



**Commissioner Raymund A. Paredes  
State of Higher Education Address  
2015 Texas Higher Education Annual Leadership Conference  
November 20, 2015**

For the past four months, I have been reading as much of the literature that I can on the four goals of the new higher education plan, *60x30TX*. I have identified what I considered to be best practices or high impact practices. I haven't finished my thinking about this and some of these ideas might encounter some opposition, but I wanted to talk about them over the next year or so as we implement the strategies that we think will help us achieve the goals of *60x30TX*.

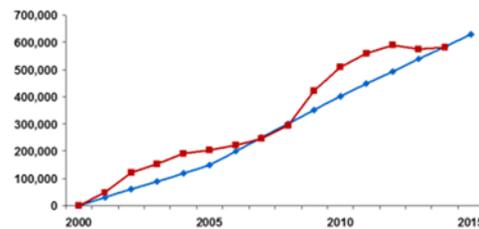
Let me begin by going over some of the things we have accomplished in *Closing the Gaps*. Obviously if we hadn't been successful with *Closing the Gaps* we would not be talking about a

second strategic plan right now. Here is one of the most important results of *Closing the Gaps*.

We had two really important goals, at least in my mind. The first one was increasing the number of students going to our institutions of higher education and the second one was making sure that the students were successful at higher levels than previously.

*Closing the Gaps by 2015 Successes*

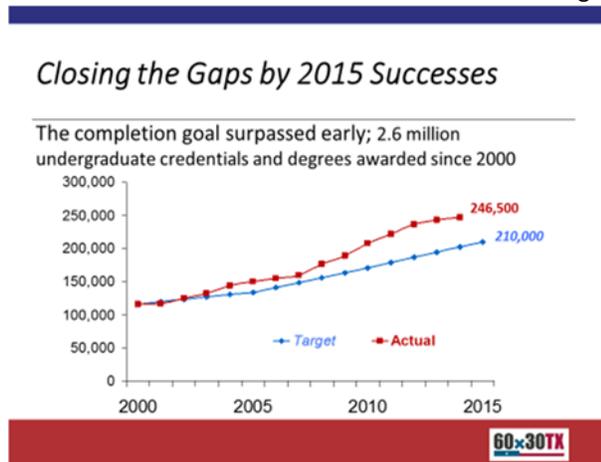
Texas strives for ambitious goal of 630,000 enrollments  
— Target — Actual



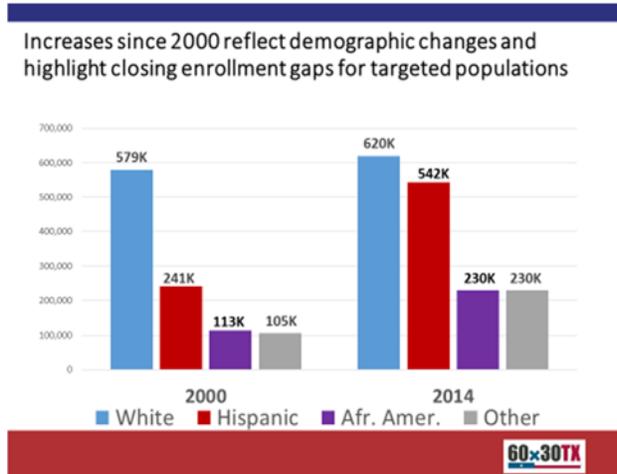
I would argue that the completion goal is the most important goal that we have in higher education and that is to not only get students in but get them to finish. As you can see from this slide, we have tapered off on this and you all know the reasons for that; the economy and other reasons. We were trending well above our goal and we flattened out and you can see just a slightest up-tick between 2013 and 2014 and now I think we will either hit the goal barely of 630,000 new students in higher education or we will come just underneath it. It is important to remember that our original goal was to increase enrollment by 500,000 and we raised that goal around 2004 because we were doing well and the population of Texas was growing faster

than we had anticipated in 2000. I think by any reasonable measure we can say that we have been successful in achieving this particular goal.

