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Texas reports annual progress on Closing the Gaps by 2015

Student success and continued investment is considered critical for meeting goals

AUSTIN, Texas (July 28, 2010) -- Texas continues to make steady progress on the path to *Closing the Gaps by 2015* in higher education in the four major goals of participation, success, excellence, and research, according to an annual report released today by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Some specific goals, however, remain a challenge for the final years of the statewide plan adopted in 2000.

In the area of higher education participation, Texas experienced the largest increase in history with 121,935 new students enrolling in fall 2009 compared with fall 2008. Hispanics and African Americans comprised 58 percent of the new enrollments. The enrollment figure includes all public and private Texas institutions, as well as all data reported by for-profit career colleges and schools. Total enrollment in Texas is 1,421,000 students.

"The historic enrollment growth validates the state's aggressive efforts to create a college-going and career-ready culture in Texas," said Texas Commissioner of Higher Education Dr. Raymund Paredes.

Additionally, the Coordinating Board reports that annual degrees and credentials awarded to Texas students in 2009 totaled 164,715—an increase of more than 9,000 awards over the previous year. Hispanics and African Americans were awarded 43,000 and 17,000 degrees and credentials, respectively.

Despite notable progress on *Closing the Gaps*, several measures remain a concern for achievement by 2015, including overall enrollment of Hispanics and African Americans; degrees and awards in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and initial certifications of teachers.

The Coordinating Board responded to the concerns by developing a plan to focus on the lagging progress areas. The *Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015,* adopted in April, identifies key strategies for Texas institutions of higher education to address the deficits.

The supplement to *Closing the Gaps* calls for greater support for community colleges (a sector of higher education that has experienced the greatest growth); comprehensive transfer agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions; improvement in the effectiveness of developmental education; and accelerating the implementation of comprehensive student support systems in institutions with large Hispanic and African American enrollments.

"The Accelerated Plan is a part of a comprehensive strategy focused on student success and cost efficiency being developed by the Coordinating Board," said Board Chairman Fred W. Heldenfels. "It is clear we need more state investment in higher education, but Texas owes it to taxpayers, and parents and students paying tuition, to get better results for that investment."

In addition to the Accelerated Plan, the Coordinating Board is recommending changes to the way institutions in Texas are funded to place emphasis on retention and graduation, amending the state's premier financial aid program to prioritize aid to students who are both needy and have excelled academically in high school, and reforming developmental education to propel less-prepared students toward success. The Coordinating Board will also issue a report later this year detailing cost efficiency strategies for institutions of higher education.

"Texas is leading the nation in higher education reform and demanding better outcomes for more students," Paredes said. "Despite the current economic challenges, now, more than ever, it is critical to continue investing in the success of this new generation of Texas students."

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About the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board works with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to help Texas meet the goals of the state's higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. The Coordinating Board provides Texans with broad access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

To schedule an interview regarding the 2010 progress report or the *Accelerated Plan*, contact Andy Kesling in External Relations, (512) 427-6119, andy.kesling@thecb.state.tx.us.

Related Information:

- Closing the Gaps Progress Report 2010
 http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/ClosingTheGaps2010Report
- Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015 http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AcceleratedPlanCTG2015

Summary of the annual *Closing the Gaps* Progress Report 2010

Statewide Goal for Participation: By 2015, increase enrollment at public and independent institutions by 630,000 students for a 2015 total of 1,650,000.

Statewide enrollment has increased every year since fall 2000, and fall 2009 saw the largest-ever annual increase of 121,935 to a total of 1,243,717. Enrollment figures have always included some reporting from career colleges, but in fall 2009 additional career colleges reported a total of 19,785 students, which contributed to the increase.

Hispanics had the largest numeric and percentage increases in enrollment from 2000 to 2009 among the three major ethnic groups. But with a participation rate of only 4.4 percent of Texas' total Hispanic population in 2009, their enrollment lags the most in meeting the CTG participation target.

In 2000, the African American participation rate was 4.5 percent of the state's total African American population. By 2009, the African American participation rate grew to 6.5 percent.

Texas females surpassed males, 6.5 percent to 5 percent, in their fall 2009 participation rate. African American females had a 7.8 percent participation rate in 2009, nearly 3 percentage points above African American.

Statewide Goal for Success: By 2015, increase the number of bachelor's and associate's degrees and certificates (BACs) to 210,000 at public and independent institutions. By 2010, increase the number of BACs to 171,000. The 2015 target requires awarding 93,765 more BACs than in 2000.

The statewide numbers of bachelor's and associate's degrees were somewhat above benchmark in FY 2009. The number of doctoral degrees was still well above projections.

The numbers of BAC awards to African Americans and Hispanics were still not on track in FY 2009 to meet targets, even though both groups had their greatest annual percentage growth that year since CTG began.

Total undergraduate awards in computer science, engineering, math, and physical science had their greatest percentage increase in FY 2009 since FY 2003, yet they were only about 17 percent above the FY 2000 level. They will have to more than double in six years to reach the 2015 target.

Certifications of new math and science teachers dropped 5 percent in FY 2009, following four years of growth. Total initial teacher certifications also dropped, the first decline since FY 2000. Both measures were well below targeted levels.

Statewide Goal for Excellence: By 2015, substantially increase the number of nationally recognized programs or services at colleges and universities.

In the 2010 U.S. News & World Report (U.S. News) rankings, The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) and Texas A&M University (TAMU) tied for 15th and 22nd place respectively among the top 68 national public universities. No other Texas public institutions were recognized in 2010.

UT-Austin and TAMU both tied for 13th place among public research universities, based on the 2009 report from The Center for Measuring University Performance. The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center also made the list of top public research universities, ranking 24 and 32, respectively.

Statewide Goal for Research: By 2015, increase the Texas share of federal obligations for science and engineering research and development (R&D) to 6.5 percent of the national total at public and independent institutions.

Texas' federal obligations for science and engineering research and development have been 5.5 or 5.6 percent of the U.S. total for the last four years. The 5.6 percent share in FY 2007 (the most recent year with available data) was somewhat below the expected the progress benchmark.

Texas met the 2015 CTG target for research and development expenditures in FY 2008, and added nearly 7 percent to its expenditures in FY 2009.