

# **Customer Service Report**

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board**

**June 2016**

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### Agency Mission

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provides leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system and promotes access, affordability, quality, success and cost efficiency through 60x30TX, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

### Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

### Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The Coordinating Board's core values are:

**Accountability:** We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

**Efficiency:** We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

**Collaboration:** We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

**Excellence:** We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

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.

Please cite this report as follows:

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2016). Customer service report. Austin, TX.

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# Executive Summary

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The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is committed to meeting the highest customer service standards. Under the *Compact with Texans*, the THECB reaffirms its commitment to professional service, responsiveness, effective communication, and follow-through with each of our customers. Our customers can expect THECB employees to be courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient when providing services.

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 Budget Division and the Legislative Budget Board. The THECB is dedicated to continual improvement of service delivery, using customer comments to help improve services and minimize response times.

This report provides a general description of the 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 2015-2016 estimated performance measures, and customer suggestions for improvements.

Overall, 81 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 the THECB staff to improve the content and user-friendliness of the agency's website.

In 2015, the agency fully implemented a new system called the Customer Relationship and Feedback Tracking (CRAFT) System to track customer service and student complaints. 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. This tool has allowed the agency to track customer inquiries and provide an efficient and effective way of responding to customers in a timely manner, as well as to monitor the quality of staff responses.

# Customer Service Report

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## **THECB Compact with Texans – Statement of Customer Service Principles**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is committed to meeting the highest customer service standards. Under the *Compact with Texans*, the THECB reaffirms its commitment to professional service, responsiveness, effective communication, and follow-through with each of our customers. Our customers can expect THECB employees to be courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient when providing services. The THECB is dedicated to continual improvement of service delivery, using customer comments to help improve services and minimize response times. (See Appendix A for standard response times to requests for information and for procedures for filing complaints.)

## **Agency Description**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) was created by the Texas Legislature in 1965 to “represent the highest authority in the state in matters of public higher education and is charged with the duties to take an active part in promoting quality education throughout the state by:

- providing a statewide perspective to ensure the efficient and effective use of higher education resources and to eliminate unnecessary duplication;
- developing and evaluating progress toward a long-range master plan for higher education and providing analysis and recommendations to link state spending for higher education with the goals of the long-range master plan;
- collecting and making accessible data on higher education in the state and aggregating and analyzing that data to support policy recommendations;
- making recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transitions, including between high school and postsecondary education, between institutions of higher education for transfer purposes, and between postsecondary education and the workforce; and
- administering programs and trusteed funds for financial aid and other grants as necessary to achieve the state's long-range goals and as directed by the legislature.” (Texas Education Code, Section 61.051).

The THECB is governed by a nine-member board appointed to six-year staggered terms by the governor, with consent of the senate. One-third of the board members’ terms expires on August 31 of each odd-numbered year. The board includes one non-voting student representative appointed by the governor to a one-year term. The board appoints the Commissioner of Higher Education, who serves as the chief executive

officer for the agency, which has 265.4 authorized full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The Commissioner functions as the state’s chief expert on higher education, making policy recommendations and carrying out higher education initiatives on behalf of the board.

### **Inventory of External Customers**

The following table is an inventory of the THECB’s external customers organized by the agency’s budget goals and strategies listed in the 2016-2017 General Appropriations Act. The table also briefly describes the types of services provided.

<b>Budget Goal (Strategy)</b>	<b>Customer</b>	<b>Description of Services Provided</b>
A. Coordinate Higher Education  (A.1.1. – A.3.1.)	Students, institutions of higher education, policymakers, businesses, community and educational organizations, researchers, general public	Implement initiatives, in partnership with 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 for successfully completing a college-entry course or for entering the skilled workforce. Provide strategic planning, information (data and research), and evaluation of programs.
B. Close the Gaps – Affordability  (B.1.1. – B.1.17.)	Students, institutions of higher education	Administer student financial aid programs, including TEXAS Grants, B-On-Time loans, Texas Educational Opportunity Grants, Tuition Equalization Grants, Texas College Work Study, Educational Aide Program, Top 10% Scholarships, Texas Armed Services Scholarships, T-STEM Challenge Scholarships, and the Engineering Recruitment program. Administer loan repayment programs for teachers, border

<b>Budget Goal (Strategy)</b>	<b>Customer</b>	<b>Description of Services Provided</b>
		faculty, and Office of Attorney General Lawyers. Administer Advise TX.
C. Close the Gaps – Research (C.1.1.)	Eight emerging research institutions of higher education	Administer the Texas Research Incentive Grant Program.
D. Close the Gaps – Health Programs (D.1.1.- D.1.11)	Institutions of higher education, dentists, nurses, physicians, students	Administer health-related programs and trusteed funds for the Family Practice Residency Program, Preceptorship Program, Joint Admissions Medical Program, Physician Education Loan Repayment Program (LRP), Dental LRP, Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program, Trauma Care Program, Graduate Medical Education Expansion Program, Primary Care Innovation Grant Program, and Autism Program.
E. Baylor College of Medicine (E.1.1. – E.1.4.)	Baylor College of Medicine	Provide trusteed funds to Baylor College of Medicine for health education and research programs.
F. Quality, Access and Success (F.1.1. – F.1.4.)	Institutions of higher education, students, higher education faculty, Texas Workforce Commission	Administer developmental education programs, teacher education at the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Accelerate TX community college grants, and teacher residency program.