Here is the most important goal and here is where we have shown the most success. Our goal was to produce 210,000 completers by the year 2015 and we are already well above that at 246,500. When we get our final numbers we will probably be around 265,000 so we can say that we have had a notable success. And it is important to say that this is attributed to all of you. This is not the work that the Coordinating Board did; this is the work that our colleges and universities did in making sure that we reached our goal in improving our strategies for completion that are in place in all our institutions; two- as well as four-year institutions.



You can see from this slide very quickly that the demographics of higher education in Texas are now beginning to resemble more closely the population of Texas. Notice that we more than doubled Hispanic enrollments, and we more than doubled African American enrollments. It is interesting that the sub-group that is most highly represented in higher education in Texas is African American



women. We all know that the key to hitting our targets and goals in higher education are to a large extent making sure that we continue to improve Latino educational attainment. That is the secret to the future of Texas. There was a study done a few months ago that pointed out that by 2050 Hispanic workers are going to outnumber Anglo workers in Texas by three to one. That is 2050 and that is not that far away. You can see that our target was to achieve 67,000 completions; we hit 80,000 a year before our end date for *Closing the Gaps*. I don't think our Hispanic completions went up 180% or our African American completions went up 110%. I don't think any state in the country can demonstrate a better record of achievement in this period of time than Texas can. Once again, that is attributed to all of you.

### Closing the Gaps by 2015 Successes

#### Texas Higher Education Recognized for Excellence

- Texas public universities are national leaders in online education.
- UT-Austin is ranked as a world-class institution.
- UH has Phi Beta Kappa chapter.
- Texas community colleges are national leaders in ECHS, dual credit, and dev ed reform.
- Texas community colleges are among least expensive in U.S. due to innovations, efficiencies.



In terms of the other goals, one was excellence. It wasn't clearly defined but I don't think there is any question that we are doing better in terms of academic quality in Texas now than we were in 2000. The University of Texas is now considered among one of the best top 35-40 universities in the world. Texas A&M has become a very prestigious university; it is bringing in a lot of research money than it did previously which is always a prime indicator of excellence. We have emerging research universities that are doing quite well. The University of Houston is rightfully proud that they are now one of 240 institutions in the country that have a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. That is an indication of excellence. We have shown some extraordinary progress in leadership in such fields as Early College High Schools, dual credit, developmental education reform among our two-year institutions and it is important to remember that our two-year institutions are among the least expensive in the country and we have to make sure that we fund them adequately so that we can retain that characteristic.

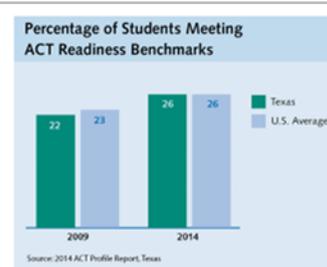
This is our challenge. You cannot have a system of quality higher education resting on a weak foundation of public K-12 education and there is nothing that is more in the enlightened self-interest of higher education than to work more closely with K-12. I will talk more about that in just a minute, but those are the numbers that we have to deal with and that I would argue we have to

intervene in order to achieve the goals of *60x30TX*. K-12 education needs help. In higher education you can help in a lot of ways that I will talk about in just a moment. But those are the numbers: 47th in reading SAT scores; 47th in writing; 42nd in math; and only 27 percent of our high school graduates in Texas are college ready across the board. In parts of Texas it is lower than that. Obviously *60x30TX* is standing on the foundation of the successes we had with *Closing the Gaps*. Before we become too effusive about the success of *Closing the Gaps* it is important to remember that the practical effect of *Closing the Gaps* is we essentially went

### College and Career Readiness

**SAT:** 47 in reading  
47 in writing  
42 in math

**ACT:** 26% of high school graduates are college ready



from being at the bottom among the 50 states in terms of higher educational attainment to the middle of the pack. That was the ultimate effect in *Closing the Gaps*; making it to the middle of the pack.

