



Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board

**TEC §61.070. PILOT PROJECT
TO AWARD INCENTIVES TO
STUDENTS
CONTRACTING TO GRADUATE
IN A TIMELY MANNER**

Second Report on Implementation

January 2009



Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Mission of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to help Texas meet the goals of the state's higher education plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015, and thereby provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

Philosophy of the Coordinating Board

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.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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**Academic Affairs & Research Division
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board**

The Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 61, Section 61.070 (Senate Bill 30 from the 79th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature) provides for a pilot project to award incentives to students contracting to graduate in a timely manner from public institutions of higher education. (The full text of the portion of Senate Bill 30 that established the pilot project is included in this report as **Appendix I.**)

The Coordinating Board was specifically charged in the statute to collect information from institutions about the level of participation and the effectiveness of the pilot project and to report that information to the Legislature at the end of each calendar year, presumably through the end of the pilot project period as specified in the statute. Thus, although the Coordinating Board did not need to adopt rules to affirm the procedures for the pilot program already detailed in the statute, there would be a need for some communication and reporting by institutions that elected to participate.

The pilot project implementation was overseen by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The initial report was provided in early 2008 and included detailed information about the implementation of the pilot project. This report presents an update to the results of the pilot project's ongoing implementation. Because of the nature of the project, no results indicating the success of the project to promote timely graduation will be available until the first cohort of students to participate graduates, which will most likely be in 2009.

Three institutions of higher education returned results for the 2006-2007 academic year. The institutions were:

Texas Tech University (TTU)
University of Houston (UH)
Grayson County College (GCC)

Three other institutions that had originally expressed interest in participating, but later decided not to do so, contacted the Coordinating Board to indicate that they had reconsidered and would like to join the pilot project. Those institutions of higher education are:

The University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB)
The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)
The University of Texas at Tyler (UTT)

Subsequently, The University of Texas at Brownsville decided not to participate in the pilot project, stating that it was unable to identify a cohort that they could work with.

On October 29, 2008, an email message was sent to the six institutions that had indicated their intention to continue or join in the pilot project. The text of the message is included in **Appendix II**. The message reminded institutions of their commitment to participate in the pilot project and included a survey to collect information about the results of the initial year, plus any information about the current semester that might be available. The survey instrument is included as **Appendix III**. Institutions were asked to return their results by November 19, 2008. These data, of course, are preliminary, since the pilot project will not have produced graduates yet. But some results are encouraging.

The Coordinating Board will submit a third report by December 31, 2009.

NOTE: Complete data are only available for the 2007-08 and 2006-07 academic years. Data for the 2008-09 academic year will likely change because students may elect to sign a pilot project contract any time during the academic year.

Participants Since 2006

Texas Tech University

Academic Year	Total 1 st Time Students	1 st Time students signing pilot contract		Students not meeting terms of the contract		Students Continuing from Previous Year		Total Students w/Pilot Contract
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
2006-07	3,922	511	13%	21	>1%	---	---	511
2007-08	4,515	1,264	28%	140	11%	490	96%	1,754
2008-09	4,407	872	20%			1,124	89%	1,996

Students for whom the institution failed to honor its agreements under the contract and the resolution/outcome.

None.

Description of the promised incentive.

Texas Tech University reports:

“Texas Tech University’s timely graduation pilot program offers the following incentives to entering freshman students choosing to participate in and complete the program:

- Savings on out-of-pocket costs of up to \$ 9,559.00/semester or up to \$28,677 over the course of three long semesters for those students who graduate on time versus spending an additional one to three semesters earning their degree.
- Opportunity to utilize above out-of-pocket savings toward a master’s or doctoral degree to improve professional/career opportunities upon graduation.
- Begin professional career up to 1.5 years earlier, translating into earnings of \$30,000-45,000 on the average versus paying out-of-pocket expenses outlined above for additional semesters in college.
- Increased opportunity of being eligible for the State of Texas \$1,000 Tuition Rebate upon graduation.

