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THECB releases annual update on *Closing the Gaps by 2015* showing Texas is making important gains with more work ahead

July 28, 2011 – Austin, Texas –Today, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) released its annual progress report on *Closing the Gaps by 2015*—the state's higher education master plan. The data show that Texas has made significant gains in key areas establishing a strong trajectory towards 2015 goals. However, some challenges persist, particularly in enrollments and degree completion among African American males and Hispanics.

"The Board is very pleased with the progress Texas has made and is encouraged about the direction we are headed in the final years of *Closing the Gaps,*" said THECB Chairman Fred W. Heldenfels IV. "We must now sharpen our focus on accelerating progress in those areas we lag, with special emphasis on increasing student completion rates across the board."

Launched in 2000, *Closing the Gaps* calls for significant improvements in four areas of higher education designed to help Texas become more competitive with peer states: participation, success, excellence, and research. The 2011 report illustrates ten years of quantitative and qualitative trends in each of these areas. Highlights include:

- ✓ Since 2007 alone, Texas has added more than 250,000 students—the equivalent of five Texas A&M University-College Station campuses.
- ✓ Overall, African Americans participate in postsecondary education at a higher rate relative to their population than Whites or Hispanics.
- ✓ Fall 2010 represented the single largest increase (11,900) in annual postsecondary awards since *Closing the Gaps* was launched.
- ✓ Texas' community colleges continue to provide the backbone for higher education, accounting for 60% of the enrollment growth between 2009 and 2010.
- ✓ Since FY 1999, total research expenditures at Texas' colleges and universities have increased by 85% in constant dollars.

Overall, Texas is making progress on all key goals. However, the THECB has identified specific areas where more improvement is necessary, including:

✓ Participation rates for African American males and Hispanics

Only 5.0% of the African American male population and 4.5% of the total
 Hispanic population were enrolled in higher education in 2010, notably below the 5.7% goal set for both groups.

✓ Degree/Certificate completion among African Americans and Hispanics

 The 6-year graduation and persistence rate at Texas public universities for African Americans (52.3%) and Hispanics (64.8%) trail far behind that of Whites (76.6%) and Asians (84.0%).

✓ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) awards

 Texas must almost double the annual degrees and certificates awarded in STEM fields to meet the 2015 goal of 29,000 annual awards.

"We have much to celebrate in the latest data," explained Higher Education Commissioner Raymund Paredes. "However, Texas institutions of higher education, the public education sector, and business must work more collaboratively to strengthen the P-16 to workforce pipeline and improve Texas' national and global competitiveness."

In preparation for the next legislative session in January 2013, the THECB is studying and developing a series of initiatives designed to meet 2015 goals and set a foundation for the next higher education master plan. The areas of focus were addressed during a special policy discussion at the July Board meeting and include:

- ✓ Establish an effective and cost-efficient pathway for students to transfer seamlessly between community colleges and universities in Texas—commonly known as a 2+2 system;
- ✓ Institutionalize a culture of innovation throughout higher education that challenges community colleges and universities to be globally competitive, cost-efficient, and focused on student success;
- ✓ Review state financial aid strategies to accommodate larger number of needy students within existing resources; and
- ✓ Identify strategies to develop low-cost pathways to postsecondary degrees and certificates.

"The world is changing rapidly around us," explained Chairman Heldenfels. "In order for Texas to seize a national leadership role and become globally competitive, we must renew a systemic commitment to a culture of innovation—a task that must begin in earnest now."

In addition to the release of the 2011 Progress Report, the THECB announced the launch of the *Closing the Gaps* Dashboard. The online dashboard provides interactive access to the most recent *Closing the Gaps* data and trends relative to 2015 goals. The purpose of the dashboard is to provide more transparency and easier access to key higher education data that is included in the state's nationally recognized Accountability System. The dashboard is located at www.txhighereddata.org/ctgdashboard.

Resources:

2011 Texas Public Higher Education Almanac Closing the Gaps Background Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015

Closing the Gaps

2011 Progress Report



Goal by 2015	2000	2010
Participation Enroll 630,000 more students (Aggregate)		486,000
Success Award 210,000 degrees/certificates (Annual)	116,200	176,600
Research [†] Secure 6.5% of federal obligations for research	5.3%	5.6%

- * All figures rounded
- † Research data for 2000 reflects FY 98 federal data; 2010 reflects FY 07 federal data (most recent). This measure compares Texas' position relative to other states and federal data lags approx. two years behind.

