

# Gulf Coast Regional Roundtable



## Stakeholder Feedback

*On Thursday, August 26th the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board hosted a roundtable discussion in Pasadena, Texas to update the Gulf Coast Region on gains made toward **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.*

### Fixing the Gulf Coast P-16 Education Pipeline

- ❖ Facilitate goal and policy alignment among all agencies (Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, THECB) and all sectors of education (public and higher).
- ❖ Improve student articulation between and among 2- and 4-year institutions, with special emphasis on the transferability of the core and the Associate of Applied Technology; consider incentives to encourage transfers and the acceptance of transfers.
- ❖ Improve collection and reporting of data between P-12 and higher education (TEA and THECB) to help better track student progress throughout the entire pipeline and identify problem areas.
- ❖ Improve college readiness for all P-12 completers, to include better curriculum alignment between high school and college.
- ❖ Facilitate better cooperation between and among university faculty and high school teachers to include summer programs for students that include educators from both sectors
- ❖ Re-evaluate state policies that may increase costs for institutions and students such as the requirement to post faculty information and the six-drop rule for courses.
- ❖ Increase the number of highly trained, well-prepared teachers in P-12 sector, with special emphasis on math and science and with training focused on helping academically at-risk students.
- ❖ Evaluate best practices nationwide related to funding education as a whole, not simply public vs. higher education.
- ❖ Align funding and regulation of education to support industry cluster preparation, particularly in the STEM fields—align curriculum and identify pathways for students to follow for employment.
- ❖ Examine the effectiveness of charter schools.
- ❖ Evaluate the role of for-profit institutions where students' costs are higher.
- ❖ Place higher emphasis on grades and degrees.

### Recommendations for Improving Proposed Funding Models

- ❖ Fund enrollment growth even during difficult economic times.
- ❖ Provide comprehensive reporting of comparative information about institutions.
- ❖ Clarify the virtues and implications of using contact versus credit hours.
- ❖ Provide a rationale for momentum point values.
- ❖ Assess the "ripple effect" of universities moving to Tier One selective admissions to two- and four-year institutions that are not.

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### Recommendations for Improving Proposed Funding Models (con't)

- ❖ Avoid one-size fits-all solution toward funding based upon semester credit hours passed or four- to six-year graduation rates; there are many students who take many years to complete degrees due to personal circumstances (family, finances, etc.).
- ❖ Consider funding mid-term rather than end-of-course; perhaps installment funding.
- ❖ Examine benchmarks within momentum points for different types of student populations.
- ❖ For community colleges, fund additional staff members who will be responsible for reporting the college funding model/momentum points.
- ❖ Fund incentives annually.
- ❖ Consider a longer phase-in or incremental approach to the Momentum Points proposal, e.g. 2% per year, rather than 10%.
- ❖ Clarify all parts of the proposal and process before implementing, including identifying the precise metrics to be used for the Momentum Points.
- ❖ Align funding with results, getting the job done.
- ❖ Consider weighted Momentum Points for four-year institutions.
- ❖ Tie incentive funding to persistence and success in higher education, e.g. persistence between 1st to 2nd semester, 1st to 2nd year; reaching junior status; graduation with certificate or degree in reasonable time.
- ❖ Make funding incentive-based, not performance-based.
- ❖ Examine any unintended consequences to focusing on student college completion, e.g. reduction in quality.
- ❖ Disburse financial aid in the form of payments, not lump sum; encourage better money management for students.

### Other Strategies for Student Success

- ❖ Conduct or evaluate studies on the high school – college curriculum gap.
- ❖ Systematically work in P-16 groups to create a seamless educational system.
- ❖ Develop and implement mentoring programs for students from the beginning of their matriculation.
- ❖ Expedite, improve, and support a process for reverse transfer.
- ❖ Develop career pathways, as opposed to focusing on a certificate or degree, with built-in start/stop points that allow students to move in and out of the education process.
- ❖ Foster and improve college readiness in non-academic areas (e.g. financial wellness, career exploration, computer literacy).
- ❖ Inclusion of the big picture – not only the education system
- ❖ Improve coordination with the entire P-12 sector to include TEA and school districts.
- ❖ Identify and implement strategies to help students at a younger age make connections between college and career readiness and academic preparation while in high school.
- ❖ Support strategies for transition from high school to higher education, such as bridge programs.
- ❖ Strengthen the link between workforce needs and P-12 academic preparation, e.g., funding for Project Lead the Way or other programs that link academic preparation to career development.
- ❖ Increase funding of successful P-16 councils and use them to develop/improve other councils, to include development of metrics for evaluating effectiveness of various state P-16 models.

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### Other Strategies for Student Success (con't.)

- ❖ In addition to content College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), explore the behavior and school culture challenges that make it difficult for students to transition from high school to higher education.
- ❖ Improve student advising, particularly with respect to helping students develop degree plans.
- ❖ Promote a college-going culture.
- ❖ Provide mentoring for high school teachers.
- ❖ Develop career counseling and aptitude testing that are student-centered.
- ❖ Develop mentoring programs or opportunities between P-12 and college faculty.