- University intervention guarantee.
- Texas Tech University assures Graduate-On-Time (GOT) contract participants that they will be able to enroll in courses that permit graduation in the specified and mutually agreed upon time period. The plan does not apply to programs combining a baccalaureate and master's degree. Texas Tech will ensure the availability of courses or the department and college offering the major will choose one of the following procedures as the exclusive remedy for GOT contract signers:
 - Allow you to graduate in the specified and mutually agreed upon time period, substituting a different course(s) or independent study assignment for the unavailable course(s) as determined by the department and college offering your major;
 - Allow you to graduate on time by waiving the requirement to be met by the department or college offering your major; and
 - Allow the unavailability of a course(s) to delay you from graduating on time, in which case the university will pay the institutional tuition and fees for you to take the unavailable course(s) at Texas Tech University in a later term.
- No penalties for students who sign and later choose not to continue to participate or fail to uphold student commitments as outlined in the contract.”

Description of the process to inform freshman about the pilot project.

Texas Tech University reports:

“The advertising/awareness campaign for the TTU Graduate-On-Time Partnership Agreement (GOT Contract) program includes:

- Detailed information on the TTU home page at the following website: www.graduateontime.ttu.edu.
- Entering freshman students receive an informational postcard with the program’s website address prior to attending New Student Orientation. The postcard is sent to every entering freshman student who registers to attend the TTU- mandated New Student Orientation program during the summer prior to the student’s first fall enrollment at the university.
- The program is explained at length in the university catalog and clearly outlines the purpose of the program, expectations for advising, the commitments expected of the students, the commitments students can expect of the institution, and a list of the degree/major programs participating in the program.
- TTU ensures every entering freshman student receives a free catalog as part of their new student orientation information packet.
- The program is presented a minimum of three times to students during the New Student Orientation required of all first-time students:
 - by college speakers at the mandated college information sessions;
 - by department speakers during the mandated department information sessions; and
 - by academic advisors during one-to-one advising sessions with students.
- Students receive multiple messages during their first two long semesters of attendance at the university via the university’s electronic messaging system known as

TechAnnounce. The messages encourage students to participate in the program and to contact their academic advisors to sign a contract form.

- Academic advisors encourage students to consider the program and sign an agreement at each advance registration period (Oct-Nov and March-April) during first-time freshman students' first year at TTU.
- The GOT Participation Agreement program is presented to new faculty at a professional development retreat for the Interdisciplinary Studies 1100 Tech Transition: Freshman Seminar program.
- Faculty teaching the Interdisciplinary Studies 1100 Tech Transitions Freshman Seminar course discusses the GOT Partnership Agreement Program in their classes and encourages students to see their academic advisor to sign a contract form.
- The program is included on a list of acceptable topics from which first or second- year journalism students choose to research, interview, and write stories for possible submission in the TTU student run newspaper."

University of Houston

Academic Year	Total 1 st Time Students	1 st Time students signing pilot contract		Students not meeting terms of the contract		Students Continuing from Previous Year		Total Students w/Pilot Contract
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
2006-07	3,216	381	12%	99	25%	---	---	381
2007-08	3,218	407	13%	158	39%	282	74%	689
2008-09	3,436	383	11%			249	61%	632

Students for whom the institution failed to honor its agreements under the contract and the resolution/outcome.

None.

Description of the promised incentive.

University of Houston reports:

"Entering freshmen who complete 30 hours towards their major at UH in good standing within one academic year will be eligible for \$500 toward their next year's tuition and fees. By completing 60 hours at UH after two years, students will then be eligible for \$1000 toward their next year's tuition and fees. Those who finish 90 hours at UH by the end of their third year will be eligible for \$1500 toward their fourth year tuition and fees. Students also receive priority registration."

Description of the process to inform freshman about the pilot project.

University of Houston reports:

"UH provides the following to inform freshmen about the project:

- Admitted students receive an informational package.
- The project is presented at all freshmen orientations.

- A website, <http://www.uh.edu/admissions/financial/undergraduate/types-aid/incentives/graduation-pledge>, is available.
- Advisors encourage students to sign up for program.
- Letters are sent to high school counselors.
- A program flyer is included in UH scholarship award letters to recipients.
- Special college visits are organized.”