<b>Budget Goal (Strategy)</b>	<b>Customer</b>	<b>Description of Services Provided</b>
G. Federal Grant Programs (G.1.1. – G.1.3.)	Students, faculty, institutions of higher education	Administer federal career/technical education programs, teacher quality grants, and other federal grants.
H. Close the Gaps – Tobacco Funds (H.1.1. – H.1.2.)	Institutions of higher education, researchers, students	Administer tobacco earnings to support the Minority Health Research and Education Grant Program and the Nursing and Allied Health Education Grant Program.
I. Indirect Administration (I.1.1. – I.1.3)	All customers	Provide central administration, information resources, and other support services to support all operations and functions of the agency.

## **Information-Gathering Methods**

The data collection methodology utilized a Likert-scale survey (see Appendix B). A link to the survey was sent to all GovDelivery subscribers on April 13, 2016, with a closing date of May 13, 2016. Out of 40,676 subscribers surveyed, 1,235 responded, yielding a 3 percent response rate.

## **Analysis of Findings**

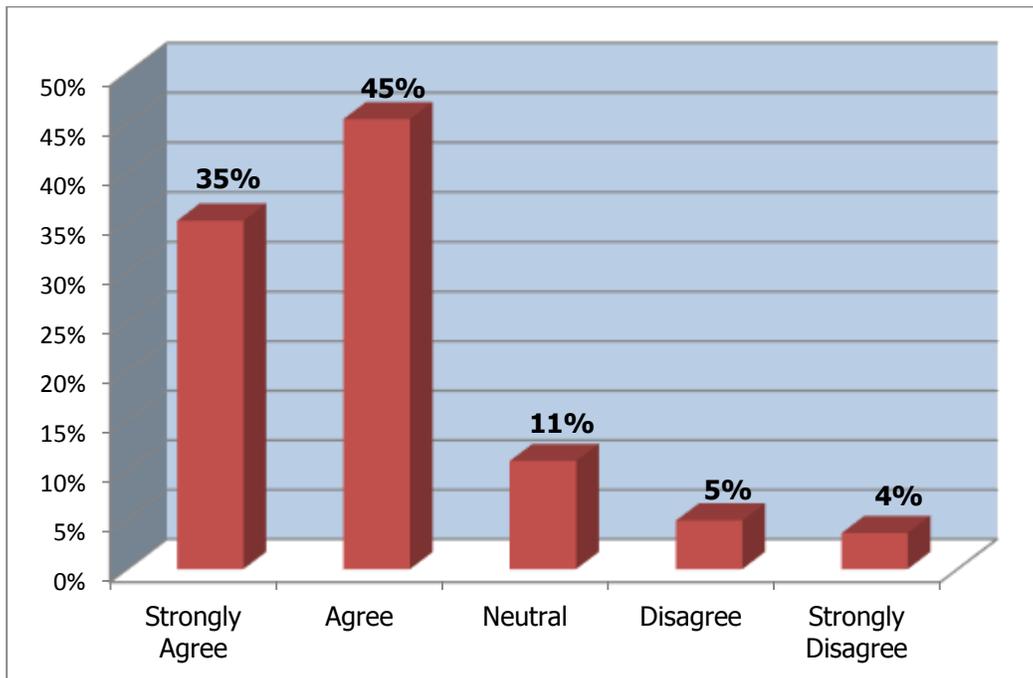
Respondents were self-categorized as a: student (26%), public citizen (3%), parent (8%), public institution of higher education (36%), career college or school (7%), public school district (7%), private institution of higher education (6%), community-based organization (2%), researcher (1%), educational association (1%), business entity (1%), state or federal legislative office (1%), and other Texas state agency (1%). The remaining respondents did not answer this question.

The gender breakdown of respondents was 64 percent female and 32 percent male; 4 percent did not respond to this question. The racial/ethnic backgrounds of the respondents were as follows: Anglo American/White – 56 percent; Hispanic – 20 percent; African American – 9 percent; Other – 10 percent; No response – 5 percent.