As I mentioned before, I have been doing a lot of reading over the last several months to identify high impact practices that will help us achieve the goals. I think it is pretty safe to say that we will not get to the goals of *60x30TX* doing business as usual. There is going to have to be an enormous wave of innovation in order to reach our goals. I don't use the term "disruptive innovation," it scares institutions of higher education. There is nothing more conservative than our colleges and universities; remember we are using pretty much the same model of education that was developed in the 12th and 13th century universities in Europe.

Getting back to the point about K-12 education, these are some of the things that we need to do. First of all we need to do a better job of attracting some of our best undergraduates into the teaching profession. There are any number of studies that show that the most single

### Increasing collaboration between K-12 and higher education

- Better preparation and professional development to ensure high quality teachers
- Reexamining college and career readiness standards through vertical teams to ensure continuing effectiveness
- New strategies to address "summer melt," including greater coordination between high school and college counselors and expanded use of social media.



significant difference in educational outcomes in K-12 between the United States and the highest achieving countries in the world is the quality of the teaching staff. The highest achieving countries in the world attract most of their teachers from the top 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent of their university class. Most of our teachers come from the bottom third of their university classes. We have plenty of excellent

teachers in Texas but we don't have enough to go around. There was a study done by the McKenzie Consulting Group which I cite all the time that essentially made the point that you can't expect teachers to teach what they themselves can't do. And if you are wondering why we don't do well in terms of a high school test in science and math, that is the reason. We don't have enough quality math and science teachers to meet the demand. We have to attract those high achieving students into the teaching profession and we have to provide them better preparation. There is a movement that I applaud to go toward more clinical experience in teacher prep programs. That is a good thing; the evidence suggests that is a better way to train teachers than the way that we have done it historically and then universities and two-year institutions have to work with their local school districts to provide professional development.

The biggest need is at the high school level. One of the things that is interesting -- if you look at the tests in K-12 -- you see that we have done pretty well over the past 15 years in terms of elementary school testing, middle school testing, and then everything falls apart in high school. The reason that is true is because the rigor necessary to teach effectively in high school is much higher and we don't have that. We have to do a better job of working with K-12 in developing college and career readiness standards. We developed some wonderful standards in Texas in 2007 and 2008. There was a bill called House Bill 1 that was passed in the special session in 2006 and it required the Coordinating Board and Texas Education Agency to put vertical teams together composed of 60 percent representatives from higher education, 40 percent from K-12, and develop college and career readiness standards. One of the things that has happened as a result of all the commotion over the common core is we have lost sight of the fact that we have wonderful standards and I am not sure that we are following those standards as closely as we should so I am suggesting that we find a way to look at the current college and career readiness standards, tweak them, modify them, overhaul them but we use this as a mechanism to improve the cooperation between the two sectors. It seems to me that one of the ways which we can start to work together very quickly is on this phenomenon of "summer melt." This is one of the subjects I was looking at very closely over the past three or four months. According to some studies as many as 40 percent of poor kids who indicate their intention to go to college don't show up come fall. This is mostly a phenomenon that effects two-year institutions; not so prevalent in universities but up to 40 percent. Can you imagine if we recovered half of those kids and they went to college and persisted? That in itself would go a long way towards achieving our goals and I am suggesting that in all of your local institutions you should work with your local high schools and start working on this challenge now. And address it in time for the fall term of 2016. We know what seems to work from the research that has been done on this issue. We know that handing off a student who is at risk of not going to college, handing off a student from a high school counselor to a higher education counselor makes a big difference. We know that using social media to stay in touch with these high risk students during the summer makes a big difference. These are students who have shown the ability to do college work but simply, for whatever reasons, get cold feet or something happens in their family and you can't figure out a way to meet the family crisis and go to college at the same time. We need to intervene and help those kids get enrolled and be successful.

