

Academic Planning and Policy E-News

Academic Quality and Workforce | College Readiness and Success
Innovation and Policy Development | Strategic Planning and Funding



Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board

Office of Academic Planning and Policy, David W. Gardner, Deputy Commissioner

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April Marketable Skills Conference Open for Proposals and Registration

On April 12-13, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) will host the first [Marketable Skills Conference](#) to help institutions achieve the third goal of the *60x30TX* strategic plan: *By 2030, all graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.* The Marketable Skills Conference is a kick-off event for achieving the marketable skills goal and will take place at the AT&T Conference Center in Austin.

Sponsored through a partnership of the THECB, the Texas Workforce Commission, The University of Texas at Austin, and the [College for All Texans Foundation](#), the event will be the first official gathering of Texas institutions of higher education to discuss one of the goals in *60x30TX*. The THECB is encouraging institutions to send teams of four drawn from the following staff: provosts, deans, career services administrators, student services administrators, chief academic/instructional officers, and faculty senate presidents.

THECB staff is planning to expand the registration to boards of regents, including student regents. Institutions may benefit further by inviting a trusted industry partner to attend. Boards of regents' members and industry partners will not be considered part of the team of four. [Conference registration](#) is online. **The registration fee for teams will increase from \$100 to \$150 on March 13.**

During this conference, higher education institutions will share ideas, policies, and practices on how to achieve the Marketable Skills Goal in *60x30TX*. Breakout sessions will feature best practices, available opportunities, and new possibilities for achieving the goal and helping graduates transition from campus to the workforce.

Currently, the THECB is accepting proposals from institutions on campus, district, or system policies and practices that are already moving the state

SNEAK PEEK AT TWO CONFERENCE PANELS

The role of institutions in graduate employability
Led by Andres Alcantar, Chairman, Texas Workforce Commission

The value of liberal arts and related marketable skills
Led by Debra Humphreys, Senior Vice President for Academic Planning and Public Engagement, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Calendar

Next Board Meeting

April 28, 8:30 a.m.

Community and Technical College Leadership Council Meeting

March 3, 10 a.m.

Minority Health Research and Education Grant Program

March 4, 10 a.m.

Education Research Center Advisory Board Meeting

March 9, 1 p.m.

Committee on Affordability, Accountability and Planning (CAAP)

March 30, 9 a.m.

Committee on Academic and Workforce Success (CAWS)

March 30, 11 a.m.

Marketable Skills Conference

April 12-13

toward achieving the marketable skills goal. Proposals for breakout sessions need to

- initiate dialogue or advance existing discourse about policy, practice, and innovation for making students aware of the marketable skills they can and do acquire during college;
- advocate for a culture of marketable skills in higher education;
- advocate for systemic policies and practices that help students think about their desired careers; and/or
- discuss ways to help students achieve the skills needed for their careers, while balancing career decisions with student-loan-debt decisions.

The instructions for submitting a proposal are posted on the [conference website](#). **The deadline for proposals has been extended to March 11.**

Ginger Gossman | Senior Director | Innovation and Policy Development

Community College Leaders Gather to Learn and Share Ideas on Block Schedules

On Feb. 8 and 9, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in partnership with [Complete College America](#), held a workshop to help community college leaders across Texas understand and implement HB 1583, passed by the 84th Legislature, Regular Session. The legislation requires public junior colleges to offer five associate degree or certificate programs from the fields of health science, nursing, or career and technology as block scheduled programs by the fall of 2016.

With 225 registered attendees representing all 50 community colleges in the state, the event marked an important step in bringing community colleges together to share ideas and best practices, as well as participate in guided efforts toward understanding the purpose and extent of the legislation. Speakers from several out-of-state institutions presented their own experiences with implementing block scheduling. Rex Peebles, Assistant Commissioner of [Academic Quality and Workforce](#), spoke about the role of block scheduling in meeting the completion goal of *60x30TX*. A panel of experts described the challenges and rewards of block scheduling programs and fielded questions from attendees.

During the second day, attendees were given time to clarify their institution's current status on block scheduled programs and formulate plans to meet the requirements outlined in the Block Scheduling Act. Additionally, Adam Hutchinson from [Texas State Technical College](#) (TSTC) shared staff experiences as they implemented block scheduled programs, although HB 1583 does not apply specifically to TSTC.