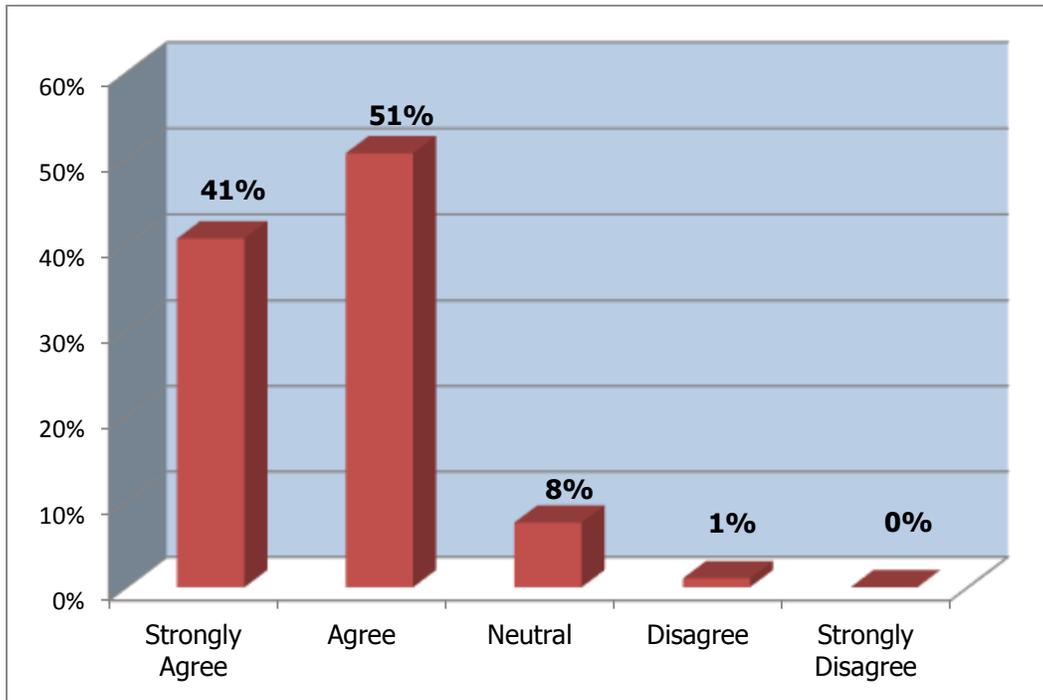
Forty-three percent of the respondents indicated that they had contact with THECB staff once within the last 12 months; 32 percent had contact two to five times over the same time period; and 24 percent had contact five or more times. Twenty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had interacted with the agency for one year or less; 34 percent had interacted with the agency for two to five years; and 41 percent had interacted with the agency for five years or more.

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. Thirty-five percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement: "Overall, I am satisfied with my experience," while 45 percent agreed; 5 percent disagreed; 4 percent strongly disagreed; and 11 percent were neutral. The graphs on the next several pages provide the results for each performance measure.

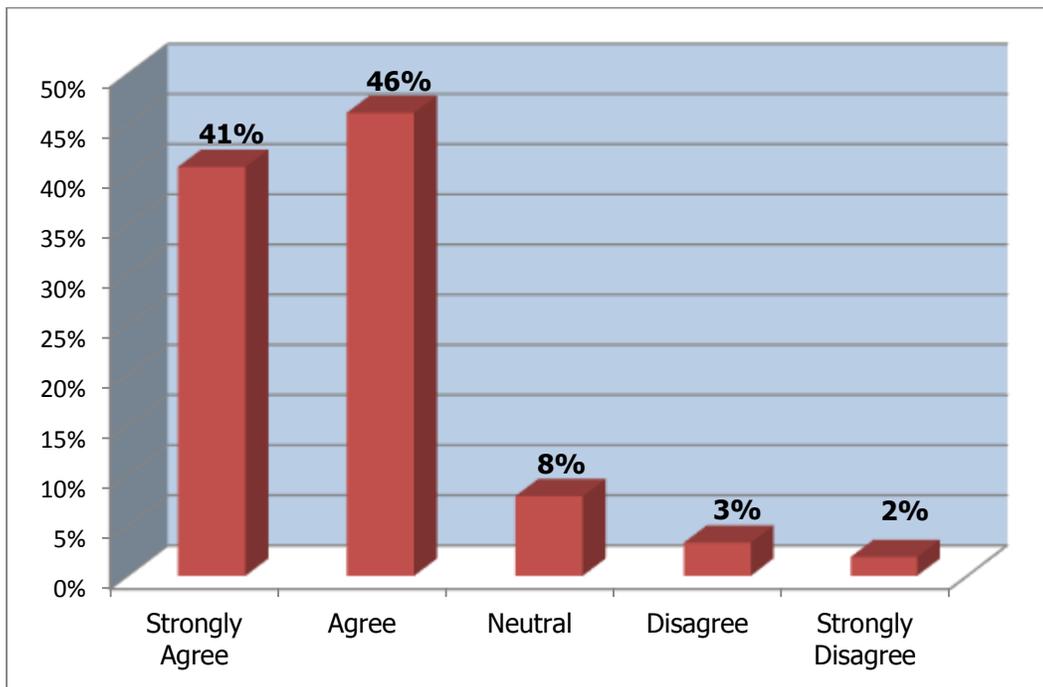
***Overall Satisfaction – "Overall, I am satisfied with my experience."***



