counsel students about postsecondary opportunities about college and career readiness;
- Develop practices to promote learners' knowledge about college and career readiness processes necessary to pursue postsecondary opportunities;
- Ensure equitable access to postsecondary opportunities for all learners and increase students' and parent/guardians' awareness and use of resources to become college and career ready;
- Facilitate learners' and parent/guardians' access to school and community resources related to postsecondary opportunities and college and career readiness; and
- Continue professional development related to increasing college and career readiness and promoting postsecondary opportunities and preparation for all learners.

SBEC Counselor Standards review started in February 2017 and should be completed by August 2017.

**Promoting Generation Texas (GenTX).** Generation Texas supports the goals of *60x30TX*, the Texas Challenge to Reach Higher, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and college readiness indicators. On May 5, 2017, GenTX held its annual decision day. GenTX Decision Day is a school spirit day that works to build excitement and awareness around the college selection and enrollment process. During GenTX Decision Day 2017, schools and communities encouraged and supported all students, especially seniors, in their postsecondary plans.



A total of 159 Texas high schools and 12 Texas elementary and middle schools participated. Those numbers include 38,415 high school seniors, of which 29,925 reported acceptance into at least one higher education institution. Students totaling 61,972 (not including high school seniors), along with 16,816 school staff, parents, community members, and other supporters, also participated. On social media, #GenTXDay had 36,700 Twitter Impressions (starting April 1), a reach of 6,591 on Facebook (starting April 18), and 390 Posts and 118 followers on Instagram.

**Expanding Texas Affordable Baccalaureate Program.** For some Texans, the traditional model of higher education may not work well. They may have some college credits but no degree, or they may have work experiences that could contribute toward their academics that currently are not integrated and applied to a degree program. For these students, the costs of higher education may be prohibitive, and time constraints of traditional


degree programs may conflict with work and family obligations. To attract these students to campus and serve their higher education needs, Texas public institutions of higher education are looking to different models of instructional delivery. One approach to expanding access and increasing attainment is the Texas Affordable Baccalaureate (TAB) program. Texas public institutions have been challenged to develop bachelor's degrees that students can complete in fewer than four years, at a cost not to exceed \$15,000.

In 2014, Texas A&M University-Commerce and South Texas College launched the first two TAB programs in Organizational Leadership. By fall 2016, more than 200 students had graduated from these programs. These programs not only contribute to making higher education more affordable, they also contribute toward the completion goal strategy to "develop and implement education and curriculum delivery systems (e.g., competency-based programs) to make higher education available to a broader and changing population."

Through the TAB degree programs, a greater number of annual completions will increase the percentage of Texans holding degrees by 2030. By engaging business and industry partners in defining competencies, institutions will focus degrees on identified marketable skills. TAB degree programs are designed to decrease educational expenses for students by lowering costs and reducing time to degree, thereby decreasing their debt load.

Building on the momentum of the first two TAB programs, additional programs are now under development. With the support of donor funding through the College for All Texans Foundation, \$651,248 in grants were awarded to four new baccalaureate programs, which will enroll students in fall 2017: a Bachelor of Science (BS) in mechanical engineering technology at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi; a Bachelor of Science in applied science (BSAS) at Tarleton State University; a Bachelor of Science (BS) in criminal justice at Texas A&M University-Commerce; and a Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) in computer information technology at South Texas College, in partnership with Austin Community College.

TAB programs offer a better path for some students, expanding their ability to engage in higher education. The expansion of the TAB programs offers motivated students a way to complete their education quickly at a low cost.

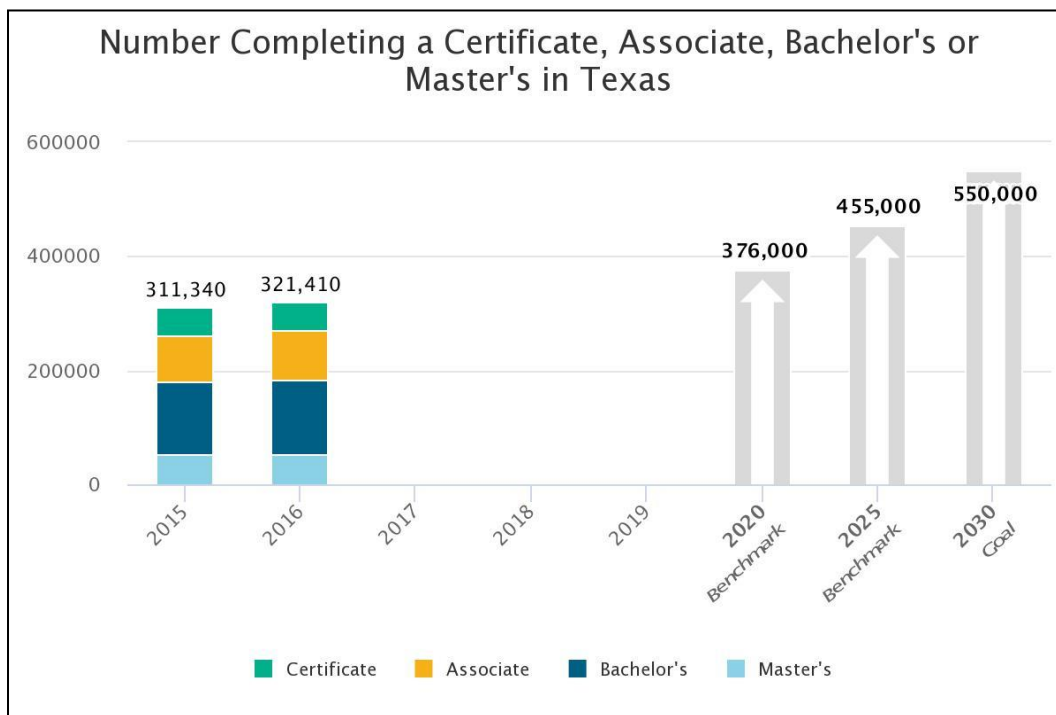


**THE SECOND GOAL: COMPLETION**  
 At least 550,000 students in 2030 will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's from an institution of higher education in Texas.  
 ■ Requires large increases among targeted groups

### Completion Goal, Progress by Data

The second goal complements the overarching goal because increased certificate and degree completions in Texas will help grow the Texas college-educated resident population. The goal is for at least 550,000 students (for all ages who are educated through Texas higher education) to complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's or master's (BACM) in FY 2030, from an institution of higher education in Texas – public, independent, or career. Reaching this goal assumes that the annual number of completions will steadily increase through 2030. Reaching this goal will mean students at Texas institutions will have completed approximately 6.4 million BACMs in those 15 years. In FY 2015, students at Texas public, independent, and career institutions completed 311,340 BACMs (Figure 2). Completions increased by just over 10,000, or 3.2 percent the following year, to 321,410.

**Figure 2.** Completions at Texas public, independent, and career institutions



Associate completions increased from 81,151 in FY 2015 to 87,423 in FY 2016 – an increase of 6,272, or 7.7 percent – the greatest and fastest increase among the four types of awards. Bachelor's degrees made up the largest component of completions in both years, increasing from about 127,000 to 129,000. Certificates and master's both rose by about 1,000 in the first year of *60x30TX*, to 51,565 and 53,379, respectively.

Hispanics completed 96,657 BACMs in the *60x30TX* base year of FY 2015 (Figure 3, next page). They completed 103,889, or approximately 7,000 (7.5%), more degrees and certificates the following year. The number of certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor’s degrees earned by Hispanic students increased in 2016, while master’s completions dropped.

