

**POSITION DESCRIPTION  
AND  
IDEAL CANDIDATE SPECIFICATION**

**Commissioner of Higher Education**

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
Austin, TX**

**The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)** was created by the Texas Legislature in 1965 to “provide leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system to achieve excellence for the college education of Texas students” while ensuring the efficient and effective use of state resources in higher education.

The Board’s overall responsibilities include assessment of the state of higher education in Texas; development of recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and educational institutions for its enhancement; and establishment of policies for the use of higher education resources.

The Board reviews and recommends changes in formulas for allocation of state funds to public institutions; reviews and approves new academic programs; and works to ensure all Texans have access to high quality programs at different instructional levels. It also administers the state’s student financial aid programs. The nine members of the Board are appointed for six-year terms by the Governor, as well as a non-voting student representative who serves for one year. The Governor also appoints the Chairman and the Vice Chairman.

The mission of the THECB is “to provide leadership and coordination for Texas higher education 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.” The *60x30TX* strategic plan, launched in 2015, is student-centered, with the primary goal that 60 percent of young adults (25-34) in Texas will hold some type of postsecondary credential by 2030. Supporting goals are that at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's from a Texas institution of higher education; that all graduates will have identifiable marketable skills regardless of major; and that students will not graduate with debt exceeding 60 percent of their first-year wages.

**The Commissioner** is appointed by the Board, and serves as the CEO of the agency. The Commissioner is the primary advocate for *60x30TX* and for higher education in Texas, meeting with education, business, political, and community leaders in Texas and nationally

regarding the critical role that higher education plays in maintaining economic competitiveness and quality of life in Texas. The Commissioner also works with institutions of higher education, the Legislature and the Governor's office, the business community, and K-12 educational leaders to develop higher education policy that improves student access and success, meets state goals and priorities, raises educational excellence, and promotes cost efficiency.

The agency has 264 authorized staff positions and an operating budget of \$32 million, with a further \$1.7 billion disbursed under its supervision. Some examples of its broad range of activities include:

- Develop recommendations for legislative action, including statutory or funding changes, to meet the goals of *60x30TX*
- Build and maintain the comprehensive and acclaimed Texas higher education data system, used for accountability, developing policy recommendations, and providing research opportunities for scholars, government officials, and the media
- Recommend data-driven formulas for use in the distribution of \$5 billion of legislatively appropriated funds to Texas higher education institutions annually
- Direct a self-supporting bond-financed student loan portfolio (\$1.6 billion) that offers one of the lowest interest rates in the country
- Administer various state and Federal programs to support students with financial need (\$543 million per year)
- Review and approve proposed academic degree and career/technical education programs (150+ applications per year)
- Direct the committee process to standardize Core Curriculum/Fields of Study/Programs of Study to improve students' ability to transfer credits that count toward their major and achieve a degree
- Promote access, success, and completion through innovative programs such as the Texas Affordable Baccalaureate (TAB), dual credit programs, online courses, and competency-based education programs to make higher education attainable for all Texans.

For more information see:

[www.thecb.state.tx.us](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us)

[www.txhighereddata.org](http://www.txhighereddata.org)

[www.texashigheredaccountability.org](http://www.texashigheredaccountability.org)

### **Position summary**

The Commissioner of Higher Education is the chief executive officer of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Commissioner is appointed by the Board to provide leadership and coordination of public higher education in Texas and to manage the agency in accordance with legislative mandates and with policies established by the Board.

### **Relationships**

The Commissioner reports to the Board through its Chairman.

Reporting to the Commissioner are:

- Deputy Commissioner-Agency Operations & Communications/Chief Operating Officer
- Deputy Commissioner-Academic Planning and Policy/Chief Academic Officer
- Director-Internal Audit & Compliance (also reports directly to the Board)
- General Counsel (also reports directly to the Board)
- Executive Assistant

The Commissioner works closely with the committees of the Board and with the office of the Governor and with the Legislature, as well as with other state agencies such as the State Board of Education, the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency, the State Board for Educator Certification, and other organizations.

