

Texas Challenge to Reach Higher recognizes college-going efforts

Nov. 2, 2017, Austin, Texas – The Texas Challenge to Reach Higher, a statewide initiative focusing on ways to strengthen, align and expand the college-going pipeline, recognized Education Service Center (ESC) Region 15 as the initiative’s 2016-17 champion at its state convening held at the University of Houston on Oct 24. ESC Regions 14, 17 and 20 were also recognized for their contributions toward increases in ApplyTexas applicants and applications and in Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completions.

The Texas Challenge to Reach Higher team is the state’s effort toward meeting the national White House Reach Higher initiative, which began in 2013. Through school counselor leadership and collaborative partnerships, the intention is to dramatically increase the number of traditionally underserved students prepared for, entering and completing postsecondary education. To create an incentive, the Texas Challenge to Reach Higher initiated a competition among ESC regions that encouraged an increase in applicants and ApplyTexas college applications, and FAFSA completions by four percent above 2016-17.

The Texas Challenge to Reach Higher initiative demonstrated significant increases in FAFSA completions among all regions with a 19 percent increase in Region 14, 16 percent increase in Region 15, 15 percent increase in Region 1, and 14 percent in both Regions 20 and 17. Region 15 exceeded the goals of the challenge in all measures with a 16 percent increase in applicants using the ApplyTexas application, 18 percent increase in ApplyTexas application completion, and a 16 percent FAFSA completions.

The Texas Challenge to Reach Higher initiative will continue during the 2017-18 academic year. Starting in September, participating ESCs worked closely with local counselors and stakeholders to improve college completions rates by increasing college application and FAFSA completion through activities that include participation in the state’s Generation Texas (GenTX) Month in November and Decision Day in May.

Texas joined the White House Reach Higher initiative last year after the launch of the statewide *60x30TX* strategic plan for higher education that aligns efforts to support the overarching goal that states: By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree. The initiative also aligns with the state’s grassroots GenTX campaign, which supports students in understanding the path to college and career education, including applying to college and finding the money to pay for higher education.

The Texas Challenge to Reach Higher team is a collaboration of partners: Texas College Access Network (TxCAN)/Educate Texas, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas OnCourse, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Education Agency, Achieve Texas – Texas Tech University, Texas Association of Community College Career & Technology Association of Texas, University of Houston, Austin Chamber of Commerce, Houston ISD, Fort Worth ISD, and Dallas ISD. The THECB funded part of the initiative for the ESC award and contributions toward the state convening and professional development training.

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THECB Mission Statement

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