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**TEXAS FUND FOR GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

**STATUS REPORT/UPDATE**

October 2006

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Prepared by the  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
1200 East Anderson Lane  
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## The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

|  |             |
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### Coordinating Board Mission

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

THECB Strategic Plan

### Coordinating Board Philosophy

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education; the agency will avoid efforts that do not add value or that are duplicated by other entities.

THECB Strategic Plan

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# TEXAS FUND FOR GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION STATUS REPORT/UPDATE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### History and Background

- House Bill 3590, 77<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, established the Texas Fund for Geography Education Program, effective June 14, 2001
- Texas Education Code , Sec. 61.9681 through 61.9685
- Texas Administrative Code (Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter J, Rule 13.180-187)
- Creates an endowment to support geographic education programs in Texas
- Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to enter into an agreement with the National Geographic Society to create and manage the fund
- Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to appoint an advisory committee consisting of seven people who have expertise and an interest in geography education to assist the national Geographic Society in awarding grants from the fund's earnings
- Requires the Texas Fund for Geography Education Program Advisory Committee to solicit proposals from Texas public and private/independent institutions of higher education upon which the grants are awarded
- Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to (a) report on the value of the fund and the membership of the advisory committee as of September 1 of that year, (b) provide a summary of each project supported by a grant from the fund during the preceding state fiscal biennium, and (c) provide other information the Board considers appropriate
- Fund value as of September 1, 2006: \$1,194,189 (See Appendix C)
- Project funding to date \$249,547

### Accomplishments during the Initial Phase of the Program

- No awards were made in 2001 and 2002 so the initial earnings could grow
- Due to the small number of proposals received, the small size of the available earnings, and Advisory Committee concerns about the proposals received, no awards were made in 2003
- First awards totaling \$100,000 were made January 2004
- Request for Proposals was not posted for the 2005 awards and no awards were made January 2005
- Grants awarded by the National Geographic Society were made on a calendar year cycle

### Current Accomplishments (September 2005-October 2006)

- Request for Proposals was posted in September 2005
- Proposals were received in November 2005
- The National Geographic Society awarded \$73,957 in January 2006 (See Appendix A)
- In March 2006, the Advisory Committee agreed to change the award cycle from a calendar year award cycle to an academic/fiscal year cycle and the Request for Proposals was posted in April 2006
- Proposals for the 2006-2007 academic year were received in July 2006
- In September 2006, the National Geographic Society approved funding recommendations made by the Advisory Committee and awarded \$75,590 for the 2006-2007 academic year (See Appendix B)

# TEXAS FUND FOR GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION STATUS REPORT/UPDATE

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## Background Information

House Bill 3590, passed by the 77th Texas Legislature, established the Texas Fund for Geography Education. The purpose of the fund was to 1) create an endowment to support geographic education programs in Texas, 2) improve the quality of geography education in Texas, and 3) promote a better understanding of Texas by all of its residents. The legislation allowed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to enter into an agreement with the National Geographic Society of Washington, D.C., to operate an endowment fund, the earnings of which would be available for competitive grants to fund partnerships which enhance geography education for K-12 students. The partnerships would include, at a minimum, an institution of higher education and a Texas K-12 institution. The fund was initially endowed at \$1 million.

The legislation further directed the Board to appoint an advisory committee consisting of seven people with expertise and an interest in geography education to assist the National Geographic Society in awarding grants from the fund. The Advisory Committee, on behalf of the National Geographic Society, would solicit proposals from institutions of higher education and private or independent institutions of higher education for use of proceeds from the fund and would recommend to the Society those that best promoted the purposes of the program.

Further, not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, the Board would report to the Governor and the Legislature 1) the value of the fund, 2) the membership of the advisory committee as of September 1 of that year, 3) a summary of each project supported by a grant from the fund during the preceding state fiscal biennium, and 4) other information the board considered appropriate.

