Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Coordinating Board Mission

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s mission is to work 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, and thereby provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

Coordinating Board Philosophy

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Coordinating Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Coordinating Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and a commitment to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education. The agency will avoid efforts that do not add value or that are duplicated by other entities.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.
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Executive Summary

Texas Government Code, Section 2114, requires state agencies and institutions of higher education to develop customer service standards and implement customer satisfaction assessment plans. By June 1 of every even-numbered year, a report on customer service is submitted to the Governor’s Office of Budget, Planning and Policy and the Legislative Budget Board.

This report provides a general description of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), its Compact with Texans, and a list of external customers. It also provides the information-gathering methods used to assess the agency’s performance on its customer service standards, an analysis of the findings, a table of customer service quality elements, a list of FY 2013 - 2014 estimated performance measures, and suggestions for improvements.

Overall, 54 percent of the survey respondents were satisfied with the services they received from the agency. The majority of the comments and suggestions for improvements centered on the need for THECB staff to provide more courteous and thorough responses to requests for information as well as improvements to the content and user-friendliness of the agency’s website.

Since the FY 2011 - 2012 Customer Service Report, the THECB has implemented a new system to track customer service and student complaints called the Customer Relationship and Feedback Tracking (CRAFT) System. The CRAFT System is a web-based application that organizes, tracks, and automates all customer-related contacts with the agency, including contacts via email, telephone, and the Internet. The agency anticipates that, when fully implemented, the CRAFT System will allow agency employees to track all customer inquiries and provide an efficient and effective way of responding to customers and monitoring the quality of staff responses.
Agency Description

Created by the Texas Legislature in 1965 to ensure quality and efficiency in public higher education, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) works closely with the state’s higher education institutions, public education entities, businesses, community groups, and other stakeholders to achieve the goals of the state’s higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*.

*Closing the Gaps* has four goals:

- **Close the Gaps in Participation** – By 2015, close the gaps in participation rates across Texas by enrolling 630,000 more students.
- **Close the Gaps in Success** – By 2015, award 210,000 undergraduate degrees, certificates, and other identifiable student successes from high quality programs.
- **Close the Gaps in Excellence** – By 2015, substantially increase the number of nationally recognized programs or services at colleges and universities in Texas.
- **Close the Gaps in Research** – By 2015, increase the level of federal science and engineering research and development obligations to Texas institutions to 6.5 percent of obligations to higher education institutions across the nation.

The THECB performs the following major functions to carry out its mission and statutory obligations:

- Provides a statewide perspective for efficient and effective use of higher education resources and eliminates unnecessary duplication;
- Develops and evaluates progress toward a long-range higher education master plan and provides analysis and recommendations to link state higher education spending to long-range master plan goals;
- Collects and makes accessible state higher education data and aggregates and analyzes data to support policy recommendations;
- Makes recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transitions between high school and postsecondary education, between institutions of higher education for transfer purposes, and between postsecondary education and the workforce; and
- Administers programs and trusteeed funds for financial aid and other grants to achieve the state’s long-range goals.

These and other functions affect the state’s higher education community, including over 1.6 million students, 148 public and private institutions of higher education (includes 50 public community college districts; 38 public four-year universities; 3 public state colleges; 4 campuses in the Texas State Technical College System; 9 public health-related institutions; and 44 non-profit, independent institutions of higher education), for-profit career colleges and schools, business entities, community-based organizations, educational associations, the media, public school districts, researchers, other state agencies, and state/federal legislative offices.
Compact with Texans

The THECB is committed to meeting the highest customer service standards. By way of its *Compact with Texans*, the THECB is committed to professional service, responsiveness, effective communication, and follow-through with customers. Customers can expect THECB employees to be courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient when providing services. The THECB is dedicated to the continual improvement of service delivery, using customer comments to help improve services and minimize response times.

Standard response times for agency services, not related to financial aid, are as follows:

- General information requests not requiring research and analysis are acknowledged and answered within one day. Information requests that require either new data to be collected or existing data to be compiled in a new format may require additional days to respond.
- Information requests requiring research are processed within 10 working days.
- Academic and technical degree program proposals submitted by public institutions of higher education are deemed complete within five working days upon receipt of the proposal. Doctoral program proposals are considered within one year following submission of a completed proposal.