Here are some issues related to completion that I have identified as being particularly

### Growing student completions to meet 60x30TX goals

- Move forward with all deliberate speed on reforming developmental education
- Ensure admissions standards are commensurate with available resources to support completion
- Increase co-enrollment and dual admission partnerships such as TAMU/Blinn
- Focus on maintaining academic rigor to promote transfer
- Establish and expand professional development programs for 2-year and 4-year faculty



important. Obviously most of these are going to be familiar to you. We have to continue moving forward with improving developmental education. As many of you know, I am a strong advocate of integrating reading and writing into one course. I tell people that as an English professor, I know one thing about teaching literature; you read the text and you write about the text and that is the way the two subjects should be taught; together. You can't be a good writer unless you are a good reader. We have to move more quickly to an integration of the two. There is the evidence that I have seen from around the country and it is still preliminary because we haven't been doing this in a systematic way very long, but the evidence is that it works much more effectively.

Another issue that I have talked about from time to time; we need to make sure that the admission standards are commensurate with available resources to support completion. If you have an open admission policy at your university and you have limited resources to provide wrap around academic support services you need to do something about that because otherwise you are setting up lots of students for failure. We have had several universities in the state that have done the valuable exercise of looking at the admission standards and matching the students who have the minimal admission standards if there are any at all and their success at that particular institution and they figured out that they need to raise their admission standards to a particular level because their data show that below that level students just haven't been successful. We would be better off directing those students to community colleges which do developmental education a lot better than universities do, and find ways to help those students succeed and transfer to universities since obviously that was their goal. We need to do a better job of making sure that students can do the work at a given institution. We are costing the students and their families a lot of money if we know we can do predictive analytics and we can use a lot of other mechanisms to determine whether students can do the work. And if it is clear that they can't, we need to either provide the services or we need to suggest that they go somewhere else. We need to make the transition from community colleges to universities less difficult so we need to increase the number of co-enrollment

programs. We have dual admission programs that some states have where if students take a prescribed curriculum they are guaranteed that every course they take at a community college will in fact transfer and count towards a major university. That might be a lot simpler way than trying to do statewide articulation agreements. We need to make sure that we have academic rigor that makes the transfer process simpler. The Coordinating Board has done a tuning experience in a number disciplines. We need to do that as broadly as possible all across curriculum. Just as we need to align rigor between K-12 and higher education, we need to align rigor between community colleges and universities. And to pretend that there are not disparities is to be blind about the actual educational experience of our students. This is probably the most important point that I want to make. I have looked at a lot of data regarding institutions that have made extraordinary progress in student completions in a relatively short period of time and what I found to be the most common denominator is that these institutions have very effective programs of faculty professional development. Some of you have heard me make the point that there are two great myths in higher education that get us into trouble all the time and we have never addressed them effectively. The first one applies more to universities, particularly residential universities than two-year institutions and the myth is that in the three-month period of graduating high school and landing on a university campus you magically transform into an adult. So we treat 18 year olds like adults and then we are surprised when they don't go to class, they don't do their homework and they flunk out after a year. The second myth that this last bullet point is intended to address is that by virtue of getting an advanced degree, a Ph.D., that you know how to teach. We have got to provide professional development for our faculty. We have to give them experience, for example in devising courses in a manner that is consistent with the cognitive research that is built up. The data are now mountainous and we have all kinds of information about how people in their twenties retain information, and I can tell you the conventional pedagogical format in our college and university classes doesn't fit the research. We need to give instructors basic information about how taking roll increases persistence; how having one contact with every one of your students in a given class increases persistence. Most faculty don't know that. We need to make sure that we have aggressive programs, mandatory programs for faculty to learn how to become more effective teachers. If you look at Valencia College in Florida which is often cited as being one of the best community colleges in the country. What has helped them achieve their goal? Faculty development. Odessa College is having very good results with its

program of faculty development. This addresses a larger issue. We need to return higher education to being student-focused. Instead of making decisions based on what faculty will accept, let's make decisions based on what students need.