**Figure 3.** BACMs earned by Hispanics at Texas public, independent, and career institutions

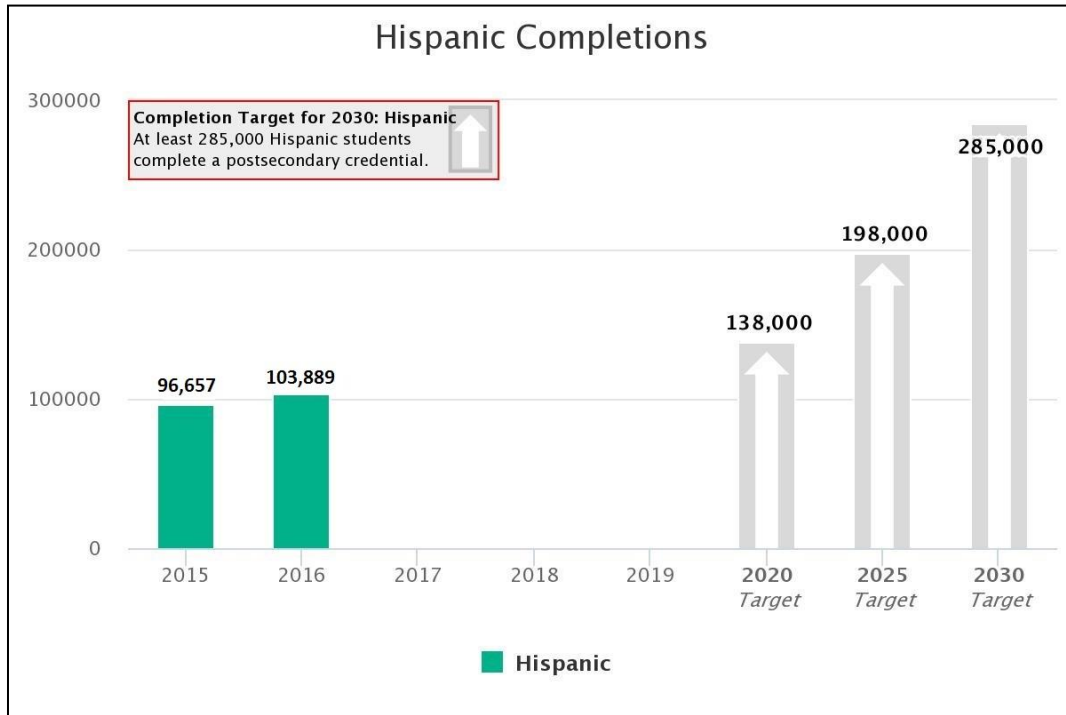
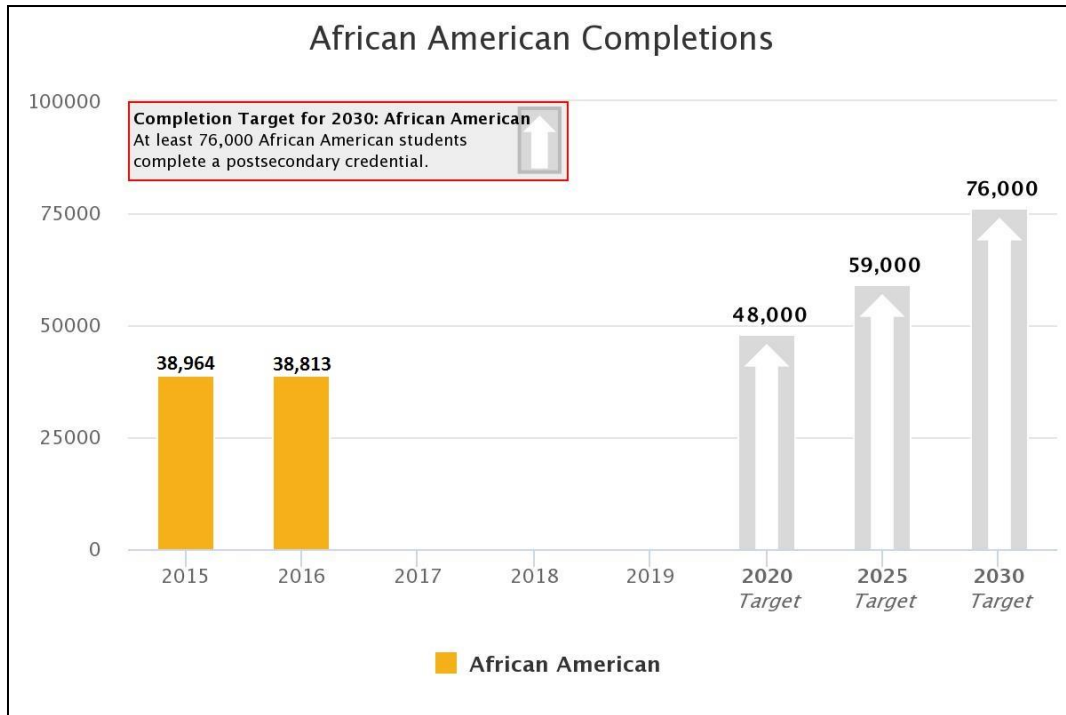


Figure 4 shows that BACM completions by African American students dropped by 151, or 0.4 percent, from the base-year level of 38,964 to 38,813 in FY 2016. An increase of nearly 500 associate degrees in 2016 was not enough to offset drops in the other award types for this population. Completions decreased by 141 BACMs for African American females and by 10 BACMs for African American males.

**Figure 4.** BACMs earned by African Americans at Texas public, independent, and career institutions



Male students (all racial/ethnic groups) completed 131,037 BACMs in FY 2015, 42.1 percent of the total awarded that year by Texas public, independent, and career institutions (Figure 5). The following year, males completed 135,849 BACMs. That was an increase of almost 5,000 awards, or 3.7 percent, but it only improved males' share of the total BACMs completed by 0.2 percentage point, to 42.3 percent. By 2030, *60x30TX* planners expect both males and females to complete at least 275,000 BACMs, for a total of 550,000 or more awards. Female students earned over 185,000 BACMs in FY 2016, 57.7 percent of the total and an increase of more than 5,200 from FY 2015.

**Figure 5.** BACMs earned by males and females at Texas public, independent, and career institutions

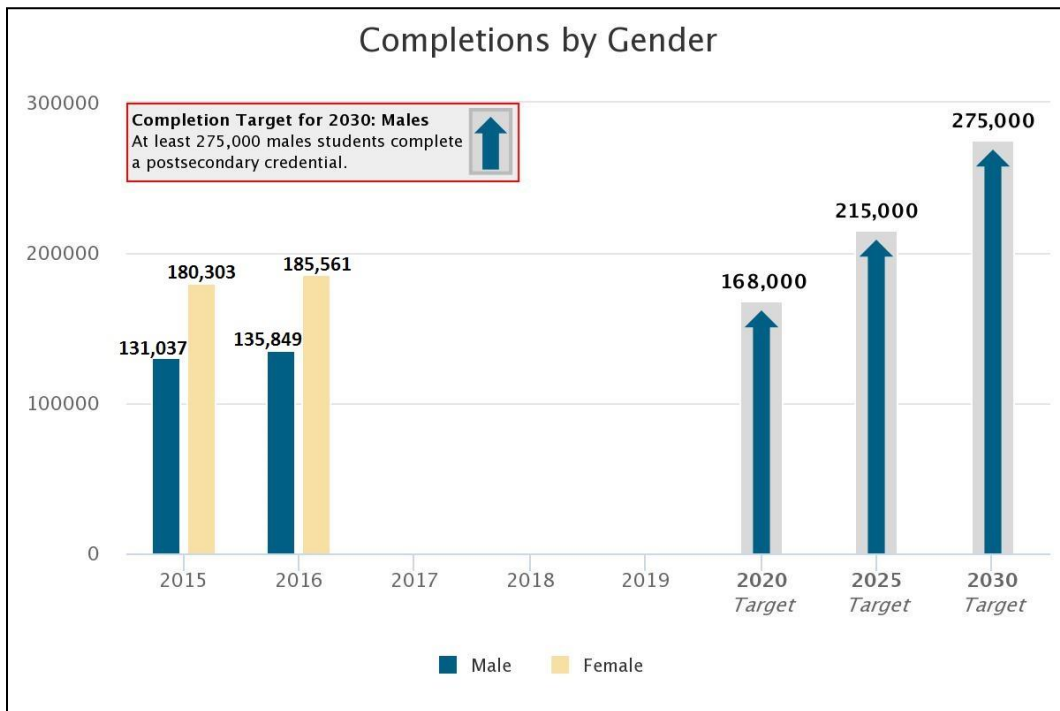


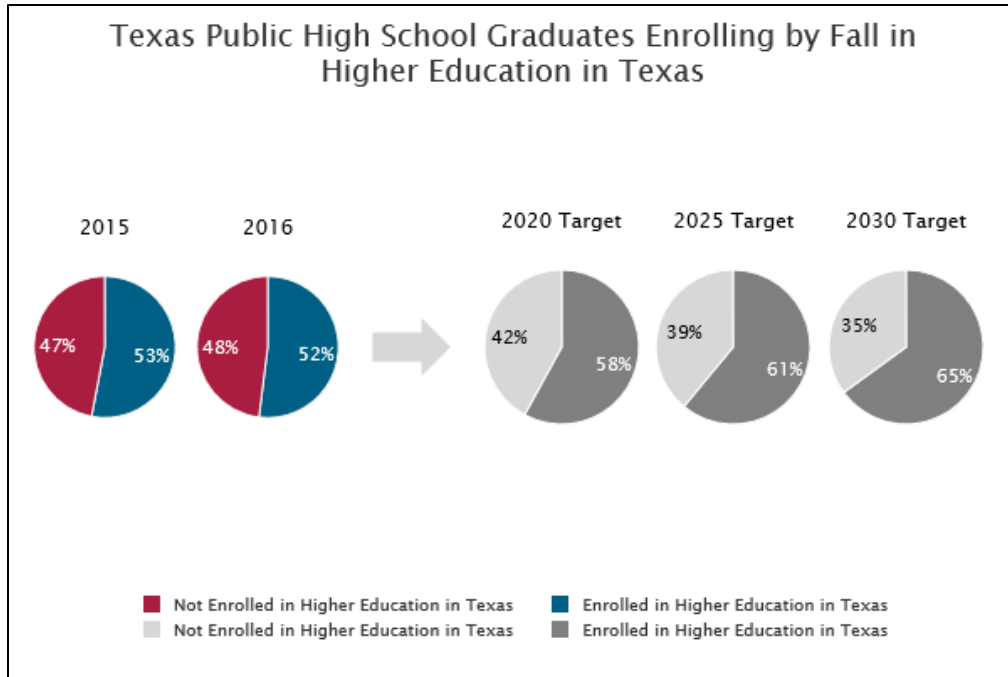
Figure 6 displays completion data for economically disadvantaged students, defined as those who received Pell Grants at any time from 1997 through the most recent fiscal year for which Pell data are available. Completions data for these students – bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, and certificates (BACs) – exclude master’s degrees and any awards from career schools. Economically disadvantaged students are off to a good start for *60x30TX*, because their completions increased by almost 7,000, or 6.3 percent, from FY 2014 to FY 2015, and by about 5,300, or 4.7 percent, from FY 2015 to FY 2016. Completions totaled 119,490 (not shown in Figure 6). In the long term, increasing award attainment for the growing pipeline for economically disadvantaged students could increase family incomes and reduce the number of economically disadvantaged families in Texas.

**Figure 6.** BACs earned by economically disadvantaged students at Texas public and independent institutions



One way to increase the number of higher education completions is to boost high school-to-college rates. Students who enroll in higher education directly from high school have higher rates of college readiness and complete their degree programs more quickly and successfully.

**Figure 7.** High school-to-college rates at Texas public and independent



Of approximately 307,000 students with trackable IDs who graduated from Texas public high schools in FY 2016, 51.9 percent enrolled directly in a Texas public or independent higher education institution in fall 2016 (Figure 7, previous page). Unfortunately, that was 0.8 points lower than the college-going rate of 52.7 percent for FY 2015 high school graduates.

