2012 Texas Public Higher Education Almanac FAQs

Why did the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) create the 2012 Texas Public Higher Education *Almanac*?

The THECB, under directive from Governor Rick Perry, created a comprehensive Accountability System for public institutions of higher education in 2004. Since its creation, the THECB has refined the system (available on the THECB website: www.thecb.state.tx.us) to include more metrics and information, all of which can be used by policymakers and the public to gauge the relative performance of institutions.

Although the system has been nationally recognized as a "best practice" model for providing robust data about our public institutions, the current Accountability System is passive. Users must know where the data is and what data they want.

In response to this challenge, the THECB launched the *Almanac* last year as an effort to make the data more interactive and promote a higher degree of transparency to a larger audience. Additionally, it is designed to provide an annual status of gains made relative to the state's higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. The THECB intends to make the *Almanac* an annual publication and this is now the 2nd Edition.

Where did the THECB get its data for the *Almanac*?

National data is collected from a variety of sources described on page 92 of the *Almanac*.

Texas institutional data is collected and certified by each institution and submitted to the THECB. Some measures, such as graduation rates, are calculated by the THECB based on data provided by the institutions.

Why does the *Almanac* not include a ranking of institutions by any of the included metrics?

The *Almanac* is designed to provide greater transparency related to the performance of public institutions of higher education on a wide variety of metrics. While the *Almanac* does provide data on where Texas ranks relative to other states, the *Almanac* was not intended to rank institutions. The data however is presented in a variety of formats that allows readers to compare the relative performance of institutions across various metrics.

On the national comparison of Graduation Rate at Four-Year Institutions (p. 7), the 6-year graduation rate for Texas is 49%. However, under the profile of Texas Four-Year Public Institutions (p. 28) statewide 6-year graduation rate is 58%. Why the difference?

Both of these measures capture 6-year graduation rates for Texas institutions. However, the federal definition of graduation rate used by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

captures only first-time entering, degree-seeking students who enrolled in a minimum of 12 semester credit hours their first fall semester and graduated from the same institution within six years.

In contrast, the THECB data system captures the identical students over the same period of time, but includes them in the rate if they graduated from any Texas public or independent institution, regardless of where they started and ended their career. Not all states have the capability to capture data in this manner, so for national comparison purposes we default to the IPEDS graduation rate which is more restrictive.

Why does the *Almanac* include various graduation rates for full-time and part-time students at public universities and community colleges?

Public institutions of higher education in Texas serve diverse populations of students and include a variety of missions. These factors can impact an institution's graduation rate. The 4-year graduation rate is largely recognized as an ideal for universities. The 6-year graduation rate is the metric used by the U.S. Department of Education as the standard for comparing universities. The THECB also calculates 10-year graduation rates as a way to capture non-traditional students, and those that may stop-out of higher education for a period of time.

The U.S. Department of Education and most other states do not report data for part-time students. However, the Texas Accountability System allows us to track and report progress of part-time students who enroll in our institutions. Because more than 1 in 5 students at our public universities (and 7 in 10 at our public community colleges) enroll part-time, it is important to include various graduation rates for these students to offer a more comprehensive view of state and institutional performance relative to this segment of our student body.

Who funded the *Almanac*?

The *Almanac* was a public-private partnership between the THECB and a number of philanthropic organizations including the College for All Texans Foundation, Educate Texas, the Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Houston Endowment, Inc. The THECB compiled and organized existing data for use in the *Almanac*. Private funding paid for the design, printing and delivery.

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