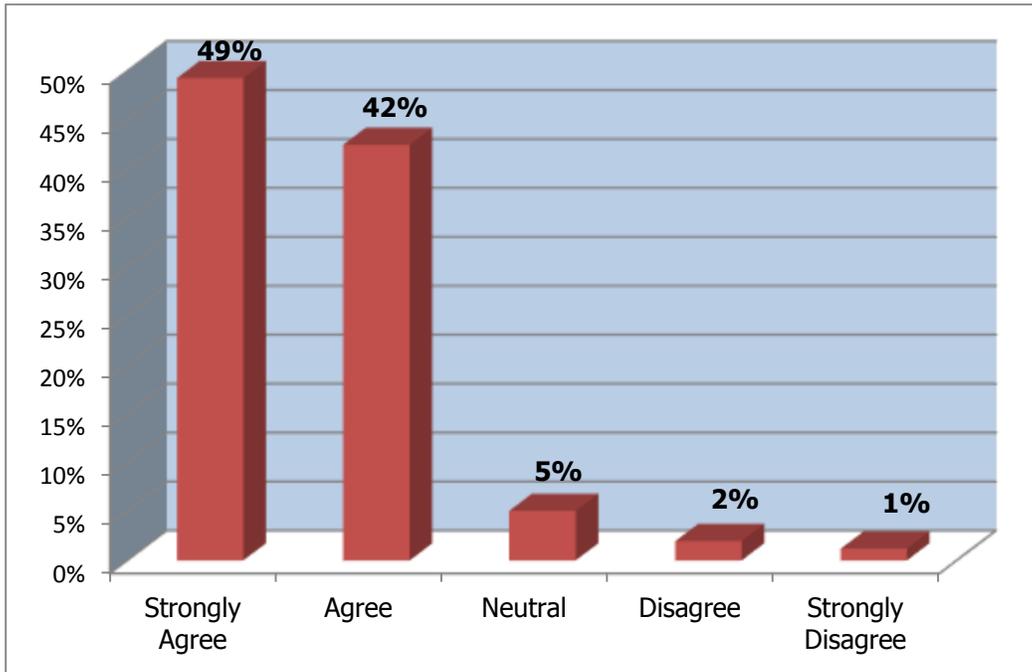
***Facilities – "If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly."***



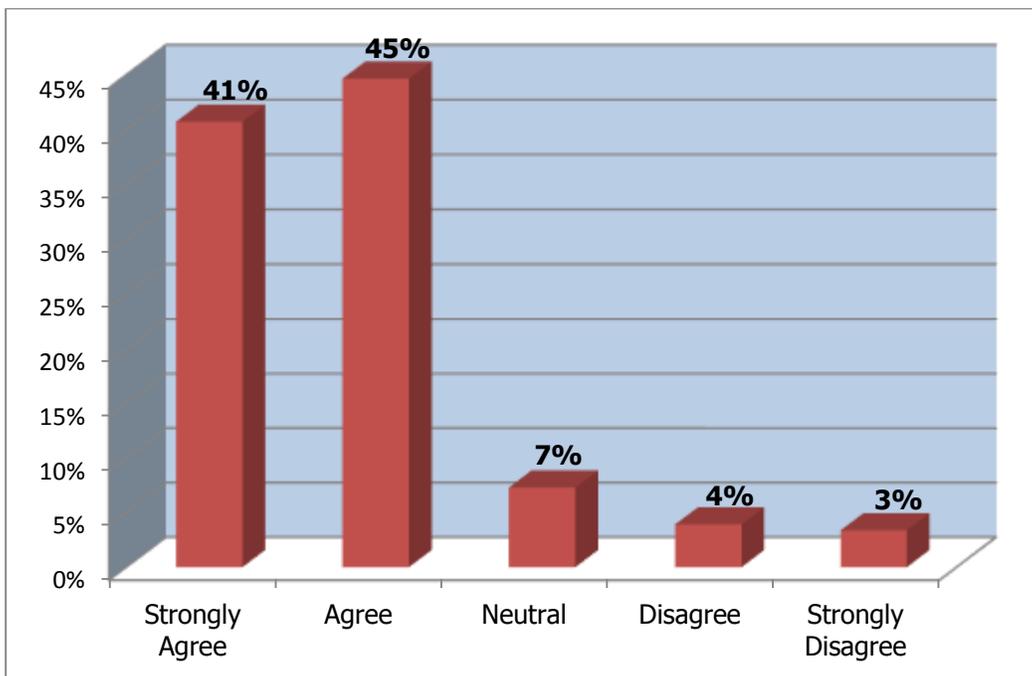
***Staff Knowledge – "If I interacted with staff, staff members were knowledgeable and helpful."***