Asian graduates of Texas public high schools went directly to public or independent higher education in Texas at a 78.0 percent rate in fall 2016, far exceeding the 53.8 percent rate for whites, 49.6 percent for Hispanics, and 47.1 percent for African Americans. Female graduates of all races/ethnicities had a college-going rate of 56.1 percent, compared with 47.8 percent for males in that same year. Decreases in rates of enrollment between FY 2015 and FY 2016 are observed in all race/ethnicity categories and in both genders, which suggests a systemic issue, such as low unemployment, may be driving the change.

**Completion Goal, Progress by Strategy**

**Strategy 1, Completion Goal: Support the completion pipeline by providing access to multiple postsecondary options.**

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Scale and share practices to guide students to higher education, collaborate with K-12 in improving college and career readiness, increase participation of economically disadvantaged high school students in dual credit and other college-level courses, and build credentials at each level with aim of reducing coursework duplication and time to degrees.*

Since the last progress report, the initiatives and activities that follow have been designed to support the completion pipeline.



**Elevating counselors through the Reach Higher Campaign.** The new “Texas Challenge to Reach Higher” initiative is designed to provide an opportunity to share best practices and resources with counselors, ultimately elevating Texas counselors to be among the best in the nation. This effort also supports the White House Reach Higher initiative.



As part of the initiative’s challenge, each regional Education Service Center (ESC) in Texas will work closely with local counselors and community stakeholders to improve college completion rates. This will be carried out through an increase in college applications and FAFSA completions. The goal for each region is to increase college applications and FAFSA completions by 4 percentage points.

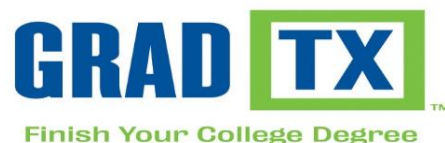
Additionally, this initiative supports GenTX, including GenTX FAFSA month and GenTX College Application Week in November, as well as GenTX Decision Day each May. Through school counselor leadership and collaborative partnerships, the initiative will dramatically increase the number of traditionally underserved students prepared for, entering, and succeeding in postsecondary education by focusing on ways to strengthen, align, and expand the college-going pipeline locally, and concomitantly, at the state and national levels. Results of the first year of implementation will be available September 2017. This initiative supports several of the strategies to reach the completion goal.

**Using the Apply Texas (Apply TX) system and the Counselor Suite.** Staff at THECB facilitates the development, maintenance, and use of Apply TX, Texas’ free online tool that helps students apply to college. More than 1.1 million applications for admission were submitted for fall 2016. Applications were submitted to 38 public four-year institutions, 22 independent four-year institutions, and 57 two-year public community, state, and technical college campuses or districts across the state. Four-year institutions received 65 percent of

admissions applications; two-year institutions, 35 percent. Undergraduate applications represented 92 percent of all applications submitted.

The Counselor Suite function of the Apply TX system provides high school counselors access to information they can use to measure their students’ progress (or not) toward completing the admission application and the FAFSA. This system not only aids in getting students to higher education, but also helps with *60x30TX*’s student debt goal. Texas ranked 23rd in the U.S. in 2013 in the percentage of undergraduate students considered economically disadvantaged. *60x30TX* plans to hold student debt to the 2013 level will be significantly affected by the share of students successfully completing the FAFSA and receiving federal, state, and institutional aid. More than 1,900 counselors used the Counselor Suite in FY 2016 to review their students’ progress in applying for admission and financial aid.

**Relaunching Grad TX.** The Grad TX campaign connects students who have college credit to colleges and universities. Its purpose is to assist students in returning to higher education and completing their credential or degree. The Grad TX campaign will relaunch in fall 2017 with institutions of higher education that promote, support, and provide degree completion programs, which are accelerated, online,



offer generous credit transfer, and/or offer flexible course scheduling. Future efforts of Grad TX will include:

- developing Grad TX mobile apps that provide timely information to students to support the THECB's public awareness campaign to increase the number of Texas adults who hold a certificate or degree;
- collaborating with institutions of higher education, other state agencies, and organizations in a statewide degree completion campaign;
- increasing the availability of and access to resources and services for returning adult students; and
- awarding mini grants to institutions of higher education to increase outreach efforts to students who have stopped out without obtaining a degree, including the support of regional media campaigns.

Initial results of the Grad TX relaunch will be available in spring 2018.

**Continuing the Texas Work-Study Mentorship.** Work-Study Mentorship grants help Texas institutions of higher education provide work-study funds to college students employed on a part-time basis in Work-Study Mentorship Programs. The primary goal of the program is to improve student access, success, and completion in higher education. During the 2016-17 biennium, 41 eligible Texas public and private institutions are receiving funding for their Work-Study Mentorship Program. During FY 2016, these institutions employed more than 600 students who provided services to more than 25,000 students and parents. This program impacts more than one of the completion goal's strategies in *60x30TX*.

**Studying dual credit.** Dual Credit (DC) education programs—delivered through partnerships between high schools and colleges and universities—offer high school students the option to take college-level courses that simultaneously award them college and high school credit. Over the past five decades, states and education institutions have created and broadened DC education programs to help high school students gain access to colleges and universities and to improve their chances of success. But despite this history, there is still a knowledge gap about how to effectively design, target, and implement high-quality and cost-effective DC programs that benefit students, particularly in states like Texas that are expanding opportunities for high school students to take DC courses.

According to previous analyses conducted by the THECB, the number of DC participants grew by 752 percent between fall 2000 and fall 2016.<sup>7</sup> Accelerated growth was observed in fall 2015 and fall 2016, likely as a result of House Bill (HB) 505 (84th Texas Legislature), which scaled back restrictions that limited DC education to eleventh- and twelfth-grade students and also the number of DC courses or SCH a student may take within a semester or academic year or while enrolled in high school.<sup>2</sup> DC enrollment grew from 112,361 in fall 2014 to 151,589 in fall 2016, and increase of over 39,228 students.

To address this research gap, the RAND Corporation (RAND), the THECB, and Gibson Consulting (Gibson) partnered to examine DC programs in Texas and conducted Phase I of a two-phase study. Phase I was designed to provide state and local decision-makers targeted guidance on dual credit policies and practices during the 85th Regular Legislative Session to better support students in Texas. The research questions (RQs) in Phase I focused on the

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/9052.PDF?CFID=56812608&CFTOKEN=82446255>

accessibility, diversity, quality, and efficiency<sup>8</sup> of DC education programs. RAND and the THECB completed the analyses conducted for Phase I in January 2017, disseminated results at a legislative briefing in February 2017, and released a draft interim report for public comment in March 2017. The final interim report release date is in July 2017.

Phase I of the study led to four main findings<sup>9</sup>:

- *DC students (prior to HB 505) had better college outcomes than high school graduates who did not take DC courses.* DC students had higher grades in DC courses in the same subject as their non-DC peers, and higher grades in follow-on courses in the same subject.<sup>10</sup> These outcomes are considered among most significant findings in this interim report. The analysis also confirmed earlier findings that DC students had higher college enrollment rates after high school, particularly at four-year colleges, and were significantly more likely to persist in and complete college.
- *DC instruction and advising varied across colleges and universities.* DC administrators reported varied approaches to ensure that DC and college-credit-only courses were comparable. For example, state policy mandates common learning objectives for all lower-division courses, and DC administrators reported using common syllabi and, in many cases, asking departments to oversee instruction and assessment. Guidelines by the regional accrediting body set minimum qualifications for college instructors, but they do not guarantee that DC instructors have equivalent academic backgrounds and teaching experience. Finally, DC administrators reported differences in advising practices across DC programs that related both to context (particularly distance from the partner college and whether the high school was an ECHS) and to resource availability.
- *Prior to HB 505, there were disparities in DC participation rates across demographic groups.* Based on quantitative analyses, Phase I discovered disparities in DC participation rates by race/ethnicity, income, and urbanicity (the urban versus rural location of the student's high school). While the diversity of students taking DC courses increased between 2000 and 2015, for some groups it did not keep pace with increased diversity in the overall student body across the state. The research thus far is unable to pinpoint the specific causes of these differences.
- *DC students took about the same time and the same semester credit hours (SCH) to complete a college degree as their non-DC counterparts.* The quantitative analysis revealed that just over 3 percent of all DC courses taken by high school graduates were retaken during the first two years of college and that most of the repeats were driven by poor performance in the DC course. The analysis also found that DC students took, on average, half an academic year less to complete a four-year degree. DC students completed their degrees with roughly the same number of SCH as students who did not take a DC course.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The use of "efficient" in this study is taken from the field of economics. "Efficiency" in this field simply means that every resource is optimally used, while also minimizing wasted resources.

<sup>9</sup> These findings are based on data on all DC courses, which include those offered at Early College High Schools (ECHS) and both academic and CTE DC courses from 2000-2015. Only 7 percent of students took CTE DC; the overwhelming majority of these students took academic DC.

<sup>10</sup> A follow-on course is one that comes after an initial course, often in the same subject. For example, English 1302 is a follow-on course to English 1301 in the Texas Core Curriculum. In this report, follow-on courses refer to those taken after a DC course.

<sup>11</sup>It is worth noting that SCH to a bachelor's degree for the cohorts studied were roughly 145 for both DC and non-DC students, while most bachelor's-level degree plans require 120 SCH of coursework; so both groups have considerable progress to make.

Although the research thus far provides rich and detailed findings, it still lacks information to recommend whether and, if so, how to change DC programs. Thus, the key recommendation from Phase I was to wait for findings from Phase II of the study to suggest changes to policy surrounding DC programs in Texas. Phase II of this research will address research questions related to differences in course content, assessments, and/or teaching approaches in DC courses, DC advising, academic readiness and readiness criteria, financial costs of DC programs, disparities in DC participation across demographic groups, and institution response to HB 505.