- ➤ In 2000, Texas adopted an ambitious higher education master plan—Closing the Gaps by 2015—designed to improve Texas' standing among peer states in four areas: Participation, Success, Excellence, and Research.
- By 2010, Texas had made noteworthy progress in each area, reflecting a strong commitment by state leadership and institutions of higher education.
- Today, Texas is on a strong trajectory to meet its goals by 2015. However, challenges persist, particularly among Hispanics and African Americans.

Participation

- √Texas increased enrollments by more than 84,000 in fall 2010 compared to fall 2009, marking second largest enrollment in history.
- ✓ Hispanic and African American enrollments increased by **30,000** and **16,000**, respectively, with <u>African Americans experiencing the greatest</u> rate of increase year over year (9.1%).
- √60% of the total enrollment increase occurred at public two-year institutions

Success

- √Texas increased undergraduate degrees and certificates awarded by 11,900 (or 7%) over 2009 levels, marking the largest year over year increase since Closing the Gaps launched.
- ✓In FY 10, African Americans and Hispanics earned 18,600 and 47,800 undergraduate degrees and certificates, respectively.
- √The statewide 6-year graduation rate in FY 10 was 57.4%

Excellence

- ✓In the *U.S. News and World Report* "America's Best Colleges, 2011," UT Austin and Texas A&M University **ranked 13**th **and 22**nd, respectively.
- ✓ Among public research medical schools, U.S. News and World Report ranked UT Southwestern at #8.
- √ The Wall Street Journal ranked Texas A&M University #2 among all universities for job readiness of its bachelor's degree graduates.

Research

- √Texas institutions received \$1.42B in federal science and engineering obligations in FY07.
- ✓Texas public universities and health-related institutions reported \$3.55B in R&D expenditures in federal, state, and private sources in FY 10—a 7% increase over FY 09.
- ✓Of all R&D expenditures at public institutions, federal resources accounted for **53%**, followed by state resources (20%) and private resources (17%).

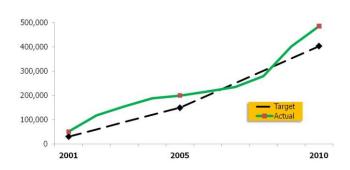
Closing the Gaps

Trends toward 2015

Participation

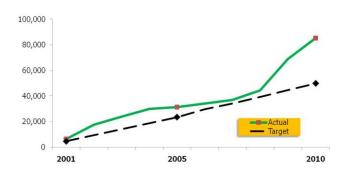
(Total Increase over 2000 levels)

Statewide: Well Above



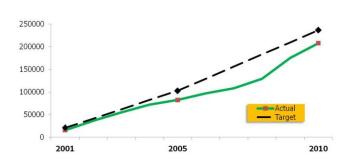
2015 Goal: **630,000** 2010 Target: **403,000** 2010 Actual: **486,000**

African American: Well Above



2015 Goal: **64,200** 2010 Target: **49,800** 2010 Actual: **85,300**

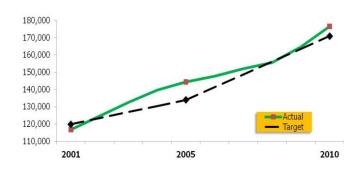
Hispanic: Well Below



2015 Goal: **438,700** 2010 Target: **236,600** 2010 Actual: **207,800**

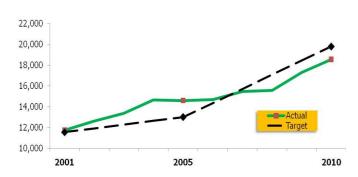
Success (Annual awards)

Statewide: Somewhat Above



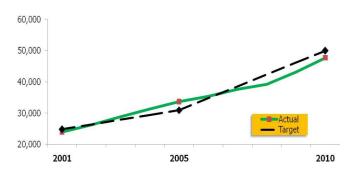
2015 Goal: **210,000** 2010 Target: **171,000** 2010 Actual: **176,600**

African American: Somewhat Below



2015 Goal: **24,300** 2010 Target: **19,800** 2010 Actual: **18,600**

Hispanic: Somewhat Below



2015 Goal: **67,000** 2010 Target: **50,000** 2010 Actual: **47,800**