## Brief History of the Program

The National Geographic Society (NGS) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) entered into an agreement in November 2001 to establish the initial corpus of the Texas Geography Fund with \$500,000 from NGS and \$500,000 from the THECB in state funds appropriated for this purpose. The agreement was executed by the Chairman of the NGS Board of Trustees, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, and the former Commissioner of Higher Education, Don W. Brown.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the National Geographic Society may accept donations to the fund from private individuals or corporations. The THECB may also transfer additional appropriated state funds to the fund, so long as NGS agrees to match the amount of transferred, additional state funds. Grants to be awarded must be made from only the earnings of the fund, according to a prescribed pay-out formula. Any unexpended grant funds are to be re-invested in the corpus annually. To begin the process of making grant awards from earnings, the corpus was held in trust for calendar years 2001 and 2002 to allow some initial earnings to grow.

By July 2002, the fund had produced a small amount of earnings (approximately \$39,000), which was available for distribution through a competitive grants process. The Advisory Committee

that oversees the process, together with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff, issued a Request for Proposals (RFP). However, the Advisory Committee and staff determined that no awards would be made during the 2002-2003 academic year due to the small number of proposals received, the small size of the available earnings, and concerns about the proposals received. Both the corpus and the earnings were again held in trust for that year.

For the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the Advisory Committee and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff were able to recommend funding for three projects which were the most highly ranked in the competitive review process during the fall 2003 semester. Those projects were reviewed by the Advisory Committee and THECB staff and approved by the national office of the NGS in January 2004. The award period for those projects was nine months, from the middle of the spring 2004 through the end of the fall 2004 semesters. Approximately \$100,000 in earnings from the fund were available for awards and distributed as follows:

- Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "Geography from the Outside In: A Field-Based Workshop for Underrepresented Students," \$35,933;
- Texas Alliance for Geography Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "The Geographic Road to Success: GIS Training for Teachers and Students," \$9,880; and
- Texas A&M University, "Linking Early U.S. History to World Geography Studies," 54,187.

A brief summary of each of the three funded projects listed above is provided in Appendix E of this report. Coordinating Board staff member Mr. Jeffrey Phelps served as the contact person for the Texas Geography Fund during this period.

In July 2004, Dr. Gloria White replaced Mr. Phelps as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff member responsible for the Texas Fund for Geography Education Program. The Advisory Committee met in August 2004 to plan for the 2005 grant cycle and to update the RFP for the next cycle of grant awards. Approximately \$56,000 in earnings was available from fund earnings. Unfortunately, Dr. White left the agency, the RFP was not published, and no awards were made. Both the corpus and the earnings were again held in trust for that year.

### **Current Program Accomplishments**

In September 2005, Dr. Susan Hetzler replaced Dr. White as the Coordinating Board's staff person responsible for the program. An RFP was posted in the Texas Register the latter part of September and seven proposals were received in early November 2005. The Advisory Committee met in mid-November to review and consider the proposals. The Committee recommended that four of the seven proposals be funded and staff forwarded the funding recommendation to the National Geographic Society for consideration. In December, the National Geographic Society's Board met to consider the funding recommendation. In addition to approving the four projects that had been recommended, the NGS Board approved and funded an additional project. The following awards totaling \$73,957 were made in January 2006:

- Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "Geography Academy," \$14,738;

- Texas A&M University, “Infusing GIS into Middle Grades Social Studies and Science,” \$15,000;
- Texas State University-San Marcos, “ Discovering Student Attitudes Toward Geography,” \$14,219;
- Texas Tech University, “Contemporary Methods of Exploring the Landscape,” \$15,000; and
- University of North Texas, “Enhancing Geography Education Through Technology: Grades 6-12,” \$15,000.

In addition, at the November 2005 meeting, the members of the Advisory Committee determined that the funding cycle would be more beneficial to grantees if it were aligned to the academic year rather than the calendar year. The Committee unanimously agreed that this adjustment should be made and asked Coordinating Board staff to put it in place for the next cycle. Dr. Lanny Proffer, the NGS representative in attendance at the meeting, informed the Committee that a similar adjustment had been made in a number of other states and was consistent with those states having a similar program.