## **Strategy 2, Completion Goal: Improve academic preparation and academic support for students to enter and complete higher education.**

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Scale up and share practices that support students in their academic preparation for postsecondary education, streamline credential pathways through the P-16 continuum to ensure secondary education graduation plans (including endorsement coursework) prepare high school graduates for completing a postsecondary credential, and scale up and share practices that support underprepared students to increase persistence and completion and to reduce time to degree.*

Since the last progress report, the initiatives and activities that follow have sought to address improving academic preparation and academic support for students to and through higher education.

**Instituting College Readiness and Success Models.** The purpose of the two Comprehensive College Readiness and Success Models for *60x30TX* (CRSM) is to support scaling and enhancing comprehensive strategies and activities to accomplish the priorities for achieving the goals and targets of *60x30TX* by awarding “funding based on students served.”

*Co-requisite Acceleration models (for underprepared students pursuing academic programs).* Acceleration models require institutions to accelerate underprepared students through the developmental education sequence by enrolling students in co-requisite options resulting in successful completion of the college course in one semester. In 2017, seven grantees received \$591,000 in grant funds: Amarillo College, Kilgore College, Palo Alto College, University of Houston-Downtown, Sam Houston State University, San Jacinto Community College District, Texas State Technical College-Waco. Institutions’ applications needed to contain a marketable skills component to receive funding.

*Gateway courses (for college ready students).* The Gateway model requires institutions of higher education to identify courses that have a high rate of failure (grades of D or F) or withdrawal, and to integrate research-based practices into those courses and into the institution to increase student success. The target student populations for the Gateway model are first-generation college students, with an emphasis on underrepresented student groups such as African Americans, Hispanics, or economically disadvantaged students. Four Texas public institutions launched the program on their campus in fall 2016. They are McLennan Community College, Texas Southmost College, Texas State Technical College-Waco, and University of North Texas-Dallas. Results for the entire first year of implementation will be available September 2017.

College Readiness and Success staff at the THECB is coordinating these initiatives, which affect multiple completion strategies and targets.

**Advising through AdviseTX.** Advise TX College Advising Corps launched in 2010-2011 and works to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete a postsecondary education.



Since the beginning of the program, advisers have facilitated over 340,000 one-on-one meetings and assisted students with more than 53,000 college application fee waivers (saving students an estimated \$2.6 million in application fees). The THECB's role is to facilitate the development, maintenance, and use of AdviseTX. During the five years of operation, the program already has seen college-going rates increase by more than 5 percent at certain underserved high schools. This program will continue working to increase the number of economically disadvantaged, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete a postsecondary education during the years of *60x30TX*.

**Accelerating developmental education through nontraditional interventions.**

Acceleration is the reorganization of instruction and curricula in ways that expedite the completion of coursework or credentials based on an assessment of students' strengths and needs. Some examples include, but are not limited to, non-course competency-based options (NCBOs), emporium models and modular models, co-requisites, course-pairing, and computer-assisted instruction. As part of these efforts, Austin Community College coordinated a statewide meeting on integrated reading and writing (IRW) on Dec. 2, 2016, for more than 150 participants. Resources and recordings from the meeting are available on Austin Community College's IRW page. CRS staff at the THECB is helping to support efforts such as these.

**Reviewing and revising the CCRS.** The Texas State Board of Education is charged with aligning the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, the curriculum standards for public K-12, to the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), to better align the preparation of students to postsecondary expectations. The Texas CCRS articulate what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level college courses.

In March, the THECB requested nominations from public community and technical colleges and universities for statewide, discipline-based vertical teams to review and, if necessary, revise subject areas in the CCRS. The THECB is collaborating with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and TWC to recruit secondary and postsecondary faculty who teach in the respective subject areas, including related career and technical courses. Respective in-person meetings will take place in Austin beginning in fall 2017.

**Strategy 3, Completion Goal: Structure programs and support services to be responsive to the changing needs of the student population to help students persist through key transitions in higher education.**

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Use innovative approaches for content delivery and assessment to improve completion and reduce student cost, employ high-impact practices (HIPs), and increase use of predictive analytics to identify and assist students at risk of not completing.*

Since the last progress report, the initiatives and activities that follow have sought to respond to the changing needs of students and to help them through key transitions in higher education.

**Surveying emergency aid in Texas.** The THECB, through the College for All Texans Foundation, received support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to work with institutions of higher education to identify strategies and practices that help promote policies and processes for effective emergency aid and financial literacy programs in Texas. As part of the first of four



phases of the “Advocating for Emergency Aid in Texas” project, the THECB sent the “Emergency Aid in Texas Survey” to 178 Texas institutions of higher education. The online survey, which was adapted from a national survey conducted by the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), is part of a landscape analysis to learn more about current emergency aid programs, policies, and practices at Texas institutions of higher education. The survey response rate was 80 percent.

For the second phase of the project, which began after the initial landscape analysis, the THECB invited 10 Texas higher education institutions currently administering emergency aid programs to participate in the Emergency Aid Network (EA Net). The EA Net will be comprised of 10 teams, each consisting of four to five institutional representatives who have content knowledge and expertise in student services, financial aid, or emergency aid. Beginning with the first meeting of the EA Net on June 23, 2017, these teams of experts will work together and share information about their emergency aid and financial literacy programs, help develop recommendations for effective policy and best practices concerning these programs to increase student persistence and completion, and move the state toward meeting the goals of *60x30TX*.

During the third phase of the project, the EA Net will host a statewide convening. Invited attendees will include representatives from all Texas higher education institutions, as well as stakeholders, philanthropists, and nonprofit organizations interested in emergency aid. In the fourth and final phase of the project, the EA Net will make presentations to the THECB’s Financial Aid Advisory Committee and Financial Literacy Advisory Committee. The THECB also will incorporate EA Net policy recommendations as a standing item on the THECB’s legislative and government relations briefings.

**Supporting Grants for Minority Male Initiatives.** The Minority Male Initiative (MMI) directly supports the attainment of the state’s *60x30TX* higher education completion goals of increasing the number of Hispanic and African American male students completing a certificate or degree. In total, the state has awarded more than \$1.4 million in grants to 13 institutions serving more than 8,500 minority males through THECB-funded initiatives that directly impact the participation, persistence, and success of minority males in higher education. Since AY 2016, five institutional partners have combined to serve more than 1,000 additional minority males through targeted institutional efforts.

**Learning about predictive analytics.** A major policy discussion on predictive analytics in higher education, a strategy identified to increase student persistence and completion in *60x30TX*, was presented at the April board meeting of the THECB. Predictive analytics involves predicting behavior and events by using technology to discover relationships and patterns within large amounts of historical data. Many colleges and universities in Texas use predictive analytics as part of their efforts to improve student success. In January 2017, the THECB surveyed 101 Texas public institutions of higher education and the vast majority of respondents indicated they either use, or are interested in using, predictive analytics to improve student completion.

Expert panelists provided a comprehensive overview of predictive analytics, including how it benefits students, and discussed the opportunities and challenges that confront higher education institutions, including transparency issues and the importance of ethical consideration of using student information. An emphasis was placed on the importance of tying the results of predictive analytics, such as indicators of risk, to effective action to increase students' likelihood of success. Panelists stressed that users of predictive analytics should be careful to avoid perpetuating biases that may be present in historical data. This discussion was coordinated by the Innovation and Policy Development and Strategic Planning and Funding divisions at the THECB.

**Convening a P-16 statewide pre-conference and conference.** The THECB and Austin Community College, in partnership with the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), hosted the first annual P-16 Statewide Professional Development Pre-Conference on May 28, 2017, in conjunction with NISOD's 2017 International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence. Both events took place at the Hilton Austin. The P-16 Statewide Professional Development Pre-Conference offered access to national and regional speakers and program resources to address topics related to transitioning students from secondary to postsecondary education. The pre-conference engaged participants in informative breakout sessions and networking opportunities. Participants exchanged models of practice and evidence-based strategies focused on specific topics that included:


- Dual enrollment, early college high school, and other pre-college options
- Improving students' financial literacy
- Streamlining P-16 pathways to college success
- High school and college academic advising

Over 125 participants, including high school counselors and college advisers, were in attendance for the event.

To follow this event, on June 29, 2017, in Austin, the annual P-16 Statewide Professional Development Conference is being hosted by the THECB's division of College Readiness and Success. This event is intended to bridge secondary and postsecondary education and support for the goals of the *60x30TX* strategic plan. High school counselors, admissions advisors from two-year and four-year institutions, and other educators interested in learning more about college access and success across Texas are invited to attend.

**Working with Texas Puente (INRW) professional development.** The Texas Puente/Dream Catcher Program is an interdisciplinary program focusing on English (Integrated Reading and Writing and English 1301) courses, counseling, and mentoring for underrepresented students. The goal is to provide identified students with the skills needed to transfer to a four-year university and receive a bachelor's degree. The program also provides robust professional development for faculty and staff implementing the Puente program model. Currently, seven institutions are implementing the program model. CRS staff at the THECB is participating in and helping to support this initiative.

Activities this past year have included four webinars, with nine to 18 participants each; a spring institute held March 29-31, 2017, with 65 participants; two presentations at the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE) Conference on Feb. 28-March 3, 2017, and at the Acceleration Institute on April 6-7, 2017.