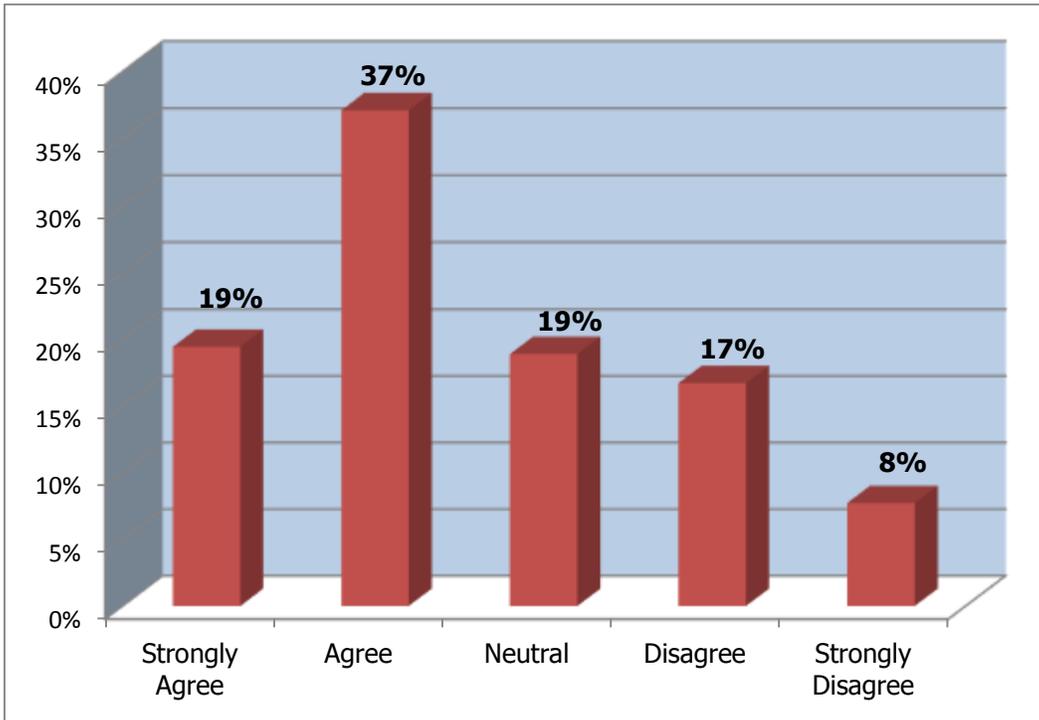
***Staff Courtesy – "If I interacted with staff, staff members were courteous and professional."***



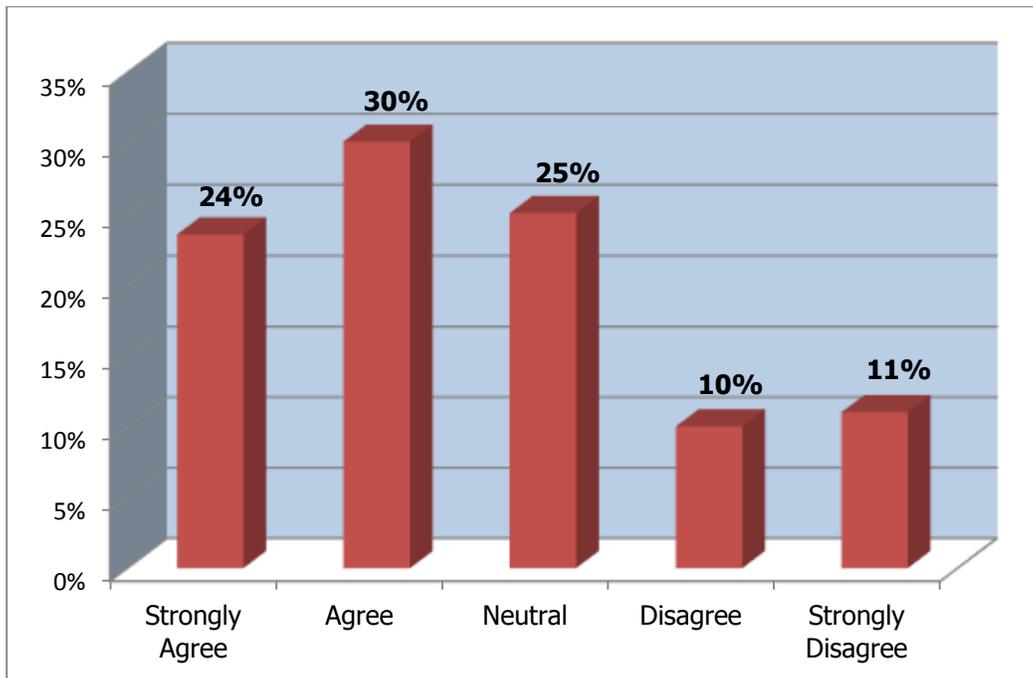
***Received Information – "If requested, I received the information I needed to obtain services."***