Marla Wise | Temporary Administrative Assistant | Academic Quality and Workforce

60x30TX in the News

[Houston Community College - HCCTV](#)

[Texas Public Policy.com](#)

[The Foundation - Dallas Community College District - Leadership Briefing](#)

[The Journal Pearland](#)

[The Katy News](#)

[The University of Texas at Arlington website](#)

[University of North Texas website](#)

[Working Poor Families Project - Policy Brief \(p. 11\)](#)

APP Links

[Higher Ed Data](#)

[Higher Ed Strategic Plan](#)

[Higher Education Almanac](#)

[Accountability System](#)

[College Readiness and Success](#)

[Academic Quality and Workforce](#)

[Compare College TX](#)

The APP E-NEWS is written and produced by the staff of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). For newsletter questions or comments, contact Ramona Reeves, Editor, at ramona.reeves@theeb.state.tx.us or (512) 427-6434.

Event Tackles Affordable Degree Programs and Competency-Based Education



National and state experts in [competency-based education](#) (CBE) and in education innovation convened in Austin on Feb. 17-19 to share knowledge from the field. The convening, "[TAB•Lab: Launching Affordable Degree Programs](#)," included moderator-led panels during breakfast and lunch each day, as well as five tracks of learning about planning and policy, curriculum development, technology, implementation, and innovative partnerships and strategies. With grant support from AT&T, TAB•Lab was co-convened by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), [Western Governors University Texas](#) (WGU), and the new Institute for Competency-Based Education at Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMU-C).

To kick off the event, Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes, introduced Sally Johnstone, Vice President for Academic Advancement at WGU. Johnstone spoke at length about the challenges and rewards of moving toward competency-based education. Johnstone said, "We may be the first generation in the U.S. to be better educated than our children and grandchildren." To help remedy this situation, Johnstone outlined a series of tools and strategies to reverse the current trend that included competency-based education, prior learning assessments, partnerships with community colleges, and looking at alternative learning credits earned through [MOOCs](#), [boot camps](#), and other "disruptive" technologies.

Panel discussion included information about a funding opportunity for Texas colleges and universities interested in pursuing seed funding provided by philanthropic partners to develop affordable baccalaureate degrees. Rex Peebles, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Quality and Workforce at the THECB, projects that the RFA for the funding will be available sometime in April.

Judith Sebesta, Executive Director of the Institute for Competency-Based Education based at TAMU-C, introduced Mary Hendrix, Vice President for Student Access and Success at TAMU-C during a lunch session. Hendrix was instrumental in implementing [TAMU-C's competency-based program](#). She stressed that support for innovation starts at the top and that faculty need to be involved from the beginning.

Hendrix was one of the more than three dozen speakers and panelists that shared expertise during the [30 smaller sessions and the eight conference-wide sessions](#). Sessions focused on predictive analytics, mission alignment/strategic planning, financial aid software, changing the role of faculty in CBE, program assessment, and many other topics. Ginger Gossman, Senior Director of [Innovation and Policy Development](#) at the THECB, said, "TAB•Lab was a unique convening in the national landscape of CBE. I don't think there has ever been this breadth and depth of information about CBE design and implementation in one event."

Sebesta, who helped plan the convening with THECB staff, called the TAB•Lab event "collaboratory" and said it was important for several reasons, among them that "institutions were able to learn from experts a variety of methods, including but not limited to CBE, for developing and implementing

affordable degree programs. These methods and programs can help to support all of the goals of *60x30TX*."

Lauren Cifuentes, Professor and Director of Distance Education and Learning Technologies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and a participant at the convening, said she and another colleague were excited about what they learned at the event. "The experience was the best of the best," she said.

The agenda and other materials are available by clicking on "[Meeting Materials](#)" on the event's website.

Ramona Reeves | Writer/Editor | Academic Planning and Policy

2016 Graduate Medical Education Expansion Grant Program Awards Announced

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) announced final awards for the Graduate Medical Education Expansion Grant Program (GME Expansion) for fiscal years 2016 and 2017. Intended to encourage the expansion of GME in Texas, the program is funded from a General Revenue appropriation. Awards of \$49.2 million will provide continuing and initial support to 65 awarded GME programs and 683 medical residency positions over an approximate two-year period. For a complete list of awards, go to www.thecb.state.tx.us/GMEXP.