The Texas Fund for Geography Education Advisory Committee met again in March 2006 to update the RFP and accompanying application materials for awards that would be considered by the Committee for the 2006-2007 academic year. The RFP was published in the Texas Register in April and four proposals were received by the July 2006 deadline. The Committee reviewed the proposals in early August and recommended funding for two of them. Dr. Hetzler forwarded the funding recommendation to the National Geographic Society for consideration and they were approved by the NGS Board in September. The following awards totaling \$75,590 were made for the 2006-2007 academic year:

- The University of Texas at El Paso, “Geographic Education Summer Seminars (GESS),” \$31,461; and
- University of Houston-Clear Lake, “Growing Geography Teachers in Texas Soil,” \$44,129.

The Texas Fund for Geography Education Advisory Committee will meet again in March 2007 to update the RFP and the accompanying application materials. In addition, the Committee will consider any changes and/or appropriate modifications that may need to be made to the program at this March meeting.

## **Summary Comments**

This report includes a brief history of the fund, a statement of the fund’s value and its earnings, a brief summary of each project supported by a grant from the earnings, a roster of the Advisory Committee members and their affiliations, and other related information, as required by the Texas Education Code, Sec. 61.99681 through 61.9685 and the Texas Administrative Code (Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter J, Rule 13.187). While still a relatively new and small-scale endeavor, the Texas Fund for Geography Education Program supports the participation, success, and excellence goals of *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. In particular, these grants contribute to the goal of recruiting, preparing, and retaining additional well-qualified educators for Texas public elementary and secondary schools. The partnership requirement of these grants ensures that public education and higher

education will collaborate and work together to equip K-12 students with the academic skills and preparation necessary to persist and succeed in their education.

The Coordinating Board staff extends its sincere appreciation to the members of the Texas Fund for Geography Education Advisory Committee who volunteer their time and efforts to meet in Austin, to review and rank proposals for funding, and to assist with the oversight and management of the grant awards process. In addition, to the Texas Alliance for Geography Education (the state's professional association for geographers and geography educators) for continuing to provide financial support to help cover a portion of the travel costs for Advisory Committee members' attendance at meetings. Finally, appreciation is extended to Dr. Roger Elliott (former Coordinating Board staff member), to the Texas Legislature, and to the National Geographic Society for their contributions in 2001 to begin this program, and also to former Coordinating Board staff members Jeffrey Phelps and Gloria White for their service as the program's staff coordinators during the initial, formative period.

**APPENDIX A**

**Summary of Projects Funded for Calendar Year 2006**

## Appendix A

### Summary of Projects Funded for Calendar Year 2006

Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "Geography Academy," \$14,738: The project partners would collaborate with 10 Texas school districts to offer an eight-day, in-residence summer geography academy for teams of high school teachers and their students. In addition to being exposed to many aspects of contemporary academic and professional geography through lectures, lab demonstrations, and hands-on technology training, participants would be paired with scientists who are conducting real world research in geography-related topics. Through active participation in on-going research projects, academy participants would develop geographic literacy know and skills related to real world problem solving, including posing geographic questions, gathering geographic data, accomplishing scientific analysis of research data, and presenting research findings.

Texas A&M University, "Infusing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) into Middle Grades Social Studies and Science," \$15,000: The project would identify elements of the Texas middle school science and social studies curricula that can be taught and learned effectively using GIS. A suite of Texas-centric GIS data layers that support the middle school TEKS would be developed. Two exemplary models, one in science and one in social science, would be created to demonstrate the effectiveness of GIS-based teaching. Lead middle school teachers would guide development of the curriculum materials by university faculty and graduate students. The project would train approximately 30 teachers to use new, free GIS software developed specifically for education during a one-day seminar and elicit feedback on improving the developed materials. The program would be disseminated through teacher and faculty participation in regional and national meetings as well as through a website and on CD-ROMs. The impact of the project on teacher practice and student learning would be assessed.

Texas State University-San Marcos, "Discovering Student Attitudes Toward Geography," \$14,219: The project is a partnership between the Department of Geography at Texas State University-San Marcos and Floresville and Warren High Schools. Student attitudes, influential on their academic achievement, are studied using mixed-methods to determine what factors have positive influences and which factors teachers can enhance in their geography and social studies courses to improve students' attitudes. Additionally, classroom climate, also called the learning environment, is considered to identify associations with students' attitudes. Results of the study will be developed into a teacher professional development program so teachers can turn theoretical knowledge into classroom application. Teachers will also learn how to gain insight on their students' attitudes themselves so they can alter their teaching approaches to support positive student attitudes and potential student achievement.