**THE THIRD GOAL: MARKETABLE SKILLS**  
 All graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.  
 ■ *Emphasizes the value of higher education in the workforce*

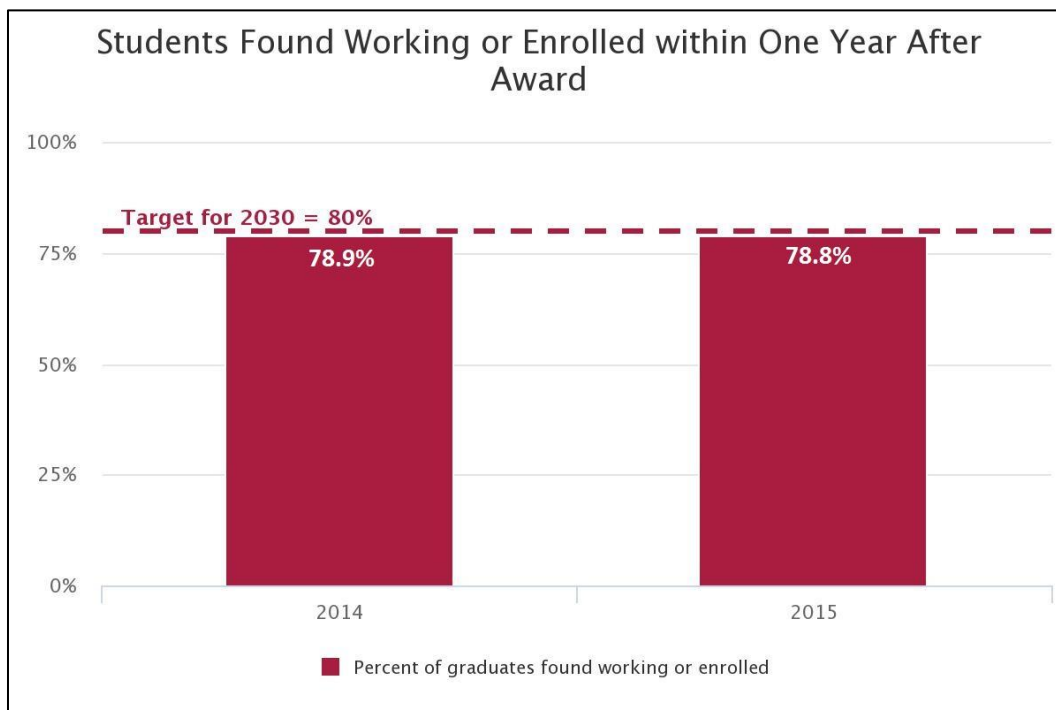
### Marketable Skills Goal, Progress by Data

The marketable skills goal builds on the first two goals: It states that, by 2030, all graduates of Texas public institutions will have completed programs with identified marketable skills. Although this goal focuses on public two- and four-year colleges, private and independent institutions in the state have been encouraged to opt in to this process.

The THECB is measuring two targets relative to this goal. The first is that, by 2020, institutions will have created and implemented a process to identify and regularly update marketable skills for each of their programs, in collaboration with business and other stakeholders. The second target of this goal specifies that at least 80 percent of students who complete a certificate or degree (associate or higher, through doctoral or professional) from a Texas higher education institution will remain in the state and be working and/or enrolled, within one fiscal year of completion.

The 80-percent target is set for 2020, 2025, and 2030. Of 280,501 students who completed a certificate or degree (any level, as specified above) at a Texas public, independent, or career institution in FY 2014, 221,366, or 78.9 percent, were found working and/or enrolled, in Texas at some time in FY 2015 (Figure 8). The percentage dropped slightly to 78.8 percent for the next year's (FY 2015) cohort of 293,012 completers. The state is close to maintaining this target but needs to work on boosting its success rate to maintain the 80 percent or higher level and keeping it there.

**Figure 8.** Working or enrolled students one year after graduating from a Texas public, independent, or career institution





## Marketable Skills Goal, Progress by Strategy

### Strategy 1, Marketable Skills Goal: Identify marketable skills in every higher education program.

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Convene a statewide group to explore general characteristics of marketable skills by meta-majors; establish collaborations between institutions and state, regional, and local employers to define desirable skills and identify in-demand programs and courses that offer those skills; and leverage existing efforts, such as the Liberal Education and America's Promise – LEAP – initiative, to ensure marketable skills are addressed in every program.*

Since the last progress report, the following efforts have been underway to identify marketable skills in higher education programs.

**Engaging career services.** The THECB has made efforts to reach out to career services professionals. The marketable skills goal provides an excellent opportunity for the agency to engage this community, which has not been a major area of focus during the agency's 50-year history.

**Identifying marketable skills through institution-led efforts.** Two coordinated statewide efforts to implement the marketable skills goal are institution-led. One of these efforts is led by Texas Council of Chief Academic Officers (TCCAO). TCCAO plans to convene university faculty from similar disciplines to create a resource list of marketable skills. These lists will be shared with all universities in the state, for them to tailor as they see fit. TCCAO selected Communication and Journalism as its pilot project. TCCAO efforts will be ongoing.

The other effort is led by Texas Council of Chief Student Affairs Officers (TCCSAO). TCCSAO has developed a common framework and definitions of marketable skills for its members by creating a crosswalk between the core objectives already assessed in the Texas Core Curriculum and the in-demand skills sought by employers – established by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). TCCSAO has finalized a set of rubrics that can be used to consistently measure the development of these skills in many contexts.

**Convening the Marketable Skills Conference and the Tri-Agency Summit.** The THECB made some progress toward this target by hosting a Marketable Skills Conference in April 2016, where more than 350 representatives of Texas higher education institutions shared ways of achieving the marketable skills goal. Staff also made more connections in this area in September 2016 at the Tri-agency Summit, a joint effort of the THECB, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Education Agency that was attended by business leaders, educators, legislators, and nonprofit executives from across the state.


### Strategy 2, Marketable Skills Goal: Communicate marketable skills to students, families, and the workforce.

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Increase the quality and availability of information targeted to students about the transition from higher education to the workforce, including information about the transferability and alignment of skills; and ensure marketable skills are integrated into curricula so that students can demonstrate and communicate those skills through established mechanisms.*

Since the last progress report, the following effort has sought to support this strategy:

**Supporting Acceleration models (for underprepared students pursuing academic programs), a part of the Comprehensive College Readiness and Success models.** These models require institutions to accelerate underprepared students through the developmental education sequence by enrolling students in co-requisite options resulting in successful completion of a college course in one semester. Funding for this initiative was awarded to several institutions (see page 20). Institutions' applications needed to contain a marketable skills component to receive the funding.

**Collaborating on the Texas Internship Challenge.** In February, TWC, TEA, and the THECB announced the Texas Internship Challenge, a new statewide campaign to increase and promote internships for students. The new initiative includes [www.txinternshipchallenge.com](http://www.txinternshipchallenge.com), a website where employers are able to post internship positions and students are able to apply for them. The purpose of the initiative is encourage business and industry partners across the state to offer paid internships. To be successful and provide students with the opportunity to acquire marketable skills prior to graduation, the THECB has urged universities and colleges to promote this campaign to students and encourage counselors and advisors to help spread the word about the program. Internships provide a bridge for students to explore in-demand industries and occupations. The Texas Internship Challenge will create opportunities for students to add work experience as part of their academic program.



**THE FOURTH GOAL: STUDENT DEBT**  
 Undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.  
 ■ *Helps students graduate with manageable debt*

### Student Debt Goal, Progress by Data

The fourth goal concerns students who borrow money to enroll in higher education and earn an undergraduate certificate or degree, thereby helping Texas reach the first three goals of the *60x30TX* plan. The intent of this statewide goal is for those students to graduate with manageable debt. The goal is designed to consider whether debt is manageable in the context of a student’s first-year wage. Specifically, the goal calculates student debt as a percentage of first-year wages. The goal is for the statewide median to be no greater than 60 percent for undergraduates of public institutions who complete with student loan debt. This percentage is the goal throughout the life of the plan.

To estimate the median debt as a percentage of wage, THECB staff first computed the percentage of student loan debt for each graduate of two-year and four-year Texas public institutions. To be included in the computation, these graduates must have (1) earned a certificate, associate, or bachelor’s degree; (2) had state, federal, or where data are available, private student loan debt, at the time of graduation; and (3) earned wages the first year after graduation. The few bachelor’s degrees earned at two-year institutions are not included.

Staff then computed the statewide median of the graduates’ percentages. For FY 2013 graduates, the base year for this goal, the median percentage was 59.5 percent, slightly below the target ceiling of 60 percent for student loan debt. The percentage inched up to 59.8 percent for FY 2014 graduates (Figure 9, next page, the displayed median percentage is rounded to 60 percent) but remained under the 60 percent benchmark.

