



Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

1200 East Anderson Lane • P.O. Box 12788, Austin, Texas 78711-2788 • www.theccb.state.tx.us

Texas receives \$1M grant to pilot the Affordable Baccalaureate Degree Program

June 19, 2012 – Austin, Texas – Today, the College For All Texans Foundation received a \$1 million grant to help design, pilot, and scale the *Affordable Baccalaureate Degree Program*—a low-cost alternative to a traditional postsecondary degree, with special focus on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The grant has been awarded to support a partnership between the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), Texas A&M University-Commerce, and South Texas College working to develop a low-cost, high-quality Bachelor's of Applied Sciences (BAS) in Organizational Leadership. The grant represents national recognition and support of the state's efforts to create affordable pathways to postsecondary education in response to Governor Perry's \$10,000 degree challenge.

"This grant will support a significant leap forward for higher education in Texas," explained THECB Chairman Fred W. Heldenfels IV. "The *Affordable Baccalaureate Degree Program* blends many of the higher education innovations recommended by the THECB. Most importantly, it rests on the vital collaboration between the community college and university sectors which is critical for creating affordable pathways to postsecondary degrees."

The 2-year grant is part of the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) grant program. Since 2010, more than \$30 million has been awarded to institutions and organizations that support breakthrough models for improving college readiness and completion rates by incorporating technology and making their business models sustainable and expandable. NGLC chose Texas as a grant recipient because the *Affordable Baccalaureate Degree Program* represented an "innovative model" by proposing to use "changes in the way human capital and technology function in order to offer a cost-effective new degree program."

"Awards such as this one continue NGLC's exploration of how schools and colleges can leverage new models and technology to provide better and more affordable education to those who need it most", said Andrew Calkins, Deputy Director of NGLC. "Our goal is to explore new models, collect evidence of what works, and then help others adopt those models to improve education, affordability and student success, with technology as a key enabler."

This degree program will allow students to enroll in as many as six, 7-week terms per year at an estimated flat rate tuition and fee cost of \$683 per 7-week term. Flat-rate tuition will be inclusive of all testing fees, support service fees, tutoring, advising, electronic learning materials and as many competencies as students are able to complete per term. Students may enroll year-round with the first students enrolling in fall 2013. It is estimated that first-time students can earn the BAS in Organizational Leadership in as little as three years at a total student cost of approximately \$13,650.

"Access to a college degree is critical to ensuring Texans can compete in the rapidly changing global marketplace, which is why maintaining our dedication to making higher education more affordable, accountable and accessible to Texans is more important now than ever," Gov. Perry said. "I congratulate the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas A&M University-Commerce, and South Texas College on this grant, and I encourage all Texas institutions to continue their efforts to leverage technology in ways that will lead to low-cost degree solutions for our Texas students."

The BAS in Organizational Leadership will focus on real world business skills such as information literacy, written and oral communication, critical thinking, and teamwork. These skills will be embedded throughout the program and emphasized through application and real world problem solving exercises. The program will leverage online education, competency-based learning, alternative academic staffing models, and other innovations to help control costs. The program will have three parts:

- 1) General Core Curriculum (42 semester credit hours or SCH) where students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of general education competencies online without sitting through traditional introductory courses, or transfer-in coursework earned through another institution, dual credit, or credit by exam.
- 2) Lower-division Electives (48 SCH) where students can demonstrate competency in a variety of related fields, including a foreign language, and apply for credit for work and/or military experience.
- 3) Upper-Division Applied Coursework (30 SCH) which builds on and applies work-related skills in the four mastery areas. Upper-division coursework will be offered both online and in a traditional face-to-face environment and culminate with an applied, digital capstone experience evaluated by faculty and business leaders using a program-specific rubric.

About College For All Texans Foundation

The mission of the College for All Texans Foundation is to increase participation and success in higher education for all Texans. The Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) supporting organization for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in raising awareness and financial support for its *Closing the Gaps by 2015* initiative.

About NGLC

Next Generation Learning Challenges is a collaborative, multi-year initiative created to address the barriers to educational innovation and tap the potential of technology to dramatically improve college readiness and completion in the United States, especially among low-income and minority students. NGLC is guided by the belief that providing investment capital to expand the use of proven and emerging learning technologies, collecting and sharing evidence of what works, and fostering a community of innovators and adopters will result in a robust pool of solutions and greater institutional adoption which, in turn, will dramatically improve the quality of learning experiences in the United States. NGLC is led by EDUCAUSE in partnership with the League for Innovation in the Community College, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

Additional Media Contacts:

Peter Boyle, Next Generation Learning Challenges
pboyle@lipmanhearne.com

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