Response times for financial aid services are as follows:

- Responses to the majority of phone calls for the loan programs, student grants and special programs, and loan repayment programs are provided in less than two minutes.
- During peak periods, response times to calls made to a loan representative are approximately four to six minutes.
- Requests for loan deferments and correspondence regarding loan accounts are processed within seven working days.
- Loan applications are processed within three working days.
- Payments are applied to accounts the same day they are received.
- Loan repayment program applications are acknowledged and receive first review within five working days.
- Responses to online loan repayment program inquiries are provided within three working days.
- Requests for loan repayment program data are generally answered within one working day, unless additional research is needed.
- Loan repayment award payments are requested within five working days of the final application review.

Customers may file a complaint related to THECB activities with the agency’s customer relations representative. The customer relations representative refers complaints and inquiries to the appropriate agency personnel for resolution and maintains a tracking system. When complaints are not resolved within 10 working days, the customer relations representative intervenes to facilitate resolution, referring the matter to the appropriate assistant commissioner if necessary. Matters not able to be resolved by an assistant commissioner are forwarded to the Commissioner for resolution. For quality control, the customer relations representative may follow up on complaints that have been resolved by a division.
Current, former and prospective students may file a complaint against an institution of higher education in Texas only after exhausting the institution’s grievance/complaint process. All submitted complaints must include a completed student complaint form, a signed Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Consent and Release form, and a THECB Consent and Agreement Form. Submitted complaints regarding students with disabilities are also required to have a signed Authorization to Disclose Medical Record Information form. These forms are available on the agency’s website.

**Inventory of External Customers**

The following table is an inventory of the THECB’s external customers organized by strategies listed in the 2014-2015 General Appropriations Act. A brief description of the types of services provided to external customers is also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Customer</th>
<th>Description of Services Provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Coordinate Higher Education (A.1.1. – A.3.2.)</td>
<td>Students, institutions of higher education, policymakers, businesses, community and educational organizations, researchers, public citizens</td>
<td>Implement initiatives in partnership with other institutions/organizations to increase the number of students enrolling in and graduating from Texas institutions of higher education. Administer and process low-interest loans, grants, and special programs for students pursuing a certificate or degree program at public and private institutions of higher education. Implement and administer initiatives to increase the college readiness of public high school graduates to prepare them to successfully complete a college-entry course or to enter the skilled workforce. Provide strategic planning, information (data and research), and evaluation of programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Close the Gaps – Research (C.1.1. - C.1.3.)</td>
<td>Institutions of higher education, researchers, students</td>
<td>Administer the Norman Hackerman Advanced Research Program and the Texas Research Incentive Grant Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Close the Gaps – Health Programs (D.1.1. - D.1.8)</td>
<td>Institutions of higher education, dentists, nurses, physicians, students</td>
<td>Administer health-related programs and trusteed funds for the Family Practice Residency Program, Joint Admissions Medical Program, Physician Education Loan Repayment Program, Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program, Trauma Care Program, UNT Health Science Center College of Pharmacy, Graduate Medical Education Expansion Program, and Primary Care Innovation Grant Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Baylor College of Medicine (E.1.1. – E.1.4.)</td>
<td>Baylor College of Medicine</td>
<td>Provide trusteed funds to Baylor College of Medicine for health education programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Description of Services Provided

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Customer</th>
<th>Description of Services Provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G. Federal Grant Programs (G.1.1. – G.2.2.)</td>
<td>Students, faculty, institutions of higher education</td>
<td>Administer federal career/technical education programs, teacher quality grants, College Access Challenge Grants, and other federal grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Close Gaps - Tobacco Funds (H.1.1. – H.1.2.)</td>
<td>Institutions of higher education, researchers, students</td>
<td>Administer tobacco earnings to support the Minority Health Research and Education Grant Program, the Nursing and Allied Health Education Grant Program, and other health-related programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Indirect Administration</td>
<td>All customers</td>
<td>Provide central administration, information resources, and other support services to support all operations and functions of the agency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Information-Gathering Methods

The data collection method utilized was a Likert-scale survey (see Attachment A) made available from the THECB’s Website. A link to the survey is also automatically provided in the agency’s responses to online requests for information. Survey responses were collected from September 1, 2013, through May 1, 2014. Out of 6,046 individuals who were surveyed, only 172 responded, yielding a 0.03 percent response rate. Due to the low response rate, confidence intervals and standard errors could not be determined. The THECB’s diverse customers make a statistically valid sample impractical. Further, limited information was collected on the assessment of the quality of the THECB’s facilities and complaint process. Because of the types of services the agency provides, almost all of the THECB’s customers rely on services provided at a distance and do not physically access agency facilities. In addition, the majority of the complaints the agency receives are in regard to an institution of higher education rather than the agency itself.