**Figure 9.** Statewide median of students’ loan debt as a percentage of first-year wages

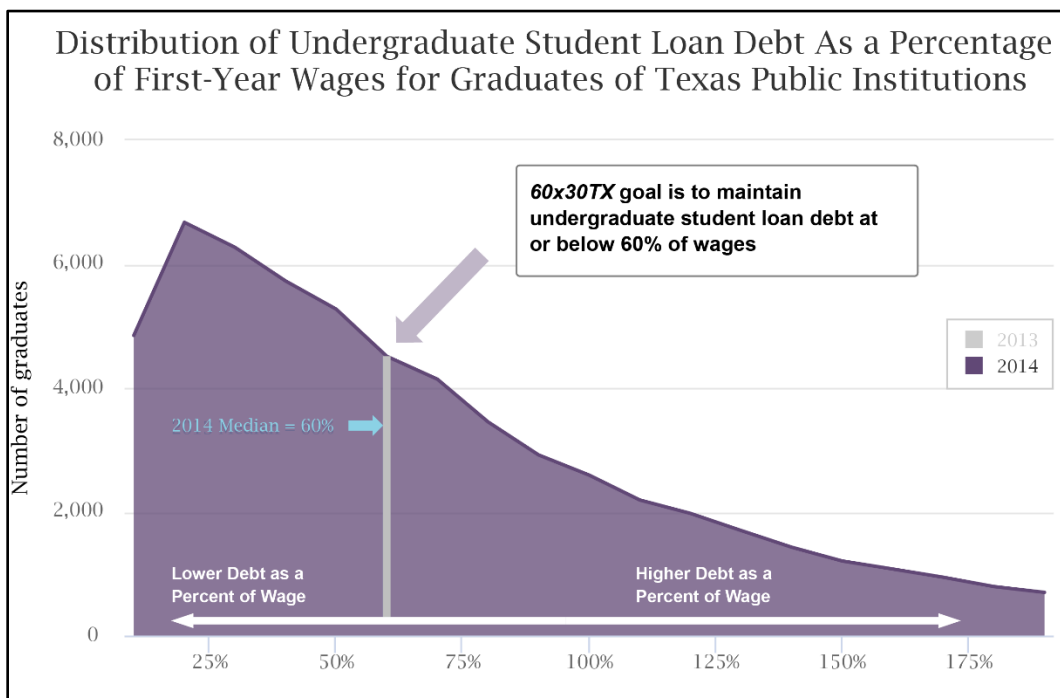
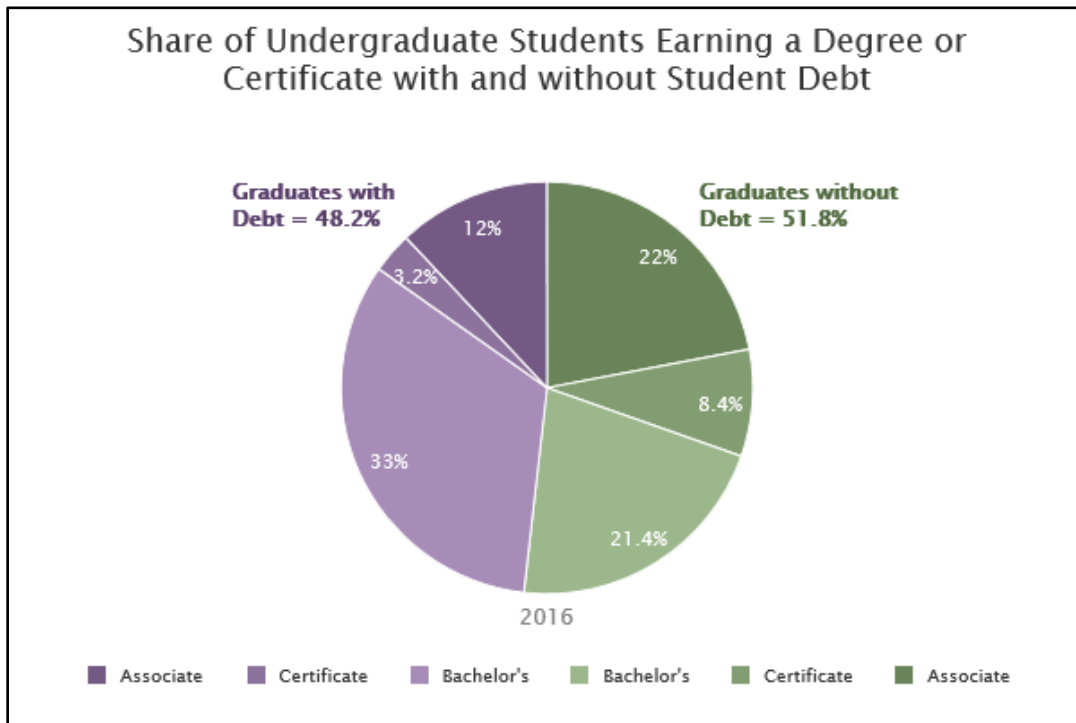


Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of students with loan debt as a percentage of first-year wage. There are equal numbers of students represented above and below the median of 60 percent. Students are clustered at lower levels of debt as a percent of wage. The distribution shows that the largest number of students (6,674) have student loan debt at 20 percent of wages. Students with higher levels of debt as a percent of wage are more spread out and small numbers of students have very large student debt loads.

The higher education strategic planning committee for *60x30TX* set two targets to help maintain the student debt goal at or below 60 percent: (1) limit debt so that no more than half of all students who earn an undergraduate degree or certificate have debt, and (2) decrease the excess semester credit hours (SCH) that students attempt in completing an associate or bachelor's degree.

In FY 2016, 48.2 percent of students who graduated from a Texas public or independent two-year or four-year institution with an undergraduate certificate or degree had some student loan debt (Figure 10). That was below the share of graduates in FY 2015 with debt (49.1%) and the 50 percent threshold for the *60x30TX* plan. For this measure, the "undergraduate certificate or degree" included certificates and associate degrees awarded by two-year institutions and associate and bachelor's degrees awarded by four-year institutions.

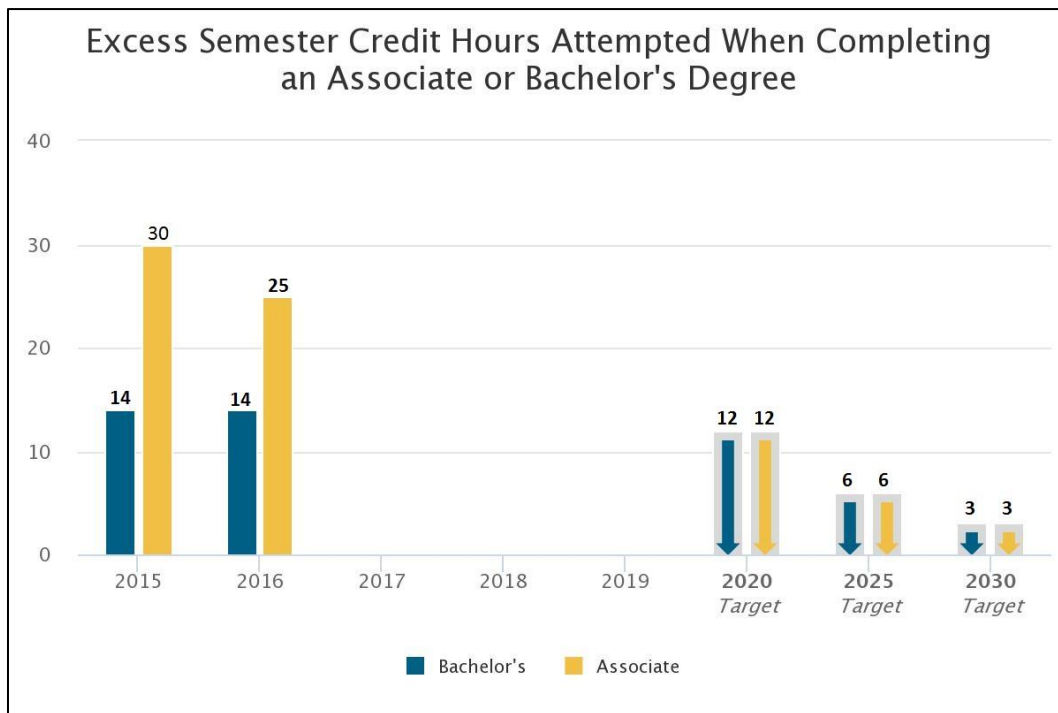
**Figure 10.** Share of students graduating with and without debt at Texas public institutions



Students attempted an average excess of 14 SCH to complete a bachelor’s degree at Texas public universities or health related institutions in FY 2015, while the average number attempted at public two-year institutions was 30 excess SCH for completing an associate degree (Figure 11). The attempted SCH were tracked for up to 10 years prior to the time of graduation. One year later, the excess SCH was unchanged for bachelor’s graduates, but it dropped to 25 SCH for associate graduates.

Bachelor’s graduates will need to reduce their excess SCH by two to reach the 2020 target of 12, but associate graduates will require a drop of 13 to reach the same target. Thereafter, both groups need to lower their excess SCH to six and three SCH in 2025 and 2030, respectively.

**Figure 11.** Progress in reducing excess SCH to lower student costs



### Student Debt Goal, Progress by Strategy

**Strategy 1, Student Debt Goal: Finance higher education in a manner that provides the most effective balance among appropriations, tuition and fees, and financial aid. Make higher education more affordable for students.**

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Fully fund grants for eligible students, support innovative approaches for more affordable credentials, and reduce time to degree through alternate degree pathways to completion.*

Since the last progress report, the following efforts have been underway to look at financing higher education and make it more affordable for students.

**Progress on transfer through Field of Study Curricula and Program of Study (FOSC/POS).** Completing degrees without repeating courses will help to reduce the number of

semester credit hours (SCH) students take in excess of degree requirements. Minimizing the number of semester credit hours students complete that do not apply to their degree will help limit student debt, essential if Texas is going to meet the goals of *60x30TX*.

Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 61.823, directs the THECB to develop FOSC for various academic programs that guarantee courses transfer and apply to a degree program. THECB-approved FOSCs are composed of the block of courses that may be transferred to a general academic teaching institution and must be substituted for that institution's lower-division requirements for the given discipline degree program into which a student transfers. Since early 2015, THECB staff, working with faculty advisory committees, has begun the process of revising the existing FOSCs in Engineering, in Music, and in Mexican American Studies and are planning for the development of new FOSCs in Architecture and in Nursing.

The revised Mexican American Studies FOSC was approved by the THECB's board in July 2016. Recommendations for the Architecture, Engineering, Music, and Nursing FOSCs tentatively are planned to be presented to board members in July 2017. The FOSCs provide guaranteed pathways for students so that the lower-division courses taken only at a community college apply to their major when they transfer to a university. The defined sequence of courses provided by a discipline-specific FOSC assists students in completing their degrees in a timely manner.

THECB staff has identified the top 25 disciplines, based on the number of declared majors and degrees awarded, that warrant the development of a new FOSC. Each of the FOSC advisory committees is governed by a separate set of rules. Six additional sets of FOSC advisory committee rules are on the June 2017 Committee on Academic Workforce Success (CAWS) agenda.

TEC, Section 61.8235 directs the THECB to develop POS for various technical programs. POS are similar to FOSCs, except they are specific to workforce certificates and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees.

