Joint Oversight Committee on Higher Education Goverance, Excellence, and Transparency
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Panel 1: Governance

I. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) continuously strives to increase transparency in postsecondary education.

A. The development of the *Higher Education Accountability System*, directed by Governor Perry in 2004, launched a movement toward increased transparency in Texas higher education.

B. The Executive Order directed the THECB and institutions of higher education to work together to create a comprehensive system of accountability to:

i. Determine the effectiveness and quality of the education students receive at individual institutions; and

ii. Provide the basis to evaluate the institutions' use of state resources.

C. Public institutions of higher education developed the measures, identified targets, and created peer groups to compare performance.

D. Early on, it was clear that the *Accountability System* had to clearly connect, support, and drive us towards *Closing the Gaps*. *Closing the Gaps* has four clear goals that were integrated into the *Accountability System*:

- to increase participation in higher education;
- to increase success;
- to improve excellence and quality of programs; and
- to increase research capacity.

E. Given the Governor's charge, we added a fifth component to the *Accountability System* – efficiency. We knew that, given the great expansion that we wanted in higher education in Texas, we could only achieve that if we were efficient as well. We needed to use our dollars effectively, and we needed to have clear measures in what that would constitute as we moved forward.

F. Examples of measures available on the *Accountability System* include:

- Fall enrollment by degree type and ethnicity
- Degrees awarded
- Graduation rates

- Research expenditures by full-time student equivalent
- Baccalaureate graduate success – graduates employed or enrolled in a Texas graduate program or professional school
- Institutional efficiency and effectiveness data -Institutional support as a percent of total operating expenses

G. Different data measures are available for each sector. (i.e. Research dollars for universities; workforce data for two-year colleges; patient care data for the health-related institutions)

H. The *Accountability System* remains an integral part of the efforts to increase transparency in higher education and is continually modified based on institutional feedback. At least once a year representatives from institutions of higher education convene to make modifications and improve the transparency and effectiveness of its capacities.

I. For example, institutions now have the ability to provide clarifications to their data directly on the *Accountability System* for the public to view.

J. Another modification that occurred most recently was the inclusion of the data on community college milestones. These data are tied to the THECB outcomes-based funding proposal.

K. Today, Texas is a national leader for using data to drive policy. Texas was one of the first, and remains one of the few, to have a robust *Accountability System* that measures the progress on higher education metrics critical for stakeholders to track and understand.

II. The legislatively driven online institutional resumes continue to provide key data to a variety of audiences.

A. In 2009, the Texas Legislature approved SB 174 which required public institutions of higher education to post online resumes with key higher education data relevant to specific audiences such as policy makers and students and their families.

B. In 2011, the Legislature approved expanding resumes to include career colleges.

C. The resumes are required to be no longer than one page in length and are meant to provide a quick and concise resource on key higher education data including number of students enrolled, cost of attendance, and graduation and persistence rates.

D. Online resumes are easily accessible on the THECB homepage (http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/) and the front page of the TX Higher Ed Data website (http://www.txhighereddata.org/)

III. In 2011, Texas entered the next phase of accountability and transparency in higher education by launching the *Texas Public Higher Education Almanac*.

A. In working closely with higher education leaders and policymakers throughout the state, it became evident that despite our robust, online accountability system, far too

many leaders were unaware of the wealth of data available for their individual institutions or the state overall.

B. The THECB decided that in order to facilitate data-driven decision making in Texas, we must make accountability data more active than passive.

C. We worked diligently over the course of a year identifying the most relevant institutional and state data in our accountability system and presenting that data in the most compelling and intuitive manner.

D. Utilizing funding from philanthropic organizations such as the Houston Endowment, Educate Texas, and the College for All Texans Foundation, we have now produced two almanacs and are in process of developing our 2013 version to be released next spring.

E. Our *Almanac* has been widely distributed to legislators, university regents, community college trustees, presidents and chancellors of all public institutions, chambers of commerce and business leaders, state and local media outlets, high school advisors, and other key stakeholders throughout the state that we believe can benefit from this critical data.

F. The publication has also been shared with the U.S. Department of Education as well as national organizations.

G. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently recognized the state as a "national leader on accountability and transparency" in large part because of this new *Almanac*.

H. The *Almanac* is designed to evolve. Although there are many ways to illustrate the value of higher education, highlighting possible financial costs and benefits can provide useful information about the potential return on investment for degrees earned in different program areas.

I. The 2013 *Almanac* will include average yearly salaries by degree area for 2006 baccalaureate graduates at one, three, and five years after degree completion. In addition, the average undergraduate debt by area at the time of graduation will be shown for those students who obtained state and federal loans.

J. While the response to this publication has been very positive, we still have not found a mechanism to effectively distribute data to the most important stakeholders—students and parents. But I am happy to report: that is about to change.

K. With funding from the Gates Foundation, the THECB is in process of developing an interactive, desktop and mobile-friendly website specifically targeted to high school advisors, students, and parents.

L. The interactive site, to be called Compare College TX ("Texas"), will utilize data from the *Almanac*, but allow users to compare institutions on a variety of measures to include student demographics, time to degree, graduation rates, tuition and fees, and other relevant data.

M. The site will formally launch when we release the 2013 *Almanac* next spring. With the launch of this site, I believe we will have the most fully-evolved accountability system in the nation, bar none.

N. We will continue to utilize and enhance our original online accountability system that is a key tool for higher education researchers, policy analysts, and institutions.
O. We will continue to publish the *Almanac* each year to place the most relevant state and institutional data in the hands of higher education officials, business leaders, and policymakers so they understand how Texas higher education is performing.
P. And finally, we will begin to expand access to data for parents and students. This will help parents and students to begin to evaluate data like time-to-degree and graduation rates in addition to just tuition and fees, financial aid and available majors when making decisions about which college is the right fit.