Awards support an increase in the number of first-year residency positions available in the state. A first-year residency position is a position filled by a physician who is entering into residency training for the first time. These positions are also referred to as entry-level positions and do not require any prior years of GME training.

Of the total 683 residency position awards, 514 are in the primary care medical specialties of internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology. Total awards to primary care specialties represent about 75 percent of the total positions and funds awarded.

The THECB received applications requesting funding for 98 medical residency programs from health-related institutions, medical schools, hospitals, and not-for-profit organizations. The funding requested exceeded the available appropriation by 50 percent.

Before the funds are disbursed, statute requires awarded applicants to verify that residency positions selected for funding are filled. The THECB will begin the verification process in April after resident matching results are announced.

Suzanne Pickens | Senior Program Director | Academic Quality and Workforce

THECB Volunteers Impact FAFSA Completions in Central Texas



Adrian Respress from the THECB works with students filling out the FAFSA

The Division of [College Readiness and Success](#) at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) coordinated a financial aid workshop in early February. In partnership with [Texas Guaranteed](#) (TG), the workshop prepared THECB staff to serve as community volunteers during [Financial Aid Saturday](#) events. The Austin Chamber of Commerce hosts the events at Austin high schools and surrounding areas in February and March to help students and parents start or complete FAFSA applications for the fall.

Fourteen THECB staff members completed the training during lunch at the THECB offices. Many of these staff committed to helping students complete the FAFSA and also committed to addressing financial aid questions during the events held at more than 10 area high schools. Richard Sapp of TG provided financial aid training on how to assist FAFSA filers.

The volunteer support for FAFSA events last year helped the class of 2015 end the year with a 63 percent FAFSA completion rate. As a result, Central Texas students received \$121 million in financial aid. Community and volunteer support also helped about 79 percent of FAFSA filers prepare to go to college.

Agency staff from these six areas participated in the workshop: College Readiness and Success, Commissioner's Office, General Counsel, Internal Audit, Strategic Planning and Funding, and Student Financial Aid Services. Volunteers included Josie Brunner, Jane Caldwell, Kammi Contreras, Michelle Fairbanks, Diana Foose, Claudette Jenks, Raul Jaimes, Matt Lashlee, Gracie

Lopez, Suzanne Morales-Vale, Angelica Reyes, Adrian Respress, Monica Rivera, and Rey Trevino.

Matt Lashlee | Program Director | College Readiness and Success

Consensus Reached on New THECB Rules for Educational Aide Exemption, B-On-Time, and Autism Programs

Based on legislation passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) worked with representatives of Texas higher education institutions through the negotiated rulemaking process to develop THECB rules for the following:

- The Educational Aide Exemption Program on Feb. 4 (required by House Bill (HB) 1, Article III, Rider 63)
- Autism Program on Feb. 3 (required by HB 1, Article III, Rider 68)
- B-On-Time for Renewal Students at Public Universities and Health-Related Institutions on Feb. 2 (required by HB 1, Article III, Rider 44)
- B-On-Time for Renewal Students at Private and Independent Institutions on Jan. 25 (as required by HB 1, Article III, Rider 56)

On Jan. 26, the THECB also continued work with representatives of Texas higher education institutions to develop THECB rules for the Toward EXcellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant Program allocation methodology for public universities and health-related institutions of higher education. If approved, the new rules will take effect beginning Fiscal Year 2017. The work on those rules falls under the provisions of Texas Education Code, Section 61.0331.

The Negotiated Rulemaking Committees (NRMCS) came to consensus on the proposed new rules during the meetings. The proposed rules have been posted to the *Texas Register* for a 30-day comment period. If comments are received, THECB staff will draft recommendations for the comments and will email recommendations to the applicable NRMCS for consensus decision-making. The Coordinating Board will consider adopting the proposed rules, as modified by the NRMCS, at the board's April 28 meeting.

Mary E. Smith | Assistant Deputy Commissioner/ADR
Coordinator | Academic Planning and Policy

Focus on 60x30TX

Each APP newsletter includes a Q&A about 60x30TX with a staff member at the Coordinating Board. This month's Q&A is with Paul Turcotte, a Program Director in Strategic Planning and Funding. We are focusing on the following [paragraphs from the text of the student debt goal](#) (pp. 26-27):

The state's public institutions ranked 28th nationally in 2013 in state funding, with students receiving an amount of state support also on par with the national average, at about \$5,300 per full-time-student equivalent. This plan, however, can succeed only if institutions of higher education in Texas continually strive for greater cost efficiencies. All stakeholders must increase

efforts to improve cost efficiency, with the aim of holding down the expense of higher education to both the state and the student.