A POS is a sequence of secondary and postsecondary courses within a discipline that increases students' transition to postsecondary without duplicating courses. This begins with introductory courses at the secondary level that teach broad foundational knowledge and skills, and progress to more occupationally specific courses at the postsecondary level, which provide knowledge and skills required for entry into and advancement in a chosen POS. Many offer opportunities for students to earn postsecondary credit for coursework taken during high school. These are developed with the assistance of advisory committees composed of faculty from secondary and postsecondary institutions of education and representatives from business and industry. These committees are organized around the 16 nationally recognized career clusters, a taxonomy in which industries and occupations are grouped together based the common nature of the knowledge and skills required to work in the clusters' various fields.

Within the 16 nationally recognized career clusters, there are hundreds of programs for which Texas community, technical, and state colleges offer credentialed certificates and associate degrees. With dedicated efforts, additional POS advisory committees will be convened for each of the career clusters over the next several years, bringing together diverse groups of secondary, postsecondary, and business and industry experts to review specific programs and the individual courses that effectively make up the completion plan for students.

Currently, the THECB has two POS advisory committees, one to review programs of study in the health sciences and another to consider programs of study in architecture and

construction. Both committees have met, and each has named subcommittees to develop the specific POS within each career cluster.

**Texas Affordable Baccalaureate Program.** This program also is helping to lower costs for many students, including older students with years of work experience and with family responsibilities that constrain their finances. (See page 9 under the strategy for the first goal).

**Strategy 2, Student Debt Goal: Build the financial literacy of Texans to promote a better understanding of how and why to pay for higher education.**

Examples of activities to support this strategy: *Implement personal financial literacy programs to support students going to college, convene a statewide advisory group to determine ways to better advise students and parents on financial aid options and the impact of those options on students' finances before, during, and after their college careers.*

**Creation of the Financial Literacy Advisory Committee (FLAC).** The Financial Literacy Advisory Committee was created to provide board members of the THECB with advice and recommendations regarding ways to better advise students and parents on financial aid options and the impact of those options on students' finances before, during, and after their college careers. The FLAC is composed of up to 24 leaders representing student financial aid, higher education, K-12 education, community-based organizations, and the business and finance sector.

The committee first convened in November 2016 and since then has been meeting on a monthly basis in an effort to gather and discuss information on research, best practices, and influential factors in the field of financial literacy.

The committee has benefitted from the insight of numerous speakers, including:

- Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, Professor at Temple University and author of *Paying the Price*
- Eden Klein, a senior at UT El Paso, who has researched the impact of Early College High Schools on college attainment
- June Giddings, regarding the development of the Texas OnCourse system and its potential for influencing the training needs of K-12 educators, and
- Zachary Taylor, a doctoral student at UT Austin, who is completing ground-breaking research on college website readability and its implications on college access.

The committee will be developing recommendations to guide the state's financial literacy efforts specifically, as they relate to promoting a better understanding of how and why to pay for higher education. At present, the committee has focused on the importance of introducing these concepts to students at an early age and equipping students and families with needed information at critical points along the educational pathway. Simple, effective, and actionable efforts are need throughout the P-20 continuum, and the committee is developing over-arching goals, targeted recommendations, and suggested tools to address financial literacy as it relates to financing higher education.

**Creation of the Financial Aid Literacy Pilot Program.** Senate Bill 680, 83rd Texas Legislature, created the Texas Student Loan Default Prevention and Financial Aid Literacy Pilot Program. As part of the pilot, nine institutions from across the state are engaged with THECB and TG in pilot activities that include default prevention planning, financial education, and student loan counseling through in-person and on-line delivery systems, financial coaching, and financial and college articles and tips through monthly notifications (the Mighty Money Minute).

TG has received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to pursue Project Success, an initiative to expand financial literacy and default prevention efforts. Senate Bill 1799, introduced by Senator Royce West, was passed by the 85th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, and awaits the governor's signature. The bill would align the Texas Student Loan Default Prevention and Financial Aid Literacy Pilot Program with the new Project Success.

This new federal program targets funds, programs, and services for minority-serving colleges and universities (MSIs) in Texas; these institutions serve large numbers of at-risk students. This program pairs TG with participating MSIs to help the schools identify student risk factors affecting graduation, retention, and cohort default rates. Together, TG and MSIs develop proactive strategies, which include financial assistance to students, to minimize risk through collective best practices. Participating schools do not pay for services provided by TG, but the schools are required to assign staff to work on the program. The program, launched in December 2016, includes public and private two-year and four-year institutions. The program is expected to include approximately 30 MSIs in Texas phased into the program over three years.



## Conclusion

This year's progress report shows that Texas has seen modest, positive progress in the second year of the plan related to the first two goals, although targets for African Americans and direct high school-to-college enrollment did not improve. The state remains on track with the marketable skills goal and its aim to graduate students from higher education programs with identified marketable skills. Also, as specified by the student debt goal, the median percentage remains under the threshold of 60 percent for students who graduate with loan debt.

Most importantly, this *60x30TX* progress report provides another opportunity to recognize that the goals represent students with hopes and aspirations. *60x30TX* was developed with the understanding that the future of Texas is not dependent upon an elite few but upon the success of many Texas students, regardless of whether they or their parents have financial means, regardless of ethnicity and regardless of whether they are from Harlingen or Houston, Del Rio or Dallas, Wichita Falls or San Antonio, or Athens or El Paso.

More than ever, with rapid and far-reaching technological advances on the horizon, higher education in Texas matters. And it matters not only in the traditional sense of earning a credential then entering the workforce, but in the need for lifelong learning. The Texas adults of the generations that follow will return again and again to the resources provided by higher education to gain and retain the knowledge and skills necessary for their lives and the workforce of the future.

Although this progress report shows Texas is moving in the right direction toward meeting the first goal, with a nearly 3 percent gain since *60x30TX* was written, all higher education stakeholders must continue to move boldly forward, innovating and collaborating for the future of the state. Higher education matters for the state's workforce, for its communities, and for its families. More than ever, higher education matters for Texas.

## **Appendix A**

### **Higher Education Assistance for Identified High Schools**

House Bill (HB) 2550, Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 58.810, was passed in 2013 by the 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, to encourage public higher education institutions to collaborate with public high schools that have chronically low college-going rates, with the goal of improving those rates and promoting student success. The bill:

- Consolidates two former programs, the Higher Education Enrollment Assistance Program (TEC, Section 61.088) and the Higher Education Assistance Plan (TEC, Section 61.07622).
- Gives special attention to African American males and Hispanics, two groups that have traditionally had lower college enrollment and persistence rates.
- Emphasizes providing access to rigorous, high-quality dual credit courses.
- Directs institutions to report their collaborative efforts to the THECB, which is charged with identifying high schools that have substantially lower than average college-going rates and with summarizing the elements and results of institutional plans in the annual progress report for the state's higher education strategic plan.

This is the fourth annual HB 2550 report, but the first to appear in a *60x30TX* progress report. The first three appeared in the 2014, 2015, and final progress reports for the agency's previous strategic plan, *Closing the Gaps*.

#### **Elements of Institutional Plans**

For the fourth consecutive year, the THECB surveyed public universities and public community and technical colleges (CTCs) to find out which collaborative activities were included in their higher education assistance plans. The 2017 online survey was available to institutions from March through early May, 2017. It directed the institutions to check off, on a list of possible activities, those activities that they engaged in during calendar year 2016 with THECB-identified high schools with low college-going rates. The list of activities was unchanged from the previous three years' surveys. However, the number of identified high schools decreased from 298 in the 2016 survey to 188 in the 2017 survey. Those 188 schools had been originally added to the 2016 survey. They were added then because the survey previously covered mostly small alternative and charter high schools, with relatively few graduates. The additional schools included more traditional ones with large numbers of graduates, which provided better overall coverage of collaborative activities between institutions of higher education and the targeted high schools.

A total of 92 higher education institutions responded to the 2017 survey, up from 84 in the 2016 survey. Of the 92 respondents, 76 reported collaborating with high schools during the survey reference period, two more than the previous year and 23 more than in the 2015 survey. The 76 institutions (46 two-year and 30 four-year institutions) worked with 214 high schools, of which 185 were in the list of identified high schools, an excellent 98 percent coverage rate (185/188) of those high schools. That was the highest coverage rate in the four years of the survey; the previous high was 93 percent (of 138 identified high schools) in the 2015 survey. Also, the 2015 percentage may have been skewed upward because one institution

reported working with 141 high schools (identified and non-identified). In the 2017 survey, the greatest number of high schools for one higher education institution was 73.

The 2017 survey results indicated that there tended to be more collaborating higher education institutions per high school than the previous year. For example, 9 percent of identified high schools worked with just one higher education institution in the 2017 survey; the 2016 survey results indicated 31 percent. The 2017 survey results indicated 59 percent of high schools were collaborating with one to four institutions, down from 81 percent the previous year. At most, 12 higher education institutions collaborated with one high school in 2016, according to the 2017 survey results; the maximum number was nine institutions the previous year (this occurred at three high schools).

Table 4 shows the number of institutions that reported activities geared toward providing information and assistance to high school students, as directed in the HB 2550 survey checklist, in the 2014 through 2017 surveys. Activities are listed in descending order of the percent of institutions reporting them in the 2017 survey.