I think we should encourage institutions to set goals for completion. For example the best public universities in the country, Berkeley, Virginia, Michigan, to just pick out three, have six-year graduation rates of about 90 percent or slightly above. I think Berkeley is at 92 percent; Virginia is about the same and Michigan is at about 90 percent. Our flagships,

### Growing student completions to meet 60x30TX goals

- Set graduation rate goals for institutions
  - 90% at flagships, 70% at emerging research universities
  - No university should be satisfied with less than 50%
  - 50% at 2-year institutions with an open timeframe
- Strengthen freshman orientation and first-year courses
  - Emphasize financial literacy, job market information and workforce preparation
  - Ensure that first-year courses include study skills and critical thinking
- Increase competency based education options
- Accelerate TX, Grad TX and Puente programs



we have two now and will have more later, should have graduation rates at about those levels. UT-Austin has a six-year graduation rate of about 83 percent; A&M has a graduation rate of about 84 percent. They should move up. I have looked at research universities all over the country that were on the cusp of becoming members of AAU. I looked at North Carolina State, I looked at Arizona State, I looked at the University of Georgia and others and it seemed to be pretty clear that all of those institutions had graduation rates at 70 percent or slightly above. That is what our emerging research universities should strive for. It is hard for me to imagine that they will actually become top-ranked research universities with any graduation rates below that. We shouldn't have any universities in Texas with six-year graduation rates under 50 percent. We have 13 public universities in Texas right now that do have graduation rates under 50 percent. Those institutions should set a goal certainly no later than the closing date of the 60x30TX of raising those graduation rates to at least those levels I have indicated. That will go a long way toward achieving our goal.

We need to strengthen freshmen orientation. We should be giving information to these students about how to study; how to prepare for exams and what it takes to be successful and to be fully aware particularly at our larger universities of all the academic support programs that are available to them. They should be given information about financial literacy and they should be told in orientation that they need to be careful about how much they borrow. Make sure they read the fine print in the contracts. They should be given information and this should be ongoing throughout their college careers about information about the job market. What kinds of jobs that are available to people with different kinds of majors. We need to increase

competency-based educational options. We have some already but we should begin moving in the direction of advancing students, not on the basis of time spent in class, but on the mastery of a body of knowledge. We have been encouraging this particularly at the graduate level and doctoral programs where if you have rigorous qualifying exams, what difference does it make how many courses graduate students take. If you can pass rigorous qualifying exams, what difference does it make if you take 15 courses or five courses if you know the material? We have to expand our programs like Accelerate Texas which aims to get people in adult basic education placed in jobs that pay a living wage and give them basic literacy skills, computational skills, grad Texas which recovers students that have dropped out of school after acquiring a significant number of college credits. We need to get those students to come back and finish. We are not going to be able to rely, particularly for those numbers that you saw before regarding performance K-12. We can't just rely on the K-12 pipeline to reach the goals of *60x30TX*.

The Puente program is one that been demonstrated to be highly successful particularly working with Latino students. A rigorous integrated curriculum mentoring wrap-around services, tutoring, etc. We know how to help these kids succeed. We know how to graduate much larger numbers of poor students. We have to do it.

Here are some of the other issues that I have been thinking about obviously in terms of

### Enhancing workforce preparation through marketable skills

- Inform students early and often regarding job market conditions and applicability of skills
- Identify and promote marketable skills across varied disciplines
- Review curricula to ensure that marketable skills are embedded, including graduate programs
- Increase availability of paid internships in relevant industries

workforce preparation and marketability of skills. Advice about the job market, advice about marketable skills; that should be a recurring theme in all the advising that students get throughout their collegiate experience whether it is a two-year institution or a four-year institution. Make sure the students know what the job market is like and what it is likely to be like when they graduate from college.