### Analysis of Findings

#### Demographics

Respondents were self-categorized as a: student (34 percent), public citizen (19 percent), parent (15 percent), public institution of higher education (13 percent), career college or school (4 percent), private institution of higher education (4 percent), researcher (2 percent), educational association (2 percent), business entity (2 percent), state or federal legislative office (1 percent), public school district (1 percent), community-based organization (1 percent), and the news media (1 percent). The remaining respondents did not answer this question.

The gender breakdown of respondents was 50 percent female and 46 percent male; 4 percent did not respond to this question. The racial/ethnic backgrounds of the respondents were as follows: Anglo American/White – 48 percent; Hispanic – 19 percent; African American – 12 percent; Other – 13 percent; No response – 8 percent.
Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they had contact with THECB staff once within the last 12 months; 26 percent had contact two to five times over the same time period; and 6 percent had contact five or more times. Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had interaction with the agency for one year or less; 20 percent had interaction with the agency for two to five years; and 25 percent had interaction with the agency for five years or more.

Results by Performance Measure

Customers were asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each of the following statements as they relate to the services they received, and were asked to skip those items that did not apply. Fifty-four percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with my experience,” while 14 percent agreed; 4 percent disagreed; 23 percent strongly disagreed; and 5 percent were neutral. The tables on the next several pages provide the results for each performance measure.

Overall Satisfaction – “Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.”
Facilities – "If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly."

- Strongly Agree: 36%
- Agree: 23%
- Neutral: 27%
- Disagree: 5%
- Strongly Disagree: 9%

Staff Knowledge – "If I interacted with staff, staff members were knowledgeable and helpful."

- Strongly Agree: 51%
- Agree: 13%
- Neutral: 7%
- Disagree: 12%
- Strongly Disagree: 16%
**Staff Courtesy** – "If I interacted with staff, staff members were courteous and professional."

![Staff Courtesy Bar Chart](chart1.png)

**Received Information** – "If requested, I received the information I needed to obtain services."

![Received Information Bar Chart](chart2.png)
Website – “If I visited the website, it was easy to use, well organized, and contained accurate information.”

Complaints – “If I filed a complaint, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.”
Request for Services – “If I called, wrote, emailed, or made a request for services, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.”

Printed Material – “If I received printed material, it provided thorough and accurate information.”
### Table of Customer-Determined Service Quality Elements

This table summarizes survey results for all customer-determined service quality elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly.</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I interacted with staff, staff members were knowledgeable and helpful.</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I interacted with staff, staff members were courteous and professional.</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If requested, I received the information I needed to obtain services.</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I visited the website, it was easy to use, well organized, and contained accurate information.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I filed a complaint, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I called, wrote, emailed, or made a request for services, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I received printed material, it provided thorough and accurate information.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FY 2013 - 2014 Estimated Performance Measures

This table identifies FY 2013 - 2014 estimated customer service performance measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Services Received</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Service Delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Customers Surveyed</td>
<td>6,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Customers Served</td>
<td>1.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency Measure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per Customer Surveyed</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Customers Identified</td>
<td>1.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Customer Groups Inventoried</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Complaints and Suggested Improvements

Out of 6,046 inquiries received from September 1, 2012, to May 1, 2014, 32 were categorized as complaints. Most of these complaints were against a Texas institution of higher education. Three complaints were against the agency and were related to student financial aid.

