

East Texas Regional Roundtable



Stakeholder Feedback

*On Tuesday, May 18th the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board hosted a roundtable discussion in Tyler, Texas to update the East Texas Region on gains made towards **Closing the Gaps by 2015** and outline specific strategies designed to accelerate progress. The Coordinating Board also outlined new models for funding universities and community colleges designed to fundamentally shift focus toward student success. During the breakout sessions, local leaders were asked to share their input and ideas on student success generally, and the Coordinating Board's initiatives specifically. Below is a short summary of the major themes that emerged from the stakeholders present.*

The East Texas P-16 Education Pipeline

- ❖ Stakeholders were generally surprised that the P-16 pipeline results were better than state, and better than expected.
- ❖ Pipeline challenges are not solely a function of the education system—culture and family play a critical role; business community, churches, and other community entities must play a role in improving results.
- ❖ K-12 system (and K-6 system specifically) must be improved if we are to improve outputs from the pipeline overall.
- ❖ To improve K-12, teachers must have more control in classrooms and stop teaching to standardized testing.
- ❖ K-12 system must focus on career readiness as well—must consider offering more technical and career oriented training in high schools.
- ❖ Students need to learn the importance of college early in their primary education, to include how to apply and what financial aid is available. Quality high school counseling is critical for this effort.

New Funding Models

- ❖ University fixed costs make it very difficult to move to a system that funds on student completion.
- ❖ State should consider a hybrid approach that would both factor in fixed costs (such as faculty salaries) as well as student graduation or finishing semester.
- ❖ Universities should be responsible for a good education.
- ❖ Some concerns about limiting degrees to 120 hours. Rather than hard limits, the state should provide incentives to complete education in 120 hours.
- ❖ We are facing a major economic crisis and the universities that will thrive are those that will redefine how they operate.
- ❖ Funding on completion may lead university admission officers to pick "winners," rather than risk a reduction in funding. This will place those with less academic preparation at a disadvantage.
- ❖ Degree completion is not always the ultimate goal for many students, particularly at community colleges. Workforce development and non-credit courses are not factored into the overall success picture yet have a very real and meaningful role.