## Maintaining affordability and limiting student debt

- Give students more, low-cost pathways to a degree or credential such as community college baccalaureate programs
- Expand dual credit opportunities and early college high schools, while ensuring that coursework meets standards of academic rigor
- Expand the Texas Affordable Baccalaureate (TAB) program to additional institutions and fields
- Fully implement practices identified in 2010 Higher Education Cost Efficiencies report

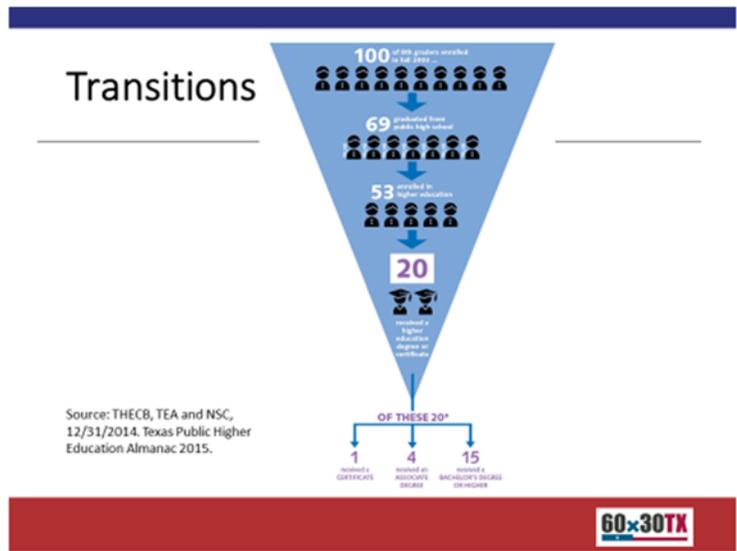


In terms of faculty development, some of you know that I am not a fan of student success courses and I know that they work, by-in-large, but they also cost money and also because you have to take an extra course, they delay time to degree. What we should be doing is making sure that every first-year course in every college and university is a student success course. And that gets back to faculty training. You have to embed study skills in the course. It is much better to embed teaching students how to study and how to learn in a regular course than a stand-alone course. We shouldn't encourage the attitude and I know that it happens when you do it the way we are typically doing it now; the faculty take the attitude "why should I talk about success in my classes instead of the student taking the student success course"? No; every course should be a student success course. Faculty members in every course should outline very clearly what their expectations are and what they can do to help students get there.

I am a big fan of the work of Claude Steele who is now the Provost at Berkeley. He was at Stanford for a long while and he was at Michigan before that. He and I have been good friends for a number of years. He has written about different attitudes that faculty bring to classrooms that either will help the student succeed or will detract from the possibility of success. He said there are primarily three styles of faculty engagement with students. The first one which you have all heard about a thousand times is look to your left; look to your right and one or two of the three of you are not going to be around next year at this institution. He said that is a self-fulfilling prophecy. He said the second thing that the faculty do is say "welcome to university X, we are very proud of this institution and we wouldn't have admitted you if we didn't think you could do the work so work hard, do well, and we will see you at commencement in four years or two years." That works modestly. What does work and works quite well is you tell students you have been admitted to the institution because we believe in you and I am more than happy to meet you half way in helping you address whatever academic difficulties you have. I am here to help you succeed. That works best of all. This doesn't happen near as much as it should and that gets back to training faculty. We need to make sure that students know about what their options are beyond graduation and help them be marketable in a competitive job. In