Texas Tech University, "Contemporary Methods of Exploring the Landscape," \$15,000: The project promotes knowledge of aerial imagery among young students and their teachers, and develops geographic awareness of the local environment. The strength of the project lies in the utilization of free, local digital orthoimagery of the region. In a pilot project, the lessons not only demonstrated effective strategies for teaching challenging geography skills in an elementary school setting, but they were also a hit with students. The children's interest and motivation for learning clearly increased as they recognized their local landscape with multiple media at various levels of detail. At the same time, they learned skills identified in the Grade 2 TEKS which included using symbols, understanding locations and characteristics of places, and identifying ways people have modified the environment. The collaboration between two university departments and between the university and public elementary schools increases the impact of the project. Students, teachers, and pre-service teachers are directly affected by the lessons. Later, others access the online lessons and instructors integrate results of the research into further geography literacy projects.

University of North Texas, "Enhancing Geography Education Through Technology: Grades 6-12," \$15,000: The project would improve geography literacy in grades 6-12 by training teachers to successfully integrate contemporary geography technologies into classroom teaching and learning. Eighty teachers from different regions of Texas would participate in a series of workshops that would improve their pedagogical knowledge and skills related to using Geographic Information Systems, Internet-based mapping tools, and Global Positioning Systems. As a result of the workshops, teachers would produce and teach TEKS-based geography lessons that infuse these geo-technologies with an emphasis on problem-solving and higher-order thinking. The lessons would be made available to other educators via the Internet and CD-ROM.

**APPENDIX B**

**Summary of Projects Funded for 2006-2007 Academic Year**

## Appendix B

### Summary of Projects Funded for 2006-2007 Academic Year

The University of Texas at El Paso, "Geographic Education Summer Seminars (GESS)," \$31,461: The Geographic Education Summer Seminars (GESS) project is designed to promote appreciation, engagement, and learning outcomes through enhanced geographic education in an international, multicultural, border locale. The seminars will produce modular documents that educators can use for course planning and combine content with pedagogies in ways that are engaging and productive for learners. Phases of the project include engaging K-12 teachers in summer seminars, assisting educators with their existing curricula, incorporating specific geography education pedagogies in classrooms, supporting and observing the delivery of geographic education to K-12 students through periodic meetings with participating teachers, and evaluating the long term effectiveness of this project.

University of Houston-Clear Lake, "Growing Geography Teachers in Texas Soil," \$44,129: Remember your middle school field trip to Chinatown? Or your high school Spanish Club trip to Mexico City? Or your junior year abroad in Spain? Most people never forget field trips. These memories are a testament to the power of experiential learning in geography. And yet today, field-based geography education, the simple notion of taking students on a field trip, suffers under the weight of possible litigation, limited funding, and poor pre-service teacher training. This project addresses this situation by taking 14 Houston-area pre-service geography teachers on a 14-day Geography of Texas Field Trip. During the field trip students will create daily digital diaries consisting of written narratives, photos, and video postcards. Upon return, their challenge as future educators will be to recapture the enthusiasm exhibited in the field and re-inject it into the curriculum. This task will be accomplished with the creation of educational resources uploaded to a Geography of Texas Virtual Field Trip website and disseminated to educators through a partnership with the Texas Alliance for Geographic Education.