**Table 4.** Number of higher education institutions reporting activities to provide information and assistance to high school students, 2014-2017 HB 2550 surveys

	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
Distribution of admissions and financial aid materials at high school	44	90%	46	87%	68	92%	72	95%
College fairs	40	82%	41	77%	67	91%	65	86%
Outreach to bring high school students to tour campus	42	86%	41	77%	57	77%	62	82%
FAFSA assistance sessions	34	69%	33	62%	55	74%	60	79%
Outreach to bring high school students to campus events	39	80%	36	68%	54	73%	57	75%
Dual credit partnerships	23	47%	26	49%	49	66%	51	67%
Training for high school counselors	29	59%	26	49%	43	58%	46	61%
College admission/recruitment/advising staff placed on h.s. campus	23	47%	20	38%	38	51%	44	58%
Grants/scholarships targeted to students in high school	26	53%	22	42%	35	47%	42	55%
High school and college faculty collaborations	14	29%	15	28%	27	36%	32	42%
Bridge programs or other academic college-readiness activities	7	14%	16	30%	30	41%	31	41%
First-year support/success programs	12	24%	14	26%	19	26%	28	37%
Test preparation for TSI assessment (excl. pre-assessment activities)	11	22%	11	21%	17	23%	25	33%
Mentoring/tutoring	12	24%	11	21%	16	22%	25	33%
Content-specific professional development for high school faculty	4	8%	9	17%	18	24%	21	28%
Test preparation for SAT/ACT	5	10%	1	2%	5	7%	13	17%
Work-study students contact freshmen during higher ed 1st semester	4	8%	4	8%	4	5%	7	9%
Other	7	14%	15	28%	22	30%	21	28%

Note: Number of institutions reporting at least one activity: 2014 – 49; 2015 – 53; 2016 – 74; 2017 – 76.

The most common activities in the 2017 survey were:

- Distribution of admissions and financial aid materials at high schools (reported by 72, or 95% of 76 reporting institutions)
- College fairs (86%)
- Outreach to bring high school students to tour campus (82%)
- FAFSA assistance sessions (79%)
- Outreach to bring high school students to campus events (75%)

These were also the five leading activities reported in the 2014 through 2016 surveys, though not in the same order of frequency. Distribution of admissions and financial aid materials at high schools has always been the most cited activity. Two activities saw 11-point increases in reporting: first-year support/success programs (from 26% to 37%) and mentoring/tutoring (from 22% to 33%). Every activity except one (college fairs) was reported at least as frequently in the 2017 survey as in the 2016 survey – and that activity was still reported 86 percent of the time. In the 2016 survey as well, every activity except one was reported at least as frequently as in the previous survey, so it is clear that higher education institutions are increasing the scope of their efforts to encourage and assist high school students in making the transition to college.

Twenty-one institutions (28% of collaborating institutions) reported 37 “other” activities in the 2017 survey, including: mobile Go Center visits to high schools; senior parent college night; onsite Texas Success Initiative (TSI) workshops and testing; Apply Texas application days; career readiness and career “cruising”; lunch visits from admissions staff; dual credit parent nights; and intervention programs in districts for at-risk students.

## **Results of Plans**

This section presents several measures of student success that HB 2550 activities could influence. No additional reporting was needed from institutions to derive these measures because the institutions regularly submit relevant data as part of their required Coordinating Board Management (CBM) reporting process. These results provide information on college-going rates and activities at THECB-identified high schools with the lowest college-going rates and compares them with data from all public high schools in Texas. Throughout this section, the THECB compares high schools with the lowest college-going rates (which refer to as HB 2550 high schools or high schools with lowest college-going rates) and all high schools on four indicators—college-going rates, persistence in higher education, dual credit enrollment, and FAFSA completion.

Table 5 shows college-going rates for FY 2016 graduates of identified high schools, the rate at which they went directly into public and independent higher education in fall 2016. Of 31,538 graduates with IDs that could be tracked into higher education, 12,154, or 38.5 percent enrolled in Texas higher education in the fall, 13.4 percentage points below the 51.9 percent college-going rate for graduates (with trackable IDs) of all public high schools. (Graduates of public high schools in FY 2015 had a little higher college-going rate of 52.7 percent, and FY 2014 graduates had an even higher 54.2 percent rate). College-going rates for all public high schools decreased for every ethnic/gender category between FY 2015 and 2016. White females had the largest drop, from 59.4 percent to 58.0 percent.

**Table 5.** College-going rates for FY 2016 Texas public high school graduates

Ethnicity	Gender	High Schools with Lowest College-Going Rates			All High Schools		
		Number of Graduates	Enrolled Directly in TX Higher Education		Number of Graduates	Enrolled Directly in TX Higher Education	
			Number	Percent		Number	Percent
African American	Female	2,147	849	39.5%	20,216	10,415	51.5%
	Male	2,377	750	31.6%	19,931	8,504	42.7%
Hispanic	Female	8,877	3,742	42.2%	72,888	39,360	54.0%
	Male	8,582	2,788	32.5%	71,316	32,180	45.1%
White	Female	4,264	2,036	47.7%	50,562	29,342	58.0%
	Male	4,299	1,506	35.0%	52,158	25,900	49.7%
Other	Female	498	268	53.8%	9,944	6,987	70.3%
	Male	494	215	43.5%	10,088	6,765	67.1%
Total	Both	31,538	12,154	38.5%	307,103	159,453	51.9%

Note: Only students with trackable IDs were included.

“Other” students (Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, and multiracial) had the highest college-going rates in FY 2016 among all high schools – 70.3 percent for females and 67.1 percent for males. They also had the largest college-going gaps when compared to graduates of identified schools, 16.5 points (70.3 percent minus 53.8 percent) and 23.6 points (67.1 percent minus 43.5 percent), respectively.

Of FY 2015's 12,798 graduates of identified high schools who went directly to a Texas public or independent college in fall 2015, 68.3 percent persisted in Texas higher education through the following fall (see Table 6). Overall, at all high schools, 78.0 percent of graduates who enrolled directly in higher education in fall 2015 persisted to fall 2016, up from 77.2 percent the previous fall and 76.1 percent the fall before that. The persistence gap for HB 2550 high school students compared to all high school students was 9.7 percent in the FY 2015 cohort.

**Table 6.** College-going rates and one-year persistence rates (fall 2015 to fall 2016) in Texas higher education for FY 2015 public high school graduates

Ethnicity	Gender	High Schools Identified with Lowest College-Going Rates				All High Schools			
		Number of Graduates	Enrolled Directly in TX Higher Education			Number of Graduates	Enrolled Directly in TX Higher Education		
			Number	Percent of Grads	Percent Persisted		Number	Percent of Grads	Percent Persisted
African American	Female	2,508	933	37.2%	61.0%	19,562	10,279	52.5%	74.1%
	Male	2,546	727	28.6%	56.4%	19,246	8,287	43.1%	66.4%
Hispanic	Female	9,889	3,845	38.9%	69.9%	69,198	37,688	54.5%	78.3%
	Male	9,508	2,813	29.6%	63.4%	67,375	30,711	45.6%	71.8%
White	Female	5,288	2,337	44.2%	75.2%	50,574	30,048	59.4%	83.4%
	Male	5,203	1,673	32.2%	70.2%	52,088	26,293	50.5%	79.0%
Other	Female	570	253	44.4%	77.9%	9,782	6,963	71.2%	89.2%
	Male	518	217	41.9%	73.7%	9,672	6,516	67.4%	86.6%
Total	Both	36,030	12,798	35.5%	68.3%	297,497	156,785	52.7%	78.0%

Note: Only students with trackable IDs were included.

About half of the postsecondary institutions that reported collaborations with identified high schools were partnering to offer dual credit in the 2014 and 2015 surveys of institutions. That activity increased in the 2016 and 2017 surveys, as about two-thirds of the institutions reported dual credit partnerships. A total of 3,788 graduates of identified high schools participated in dual credit during their senior year, 12.0 percent of all 31,538 graduates of these schools (Tables 5 and 7). Fiscal year 2016 graduates of identified schools who took dual credit during their senior year enrolled directly in higher education at a 71.8 percent rate, about 33 percentage points higher than the 38.5 percent rate for all graduates of identified schools and only about 5 percentage points below the rate for dual credit students at all high schools. Despite enrolling in dual credit, all ethnic groups at identified high schools had somewhat lower college-going rates compared with all high schools, except white females. They had a 77.5 percent rate at both sets of high schools.

**Table 7.** College-going rates for FY 2016 public high school graduates who were enrolled in dual credit their senior year

Ethnicity	Gender	High Schools with Lowest College-Going Rates			All High Schools		
		Number of Dual Credit Graduates	Enrolled Directly in Higher Education		Number of Dual Credit Graduates	Enrolled Directly in Higher Education	
			Number	Percent		Number	Percent
African American	Female	143	101	70.6%	2,288	1,734	75.8%
	Male	115	71	61.7%	1,277	895	70.1%
Hispanic	Female	1,059	771	72.8%	12,153	9,601	79.0%
	Male	777	505	65.0%	8,840	6,465	73.1%
White	Female	946	733	77.5%	13,287	10,304	77.5%
	Male	613	429	70.0%	9,899	7,296	73.7%
Other	Female	85	67	78.8%	1,805	1,506	83.4%
	Male	50	42	84.0%	1,363	1,159	85.0%
Total	Both	3,788	2,719	71.8%	50,912	38,960	76.5%

Note: Only students with trackable IDs were included.

Table 8 shows FAFSA submission rates for seniors at identified schools, compared to statewide results at all public high schools. With 79 percent of institutions reporting on the 2017 survey that they provide assistance with FAFSA preparation at identified schools, it is clearly a priority of the institutions to inform students about the completion of this critical paperwork. In 2015-16, 41.6 percent of seniors at HB 2550 high schools submitted FAFSA paperwork between January and June of their senior year, compared with 46.9 percent of seniors at all Texas public high schools. While the gap of 5.3 percentage points between identified schools and all schools is relatively modest, it is important to note that each year since 2011-12, FAFSA submission rates among seniors at all high schools have been decreasing (from 49.2 percent in 2011-12). Improving the FAFSA completion should be an ongoing priority for students attending high schools with low college-going rates, as well as students from a broader array of schools.

**Table 8.** FAFSA submission by Texas public high school seniors

Senior Year	High Schools with Lowest College-Going Rates			All High Schools		
	Number of Seniors	Submitted FAFSA January-June of Senior Year		Number of Seniors	Submitted FAFSA January-June of Senior Year	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
2015-16	32,694	13,602	41.6%	323,478	151,581	46.9%



This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website:  
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