some ways, maintaining affordability and limiting student debt will be our toughest challenge because we are essentially saying we are not going to increase debt between now and 2030 when all the trends in higher education indicate otherwise. We have to create more low cost pathways to degree or credentials and one of the things we have recommended and we will recommend it again is community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees on a measured basis. Secondly, continue expanding dual credit opportunities early college high schools insuring that we have appropriate levels of rigor. We have to expand the Texas affordable baccalaureate program. We have two institutions that have developed affordable baccalaureates, Texas A&M Commerce and South Texas College which is one of the three community colleges in Texas that is authorized to offer baccalaureate degrees. We need to expand the model. It works; we know it works. It is not perfect but we already have proof of concept. I would like to do something in STEM fields. We received some seed funding to expand this program and we are going to be in touch with institutions of higher education. You might want to participate in the second round of creating affordable baccalaureates. And then we have to make higher education more cost efficient. Some of you have heard me say that the easiest place to start is to reduce the number of hours that students accumulate in acquiring a degree. Right now in Texas it is 140 hours for a 120 hour baccalaureate degree and in community colleges it is 91 hours for a 60 hour associates degree. We can save tens of millions of dollars every year if we reduce that number. We should go to a different model for what we consider average student progress, instead of 12 hours a semester we should go to 30 hours a year. I am not suggesting that we enforce it across the board because I know that there are circumstances that compel students to take fewer courses but there are an awful lot of students who will take 12 hours a semester because that is what they are expected to take. Let's raise the standards. I don't care if students do it 12, 12 and six in the summer or 12, 15 and three, however they do it, let's get students in universities on track to graduate in four years.

Here is our challenge and this is what we have to address. This is a chart regarding the 8th grade cohort in Texas. We have taken the 8th grade class of 2003; taken it out 11 years; one year to finish the 8th grade; four years to finish high school; and six years to complete a postsecondary credential of any kind. So if you are in a community college and you want to get a workforce certificate or you go to Texas State Technical College you



still have six years to complete a credential. And here is what the numbers show. Now I know that high schools calculate graduation rates differently and they do it in a legitimate way, but we did it the simplest way. We have taken the number of 8th graders that we have in Texas in a given year and taken them out 11 years and see what the results are. And here are the results. As you can see, 69 percent graduated high school; 53 percent go to college of any type. The highest achieving states in the country send about two-thirds of their high school graduates to college. We sent 35 percent. And going down the road 11 years ultimately only 20 percent achieve some form of postsecondary credential. If you are poor, that number is 10 percent.

The most basic thing that we have to do in Texas is we have to restore higher education as an engine of social and economic mobility. We have to do that for the whole system. Probably the single biggest flaw in American education is that if you start behind and fall behind you almost never catch up. It doesn't matter whether we are talking about elementary school, middle school, high school, or higher education. If you are behind, the odds of you catching up are miniscule. We need to change that. Sixty percent of the kids coming through the pipeline are poor. The future of Texas to a large extent depends on how well we educate those poor kids. Now a disproportionate number our percentage of African American and Hispanic but poor kids from all backgrounds don't have much of a chance of climbing in to the middle class by going up the higher education ladder.

I try to distill to a few basic issues of some of the things I believe we need to do. First of all we need to go back to a focus on students. I think we have become faculty centered in higher education. Faculty teach what they want to regardless of whether the consequences chaotic general education. Often times we place more emphasis on what faculty do in terms of research rather than what they do in teaching. We need to go back to being student-focused. Secondly, as I said, we need to work more closely with K-12 in ways that I have described and many others as well. We need to get the universities and community colleges to work more closely together. We need to develop comprehensive completion strategies campus by campus. How is every institution going to raise its completion rates? We should ask two-year institutions to set completion goals because two-year institutions have so many part-time students. I say forget about the timeframe, just set a standard of having students complete 50 percent which is way above where two-year institutions are now. But you have 50 percent completion rate; however long it takes. We need to make sure that we do a better job with poor kids. If we don't do that we are going to be in big trouble. We are not doing very well. We are 42nd among the 50 states in the percentage of poor kids that go to college and we are 30th in the amount of progress that we demonstrated in getting more poor kids in to college over the last 10-12 years. That is not adequate.

As I said at the beginning, we can't get to the goal of *60x30TX* doing business as usual. So we have to move with all deliberate speed and I think that is an important phrase to use because I think most of you know that phrase came out of a court decision regarding civil rights in this country. Move with all deliberate speed and to a large extent what I am proposing for higher education in Texas is a civil rights issue. Let's move with all deliberate speed and let's take care of the poor kids in Texas and let's hit our targets in *60x30TX*.

Thank you.