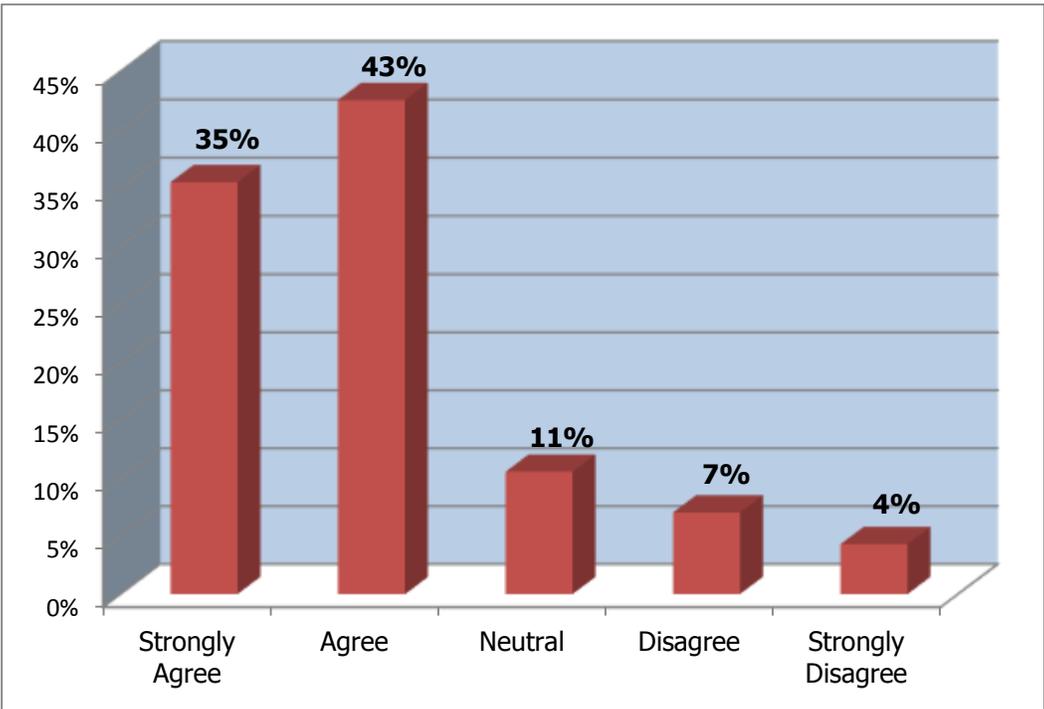
***Website – "If I visited the website, it was easy to use, well organized, and contained accurate information."***



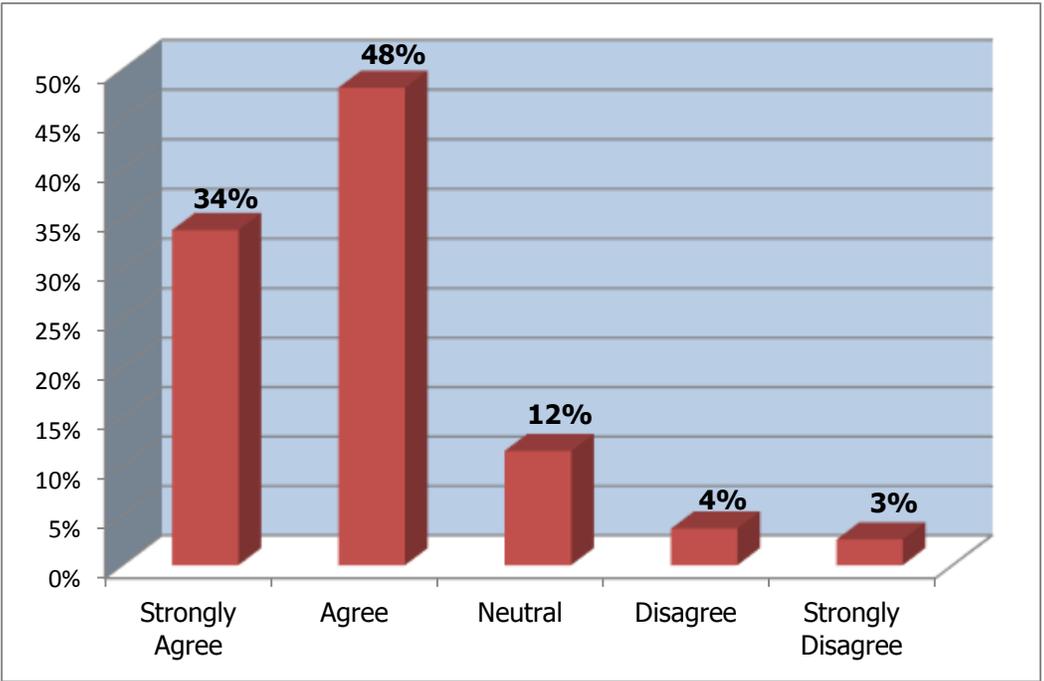
***Complaints – "If I filed a complaint, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner."***



***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.

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly.	41%	51%	8%	1%	0%
If I interacted with staff, staff members were knowledgeable and helpful.	41%	46%	8%	3%	2%
If I interacted with staff, staff members were courteous and professional.	49%	42%	5%	2%	1%
If requested, I received the information I needed to obtain services.	41%	45%	7%	4%	3%
If I visited the website, it was easy to use, well organized, and contained accurate information.	19%	37%	19%	17%	8%
If I filed a complaint, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.	24%	30%	25%	10%	11%
If I called, wrote, emailed, or made a request for services, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.	35%	43%	11%	7%	4%
If I received printed material, it provided thorough and accurate information.	34%	48%	12%	4%	3%
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.	35%	45%	11%	5%	4%

## FY 2016-2017 Estimated Performance Measures

This table identifies FY 2016-2017 estimated customer service performance measures.