### **Position priorities (to be addressed during the first six months)**

- Examine and evaluate the current targets and strategies in the Board's strategic plan, *60x30TX*, making any necessary recommendations for adjustment or changes.
- Review the status of actions required by the 2019 legislative session, and initiate preparation for the 2021 legislative session.

### **Primary responsibilities**

- Serve as the chief executive officer of the agency, directing its employees and managing its resources effectively toward fulfilling its mission.
- Provide all necessary support and background information to the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities.
- Lead the execution of the Board's strategic plan (*60x30TX*), implementing Board policies and agency responsibilities to achieve the plan's goals.
- Serve as the chief spokesperson for the Board, representing it and its policies to the Legislature, the Governor, public and private institutions and organizations, and the general public.
- Staying ahead of global and national developments, anticipate opportunities and challenges for Texas higher education and the THECB; advise the Board on significant issues, and recommend positions and changes to Board policies.
- Build and maintain strong working relationships with the Legislature and the Governor's office.
- Develop and maintain appropriate working relationships with the State Board of Education, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, the State

Board for Educator Certification, and other organizations, pre-kindergarten through higher education.

- Relate effectively with all THECB constituencies, including institutions of higher education and other agencies, associations, and interest groups.
- Maintain national visibility for Texas higher education through writings and participation in national organizations and policy-making efforts.
- Stay abreast of higher education strategies in other states and recommend successful strategies to institutions and the Legislature.
- Recruit, train, motivate, and retain employees of the highest caliber, providing supervision conducive to high performance, quality work, and good morale.

### **Ideal experience**

- Education: A Ph.D. or Ed.D. is preferred; another terminal degree would be considered. Candidates should demonstrate ongoing professional development and leadership in their field.
- Work experience: at least 8 years at a senior level in higher education administration is ideal; experience in business or government will be considered but “a thorough background by training and experience in the fields of higher education and administration” is a statutory requirement. Comprehensive management experience with a similar budget/size of staff, with proven ability to manage a complex organization’s finance/budgeting, technology, human resources, etc. is important.
- Extensive knowledge of higher education is essential; knowledge of Texas, its state government, and its higher education structure is highly desirable but not mandatory. A student-centered philosophy is important, and a commitment to *60x30TX* is essential.
- Political sensitivity, and the ability to understand, communicate, and steer important policy initiatives, is essential; experience in working with legislators and public officials is highly desirable.
- A commitment to diversity, both in terms of building and maintaining a diverse staff and serving traditionally underserved populations, is important.
- Excellent communications skills – oral, written, and presentation – are required.
- The ideal candidate will also have some combination of the following:
  - An understanding of big data and its linkage with policy, and the ability to work with experts on data analysis and presentation.

- Knowledge of the challenges of K-12 and student preparation for success, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in higher education.
- An understanding of workforce needs, and a track record of working effectively with the business community.
- Fundraising experience (THECB has an affiliated foundation, the Texas Higher Education Foundation).
- An understanding of the importance of research universities and research funding.
- A commitment to the potential for technology and innovation to lower the cost of higher education and improve outcomes.

### **Ideal personal profile**

- A respected leader with true gravitas in the higher education field, so that when the Commissioner speaks, people in Texas and elsewhere will listen.
- An individual with proven interpersonal skills who can work effectively with the Board, agency employees, legislators and State officials, and all THECB constituencies.
- An executive who understands how to negotiate among competing interests, and who can build coalitions and consensus.
- An educational leader of passion and vision, fully committed to expanding educational opportunity and success to Texans of all backgrounds and to meeting the goals of 60x30TX.
- A creative leader with the knowledge and skills to develop and effectively communicate strategies and goals, evaluate and establish priorities, and motivate and guide all concerned with fulfilling them.
- An individual with a personal commitment to diversity with understanding and sensitivity.
- An outstanding individual who has the character, standards, experience, and judgment to represent the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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