

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board awards expansion grants for four new Texas Affordable Baccalaureate programs

Austin, Texas, March 2, 2017— Today the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us) announced the award of more than \$650,000 to four public institutions for expansion of the Texas Affordable Baccalaureate program. Recipients are Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Tarleton State University, South Texas College (in partnership with Austin Community College), and Texas A&M University-Commerce. The funds awarded will support the planning, development and implementation of the institutions' new affordable baccalaureate programs.

"The Texas Affordable Baccalaureate is a cost-effective option to provide greater socioeconomic mobility for a greater number of Texans," said Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes. "The state must continue to innovate and provide cost-effective, high-quality education that meets the needs of an ever-changing global economy while providing greater opportunity and prosperity for Texans. The Coordinating Board welcomes these four new programs."

[The College For all Texans Foundation](#) supported the fundraising efforts for the grants, which were made possible through [AT&T Aspire](#), [Greater Texas Foundation](#), [Kresge Foundation](#), and [Meadows Foundation](#). Grant recipients were selected through a competitive application and review process.

[Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi](#) will use the funds to create an affordable baccalaureate program in mechanical engineering technology. The program will incorporate competency-based curriculum to prepare workers with a skillset that is needed for employment in areas such as the refinery and process industries, among others, as projected by workforce needs. The program will also provide an opportunity for engineering technology associate degree holders to pursue opportunities and career paths as engineering technologists, helping to close the gap between the Coastal Bend Workforce Development Area and the rest of the country.

"This grant provides an exciting opportunity for our faculty to develop a student-focused program that will leverage life experiences and can accelerate the completion of students' degree programs," said Dr. Kelly Quintanilla, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Interim President and CEO.

[Tarleton State University](#) will use its grant funds to evaluate and implement alternative credit courses to reduce costs and time-to-degree for students in its bachelor of science in applied science program. By combining a hybrid-delivery model with an alternative credit model for general education courses, the new program will provide a path to an affordable baccalaureate degree for nontraditional students who have completed technical or occupational specializations from a community college or technical school, or during military training.

"We are extremely grateful to be selected by the Coordinating Board to participate in the TAB program," said Dr. Wayne Atchley, director of Tarleton's Office of Applied and Experiential Learning. "Tarleton is committed to serving the needs of nontraditional students throughout Texas. As part of the TAB program, we're able to offer an affordable, expedient degree option to a growing number of Texans eager to return to the classroom and earn a bachelor's degree."

[South Texas College](#) will partner with [Austin Community College](#) (ACC) to create coursework, support services, and an articulation agreement for a 100 percent online, competency-based bachelor of applied technology (BAT) degree in computer information technology (CIT).

"This grant enables ACC to build upon the acclaimed accelerated programmer training program and on the expertise South Texas College brings in the realm of accelerated, online offerings," said ACC's Fast Track to Success Director Amardeep Kahlon. "This gives students an affordable fast-track to a baccalaureate and some of the most in-demand information technology (IT) occupations in Texas and beyond."

All of the existing competency-based courses in ACC's associate of applied science (AAS) in computer programming will seamlessly transfer into South Texas College's newly developed, competency-based BAT in CIT, giving students an affordable fast-track to some of the most in-demand information technology (IT) occupations in Texas and beyond.

"The new competency-based bachelor's program in computer information technology is based on the model applied in the elaboration of the bachelor's program in organizational leadership (BASOL) and, as such, is designed to provide an affordable, accessible and accelerated path to degree completion," said South Texas College President Shirley Reed. "Given the unprecedented success of the BASOL Program and the commitment of the instructors, staff and administrators of South Texas College and Austin Community College to the success of our students, we have no doubt that this new degree will be a resounding success that further paves the way toward achieving the 60X30TX initiative for the State of Texas."

[Texas A&M University-Commerce](#) will develop a bachelor of science degree in criminal justice as a hybrid competency-based online program for certified first responders, military personnel, and adult learners with criminal justice employment experience. The proposed competency-based criminal justice degree is designed to assist this nontraditional professional population by providing a more affordable option for degree completion. Because employability of students is of vital importance, the curriculum will be designed so that competencies and learning outcomes are tied to specific lower division courses. By providing a lower-cost, competency-based format, students can work at a pace that is most appropriate for their level of ability in a forum that allows for self-paced learning in an online learning platform.

"This unique portal extends higher education to citizens of Texas heretofore unable to finish a course of study. We are delighted to receive funds from the Coordinating Board to develop a second line of study, criminal justice," said Texas A&M University-Commerce President Ray Keck.

"At the Texas A&M University System, we are always looking for new ways to lower costs and increase options for our students," said A&M System Chancellor John Sharp. "This initiative is a natural fit for us. I am so proud that three of our universities are on the leading edge of it, and I am grateful to the Coordinating Board and the funders for making it possible."

Three years ago, Texas A&M University-Commerce and South Texas College collaborated with the Coordinating Board to launch the state's first competency-based bachelor-level degree from a public institution. Over the past three years, this unique, low-cost degree has provided hundreds of Texas students the opportunity to acquire a high-quality bachelor of applied science degree with an emphasis in organizational leadership. The TAB program launched at A&M Commerce in late 2013 with seven enrolled students and grew to more than 300 students and 121 program graduates by the fall of 2016. The structure of the new TAB major, a bachelor of science in criminal justice, is a program designed for first responders, military personnel and adult learners with criminal justice employment experience. The new program is scheduled to launch fall 2018.

The Texas Affordable Baccalaureate program supports 60x30TX, the state's higher education goals for completion, marketable skills, managing student debt, and ensuring that at least 60 percent of Texans age 25-34 will have a college degree or certificate by 2030.

###