Performance Measure	Result
<b>Outcome Measures</b>	
Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Services Received	35%
Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery	10%
<b>Output Measures</b>	
Total Customers Surveyed (GovDelivery Subscribers)	40,676
Total Customers Served (via CRAFT System)	15,253
<b>Efficiency Measure</b>	
Cost per Customer Surveyed (via GovDelivery)	\$0
<b>Explanatory Measures</b>	
Total Customers Identified	1.6 million
Total Customer Groups Inventoried	14

## Complaints and Suggested Improvements

Out of 15,253 inquiries received via the Customer Relationship and Feedback Tracking System (CRAFT) from May 2, 2014 to May 13, 2016, 1,540 were categorized as complaints: 842 were complaints against a Texas institution of higher education, 69 were complaints against the agency and were related to student financial aid, and the remaining 629 were uncategorized complaints.

Out of the 1,253 respondents to the customer service survey, 322 provided comments. The comments received from 79 (or 6%) were favorable toward the quality and efficiency of the agency's customer service; 151 (or 12%) were negative. Suggestions for improvements, received from 122 respondents, mostly focused on the need for website improvements, particularly for student loan borrowers. Specifically, those respondents suggested providing more information on the website about loan accounts, e.g., showing payment history, making the website more user-friendly for borrowers to pay loans online and update personal contact information, and reducing the amount of information available on the website for easier navigation. 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 has been recognized for having one of the finest postsecondary data systems in the nation. However, as customers have pointed out, there are problems associated with the website. First, the THECB's website does not make data available to stakeholders in an easily accessible format. So much data available on the website can lead to confusion about how to interpret the data or how to use it to answer a particular question in a meaningful way. For example, the agency's accountability system is not easy to find on the data website ([www.txhighereddata.org](http://www.txhighereddata.org)), and once it is found, it has a "clunky" interface ([www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability)). With the support of a private grant from the Gates Foundation, the THECB will introduce a website focused on the state plan for higher education, *60x30TX* and answer stakeholders' questions on attainment, completion, marketable skills, and student debt through a user-friendly interface with meaningful visualizations that will be accessible from desktops and mobile devices. The interface will target a broad audience with little background in data. The interface also will seamlessly lead users who want detailed analyses to the more cleanly designed accountability system website built with users' experiences in mind.

To address borrowers' complaints regarding the agency's online loan management system, the THECB is in the process of upgrading its system, which is expected to launch in early 2017. In the new online system, visitors will interface with a more modern, easy to navigate site that provides increased functionality and more complete loan information for both borrowers and co-signers. It will allow for e-signing of borrower and co-signer online applications (including the promissory note), and will provide a mechanism for real-time demographic changes to accounts. The ability to

access the site from any desktop or mobile device via all major web browsers (Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari and Firefox) will deliver a substantially better user experience and increased access to more account holders. In addition, the online system will meet all state and federal web accessibility requirements providing all users full access to their loan information.

Another recurring complaint from borrowers is that, although the agency accepts online payments from a checking account or by most major credit cards, it does not accept Visa credit cards. The agency does not accept Visa because it is cost-prohibitive through the current vendor. The THECB is required to use TEXAS NICUSA to process online payments because the Department of Information Resources (DIR) has entered into a contract with this vendor on behalf of all state agencies. If DIR would authorize the THECB to seek a more competitive vendor that charges a more reasonable fee to process Visa credit card payments, the THECB would be able to address borrowers' concerns.

Now that the THECB has fully launched the Customer Relationship and Feedback Tracking (CRAFT) System, the agency will be able to provide more robust data in future reports regarding number of customers served, response times, and number of cases closed. Additionally, to improve the gathering of customer feedback, the agency has added a link to the customer service survey on all electronic responses for closed cases that are entered in the CRAFT System. This will provide real-time feedback to the agency when a customer completes the survey and makes suggestions for improvements.

# Appendix A

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## THECB Compact with Texans (as it appears on the agency's website)

### **Statement of Customer Service Principles:**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is committed to meeting the highest customer service standards. In this *Compact with Texans*, we reaffirm the THECB's commitment to professional service, responsiveness, effective communication, and follow-through with each of our customers. Our 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 are as follows:

- General information requests not requiring research and analysis are acknowledged and answered within one working 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 within which to respond.
- Information requests requiring research and analysis, as well as materials submitted for processing, are processed within 10 working days (or customers will receive notification of additional information needed to complete their request).
- On average, phone calls will be answered in less than two minutes, though peak periods may experience longer wait times.
- Academic and technical degree program proposals submitted by public institutions of higher education are deemed complete – unless otherwise indicated by staff - within five working days after receipt of the proposal.
- Doctoral program proposals are considered within one year following submission of a completed proposal.