The challenge is that Texas ranked 23rd in the U.S. in 2013 in the percentage of undergraduate students considered economically disadvantaged, a population projected to grow. To achieve the completion and student debt goals, higher education must become more affordable to more of the population. One way to do that is for all stakeholders to work together to reduce the cost per degree.

Elsewhere in the text of the student debt goal, some strategies for reducing the cost per degree are mentioned, such as taking mostly, or only courses that count toward a degree to reduce costs to the student and the state. How much could the state and students save if most students finish their associate or bachelor's in two years and four years, respectively?

PT: We know that FY 2013 graduates who took more hours than required, on average, attended an additional 32 semester credit hours and spent an additional 1.4 years in school to earn their degrees. These additional hours and time cost the students who took additional hours around \$7,000 in extra tuition and fees, of which they borrowed \$4,100 to pay. The state supported these additional hours with an estimated \$3,100 in formula funding and \$3,400 in state-supported grants. The average Pell grant for these additional hours was about \$2,000. On top of these direct costs, we estimate that each of these students, on average, lost \$11,500 in wages for this additional time, resulting in \$1,000 in lost taxes per individual for the state.

How do you see the strategic plan and the student debt goal affecting economically disadvantaged students, a growing population in Texas public K-12 and higher education institutions?

PT: Supporting high-quality faculty and facilities to ensure degrees are of value in the workforce is critical to the success of the Texas economy. The student debt goal intends that Texans are not unduly burdened by college debt, by measuring the debt they incur while earning their degrees in relation to the wages those degrees garner in the workforce. Credit bureaus perform a similar test when evaluating a person's credit. This measure of a graduating class's financial fitness allows the state to evaluate its policies on college affordability, which affects economically disadvantaged students the most.

In the first paragraph above, the words "cost efficiencies" are used. Can you talk more about "cost efficiencies" and how those will help this goal to succeed?

PT: First, it should be noted that not all budget reductions are "cost efficiencies." For example, if an institution reduces the number of times a course is offered to cut costs, and students have to attend extra semesters as a result, then this would not be a cost efficiency. Administrators can find cost efficiencies by examining each expense to determine if its benefits outweigh its costs, and if they do, it's the most cost-effective approach. Still, what was cost-effective last year may not be cost effective this year. Texas public institutions of higher education provide a great value to students by managing costs while continuously improving quality. For this plan to succeed, these efforts must continue.

New Staff in Academic Planning and Policy

Cris Hamilton (Program Director, Strategic Planning and Funding) - Before joining the THECB, Cris worked as a lecturer and research scientist at Rice University for almost seven years. He also spent one year as a researcher at a marketing and advertising research company in Austin. After beginning his education at Temple Junior College (now Temple College), Cris received his bachelor's degree from The University of Texas at Austin, his master's degree from Texas Tech University, and his doctorate from Rice University. He was also a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Pennsylvania.

José O. Rios (Assistant Director, Stewardship, Office of Development) - José rejoined the THECB after briefly working for The University of Texas at Austin. At the THECB, he has served in various capacities and areas including College Readiness and Success, Financial Services, and Academic Quality and Workforce. In his prior THECB position, he had a leadership role in making current FAFSA and ApplyTexas data available to high school counselors statewide in a systemic manner. His [TRIO](#) experiences – as a participant of Upward Bound Program at Tarleton State University and later as a TRIO professional with the Texas State University Educational Talent Search program – gave him a unique perspective on higher education policy. José holds an MBA from LeTourneau University and a bachelor's from Tarleton State University.

Pamela Rogers (Program Director, Academic Quality and Workforce) - Pam worked at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as a research specialist and oversaw external research between the University of Texas Health Science Center and Adult Protective Services to study elder abuse. Prior to that, Pam worked at the THECB as a Program Director administering the College Access Challenge Grant - Community Partnerships program. She has served as an academic dean at National American University, an assistant visiting professor at Tulane University, and program director of the Texas Skill Standards Board. Pam has a doctorate in sociology; two master's, one in public affairs and one in Latin American studies; and a bachelor's in Latin American studies from The University of Texas at Austin. Pam will work with advisory committees to establish Fields of Study and Programs of Study.



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