**APPENDIX C**

**Texas Fund for Geography Education Program  
Account Balance**

**Appendix C**

**Texas Fund for Geography Education Program**

**Account Balance**

| <b>Texas Fund for Geography Education<br/>2001-2006</b>   |                 |  |   |
|---|-----------------|--|---|
| <i>National Geographic Society's collaboration for programs<br/>in association with the<br/>Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</i> |                 |  |   |
| Calendar Year<br>(January-December)   | Account Balance | Maximum Amount of<br>Funds Available<br>to Award | Total Amount of<br>Project Funds<br>Awarded |
| 2001  | \$998,232       | \$0  | \$0   |
| 2002  | \$959,170       | \$0  | \$0   |
| 2003  | \$1,167,733     | \$0  | \$0   |
| 2004  | \$1,316,794     | \$100,000  | \$100,000                                   |
| 2005  | \$1,343,736     | \$0  | \$0   |
| 2006  | \$1,269,779*    | \$90,000   | \$73,957                                    |
|   |                 |  |   |
| Academic Year<br>(September-August)   | Account Balance | Maximum Amount of<br>Funds Available<br>to Award | Total Amount of<br>Project Funds<br>Awarded |
| 2006-2007   | \$1,194,189*    | \$90,000   | \$75,590                                    |
| Balance as of 9/1/06  | \$1,194,189*    |  |   |

Notes: The project funding cycle was changed from a calendar year to an academic year in 2006, which resulted in an overlap of projects being funded during the year. Beginning with the 2006-2007 award cycle, awards will be made annually and will follow an academic calendar year. The unexpended earnings that were available for the 2006-2007 awards cycle have been returned to the corpus. It is anticipated that the account balance will continue to grow so that the earnings available for the 2007-2008 awards cycle will remain the same as those available in 2006-2007. \*Estimated balance does not include earnings to be allocated as of December 31, 2006.

**APPENDIX D**

**Texas Fund for Geography Education Program  
Advisory Committee**

## **Appendix D**

### **Texas Fund for Geography Education Program**

#### **Advisory Committee as of September 1, 2006**

- Dr. Sherry Field, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, The University of Texas at Austin
- Ms. Patricia Hardy, Social Studies Supervisor, Weatherford Independent School District, Weatherford, Texas and Board Member, State Board of Education
- Dr. James Kracht, Associate Dean of the College of Education, Texas A&M University
- Dr. Margaret A. (Peggie) Price, Assistant Professor of Education, Texas Tech University
- Mr. Philip Rodriguez, High School Social Studies Teacher, Northside Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas
- Ms. Michelle Ungurait, Director of Social Studies, Texas Education Agency
- Vacant, Higher Education Faculty Member
- Mr. Lanny Proffer (ex-officio), National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.
- Dr. Susan Hetzler (ex-officio), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Board Member, State Board for Educator Certification
- Dr. David Couch (ex-officio), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

**APPENDIX E**

**Summary of Projects Funded for Calendar Years 2001-2004**

## Appendix E

### Summary of Projects Funded for Calendar Years 2001-2004

Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "Geography from the Outside In: A Field-Based Workshop for Underrepresented Students," \$35,993: The project provided an on-campus residential eight-day workshop for up to 12 teachers and 36 students from area high schools to introduce geographic skills, concepts, and applications through field-based experiences. A variety of research methods were utilized in conjunction with geographic technology training, demonstrations, and classroom sessions. Participating campus teams of teachers and students consisted of one teacher and one to three students; students were recruited from groups that are historically underrepresented in the field of geography, including Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, and women.

Texas Alliance for Geographic Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "The Geographic Road to Success: GIS Training for Teachers and Students," \$9,880: The project provided a two-day "hands-on" intensive training session for middle school and high school educators and students during an annual GIS Technology Conference held at an area high school. While classroom teachers have become interested in GIS as a powerful educational tool, implementation in the K-12 environment has lagged behind the evolution of the technology. This intensive training program sought to overcome some of the initial and structural barriers which prevent the effective implementation of GIS technology in classroom teaching, and allow for increasing the level of knowledge and skills in educational settings with regard to Geographic Information System (GIS) technology.

Texas A&M University, "Linking Early U.S. History to World Geography Studies," \$54,187: Approximately one-third of the items on the Grade 10 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) requires students to know early U. S. history content taught in Grade 8. However, students in Grade 9 and Grade 10 typically take World History and/or World Geography, and often do not retain what was learned in Grade 8. This project provided for curriculum development and dissemination of training modules for teachers of World Geography and/or World History for ninth and tenth grade students. The training modules include lessons and detailed materials that infuse U.S. history content into the context of World Geography and World History, so that teachers can more effectively and memorably help students master the TAKS-tested U.S. history content.

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