Out of the 172 respondents to the customer service survey, 79 provided comments. Twenty-eight (or 35.4 percent) of the comments received were favorable towards the quality and efficiency of the agency’s customer service; 32 (or 40.5 percent) were negative. Twenty-four of the 79 respondents provided suggestions for improvements. These suggestions mostly focused on the need for website improvements, particularly for student loan borrowers. Specifically, respondents suggested providing more information on the website about loan accounts such as payment history; making the website more user-friendly for borrowers to make online loan payments and to update personal contact information; and to lessen the amount of information available on the website in order for users to navigate it more easily. Other suggestions included the need to improve the professional courtesy of customer service representatives and to provide more direct, accurate, and thorough responses to customer inquiries.
Next Steps/Conclusion

The THECB is committed to improving the quality and efficiency of its customer service. To address complaints relating to the agency’s website, THECB staff will seek funding to redesign the website in order to make it more user-friendly. Additionally, the agency recently launched a new web-based application called the Customer Relationship and Feedback Tracking (CRAFT) System. The CRAFT System is a centralized database that organizes, tracks, and automates all customer-related contacts, including contacts via email, telephone, and the Internet. When an inquiry is recorded in the system, an automatic due date is assigned to that inquiry based on the level of priority and in accordance with the agency’s *Compact with Texans*.

The CRAFT System is based on a work flow capability in which staff can delegate tasks and activities to other staff who have the expertise and oversight to follow-up on a particular inquiry. The system maintains a complete documentation of all actions related to a particular inquiry and provides standard reports to track performance measures. The system also has a strong query capability based on type of inquiry, customer, etc.

The agency launched the CRAFT System in February 2014 in a few departments. Training of loan program staff was completed as of May 2014. Ultimately, the loan program staff will be the largest group of users of the system because this department gets the bulk of customer inquiries. Staff members within other agency departments will be trained over the next several months, and the agency-wide implementation of the CRAFT System is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2014.

As of April 2014, 98 inquiries had been entered into the new system. Of those 98 inquiries, 83 have been resolved and 15 were in progress. Of those 98 inquiries, 23 were student complaints against an institution of higher education; 22 were from the media; 9 were from the Texas Legislature; and the remainder were from the general public, including parents and businesses. Agency staff anticipate that the CRAFT System will provide an efficient and effective way of responding to customer inquiries as well as improve the ability to monitor the timeliness and quality of staff responses.
Appendix A

Customer Service Survey

To better serve you, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board appreciates you taking the time to complete this survey.

Please note:

- For each of the following statements, select the one which most clearly reflects your answer. You may skip items that do not apply.
- This survey is anonymous and we do not collect information which allows for identification of individuals.
- If you do not have any experience with an item, mark "N/A" or "Not Applicable".

How many times have you had contact with the THECB staff in the past 12 months?
- Once
- 2-5
- 5 or more

Indicate how long you have interacted with this agency.
- 1 year or less
- 2-5 years
- 5 or more years

Which customer type would you consider yourself (mark only one):

- Business Entity
- Public Citizen
- Career College or School
- Public Higher Education Institution
- Community-Based Organization
- Public School District
- Educational Association
- Other Texas State Agency
- News Media
- Researcher
- Parent
- State or Federal Legislative Office
- Private Institution of Higher Education
- Student
Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following regarding the service you received and please skip those which do not apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I interacted with staff, staff members were knowledgeable and helpful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I interacted with staff, staff members were courteous and professional.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If requested, I received the information I needed to obtain services.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I visited the website, it was easy to use, well organized, and contained accurate information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I filed a complaint, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I called, wrote, emailed, or made a request for services, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I received printed material, it provided thorough and accurate information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Provide any suggestions to improve the quality of our customer service:

My race/ethnicity is:
- African-American
- Anglo-American/White
- Asian-American/Native American
- Mexican-American/Hispanic
- Multiracial/Other

My gender is:
- Female
- Male
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
1200 E. Anderson Lane / P.O. Box 12788
Austin, Texas 78752 / 78711
Telephone: 512/427-6101
Fax: 512/427-6127
www.thecb.state.tx.us

For information regarding financial aid services, contact:
Loans, Grants, and Special Programs
1-800-242-3062
or 512/427-6340 if inside the Austin area

For general information, contact:
Office of External Relations
Telephone: 512/427-6111
Fax: 512/427-6127
ER@thecb.state.tx.us

Customer Relations Representative:
Linda Battles, Associate Commissioner/Chief of Staff
Telephone: 512/427-6205
Fax: 512/427-6127
Linda.Battles@thecb.state.tx.us

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