Important items to note related to student loans:

- Payments are applied to loan accounts using an effective date of the day the funds are received. (Please note that it may take up to three days for this to be reflected on your account.)
- Loan applications require active processing by the borrower, the agency, and the institution where the student will be attending. Thus, borrowers should allow for at least 30 days between submitting a complete loan application and the delivery of the funds to the institution.
- Loan repayment program applications require active processing by the borrower, the agency, the borrower's employer, and the lender(s) holding the borrower's loan(s). Thus, loan repayment program applicants should allow for at least 30 days after the application deadline date for an eligibility determination to be made by the agency.

**Procedure for Complaints Against the THECB:**

To file a complaint related to THECB activities or to inquire about the agency's customer service policies, contact:

Linda Battles, Deputy Commissioner for Agency Operations and Communications/COO  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
P.O. Box 12788  
Austin, Texas 78711  
Telephone: (512) 427-6205  
Fax: (512) 427-6127  
E-Mail: [Linda.Battles@theccb.state.tx.us](mailto:Linda.Battles@theccb.state.tx.us)

Complaints and inquiries are entered into and maintained on an electronic tracking system and are assigned to the appropriate agency division personnel for resolution. When complaints are not resolved within 10 working days, the system notifies the customer service coordinator who 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 service coordinator may follow up on complaints that have been resolved by a division.

**Procedure for Student Complaints Against an Institution of Higher Education:**

After exhausting the institution's grievance/complaint process, current, former and prospective students may initiate a complaint with the THECB by:

1. Completing the online student complaint form available through the Agency's "Contact Us" link at <https://www1.theccb.state.tx.us/Apps/CRAFT/Home/Create>; or by
2. Downloading and completing a .pdf version of the complaint form at [www.theccb.state.tx.us/studentcomplaint](http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/studentcomplaint) and either:
  - a. emailing it to [StudentComplaints@theccb.state.tx.us](mailto:StudentComplaints@theccb.state.tx.us); or
  - b. mailing it to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, P.O. Box 12788, Austin, Texas 78711-2788.

Facsimile (faxed) transmissions of the forms are not accepted.

Complaints submitted regarding students with disabilities must be accompanied by a signed Authorization to Disclose Medical Record Information Form, available at [www.theccb.state.tx.us/studentcomplaint](http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/studentcomplaint).

**Information Requests:**

*For information regarding financial aid services, contact Student Financial Aid Programs at 1-800-242-3062 (or 512-427-6340 if inside the Austin area).*

*For general public information, contact the Office of External Relations:*

**John Wyatt, Director**

Office of External Relations  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
P.O. Box 12788  
Austin, Texas 78711  
Telephone: (512) 427-6111  
Fax: (512) 427-6127  
E-Mail: [John.Wyatt@theccb.state.tx.us](mailto:John.Wyatt@theccb.state.tx.us)

*For media inquiries and interview requests, contact the Office of External Relations:*

**Kelly Carper Polden, Assistant Director of Communications**

Office of External Relations  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
P.O. Box 12788  
Austin, Texas 78711  
Telephone: (512) 427-6119 (after-hour calls will be transferred to a cell phone)  
Fax: (512) 427-6127  
E-Mail: [Kelly.polden@theccb.state.tx.us](mailto:Kelly.polden@theccb.state.tx.us)

Your feedback is important to us. Please take a moment to complete this [Customer Service Survey](#) and let us know how the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board can better serve you. Thank you.

## Appendix B

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### 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):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Business Entity              | <input type="radio"/> Public Citizen                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Career College or School                | <input type="radio"/> Public Higher Education Institution |
| <input type="radio"/> Community-Based Organization            | <input type="radio"/> Public School District              |
| <input type="radio"/> Educational Association                 | <input type="radio"/> Other Texas State Agency            |
| <input type="radio"/> News Media                              | <input type="radio"/> Researcher                          |
| <input type="radio"/> Parent                                  | <input type="radio"/> State or Federal Legislative Office |
| <input type="radio"/> Private Institution of Higher Education | <input type="radio"/> Student                             |

**Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following regarding the service you received and please skip those which do not apply:**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>N/A</b>
If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I interacted with staff, staff members were knowledgeable and helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I interacted with staff, staff members were courteous and professional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If requested, I received the information I needed to obtain services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If I visited the website, it was easy to use, well organized, and contained accurate information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If I filed a complaint, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
If I called, wrote, emailed, or made a request for services, it was handled in a reasonable and timely manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

If I received printed material, it provided thorough and accurate information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**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



This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website:  
<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>

**For more information, contact:**

Linda Battles, M.P.AFF.  
Deputy Commissioner for Agency Operations and Communications/COO  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
P.O. Box 12788  
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