Participants Since 2007

Grayson County College

Academic Year	Total 1 st Time Students	1 st Time students signing pilot contract		Students not meeting terms of the contract		Students Continuing from Previous Year		Total Students w/Pilot Contract
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
2006-07	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2007-08	568	6	1%	1	17%	---	---	6
2008-09 ¹						5	83%	5

¹The college has not provided data for this academic year because it assesses students and makes contract offers at the end of the spring semester each year.

Students for whom the institution failed to honor its agreements under the contract and the resolution/outcome.

None.

Description of the promised incentive.

Grayson County College reports:

“Each student in the cohort identified and contracted with received free tuition for any courses taken in spring 2008 that were in excess of twelve semester credit hours and for summer classes to ensure they finished the freshman year with thirty hours.”

Description of the process to inform freshman about the pilot project.

Grayson County College reports:

“The College tested 568 fist-time college students with the Noel Levitz assessment. Fifty-seven students were identified as high risk to not progress. Of the 57 students, personal letters were sent to 18 first-time in college students inviting them to participate and receive scholarship incentives. Six students signed agreements to participate.”

The University of Texas at Tyler

Academic Year	Total 1 st Time Students	1 st Time students signing pilot contract		Students not meeting terms of the contract		Students Continuing from Previous Year		Total Students w/Pilot Contract
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
2006-07	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2007-08	582	92	16%	27	29%	---	---	92
2008-09 ¹	544					65	11%	65

¹The university did not report any first-time students signing contracts because their due date for students to submit contracts is January 2009.

Students for whom the institution failed to honor its agreements under the contract and the resolution/outcome.

None.

Description of the promised incentive.

The UT Tyler Timely Graduation Contract states:

"In the event the university does not satisfy the commitments made herein, and you are unable to graduate due to the unavailability of a course (or courses), the department offering the major will choose one of the following procedures, subject to the approval of the Provost or the Provost's designee:

1. Substitute a different course (or courses) or independent study course, as determined by your advisor, for the unavailable course(s).
2. Waive the requirement to be met by the unavailable course(s), as long as you do not fall below 120 hours for graduation.
3. If neither option 1 or 2 above is feasible, the university will allow the delay of graduation, in which case the university will pay the designated tuition (**not** mandatory state tuition) and fees for you to take the unavailable course(s) at the university the next time it is available.

If you meet all conditions set by the contract and graduate on time, you will be guaranteed a one-time only \$600 Graduate-on-Time Tuition Rebate."

Description of the process to inform freshman about the pilot project.

The UT Tyler reports:

"The Academic Advising Center notifies all eligible freshmen of the Timely Graduation Contract (TGC) program during the fall semester and announces a January deadline for completing the contract in order to participate in the program. Advisors also inform freshmen

students of the TGC program during follow-up advising sessions. Beginning in spring 2009, TGC literature will also be included in the information packets distributed to incoming freshmen.”

Participant Since 2008

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Academic Year	Total 1 st Time Students	1 st Time students signing pilot contract		Students not meeting terms of the contract		Students Continuing from Previous Year		Total Students w/Pilot Contract
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
2006-07	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2007-08	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2008-09	4,795	288	6%	---	---	---	---	288

Students for whom the institution failed to honor its agreements under the contract and resolution/outcome.

None.

Description of the promised incentive.

The University of Texas at San Antonio reports:

“The pilot project is called UTSAccess. Students whose annual family income is less than \$25,000 are eligible to participate. The participants are required to enroll in at least 12 semester credit hours in each fall and spring semester and to earn at least 30 semester credit hours toward their degrees each year. Each participant is also required to maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 or higher at the end of each term, have a declared major by the end of his or her first year at UTSA, meet with an academic advisor by the end of the first year in order to file a semester-by-semester degree plan showing graduation in four years, and meet with an academic advisor at least once per semester.

UTSA promises to cover all tuition and fees of the participants for up to four years and to assist in the facilitation of the timely graduation of the participants by substituting different courses or independent study assignments for those required courses determined to be unavailable by the department and college offering the major.

The UTSAccess program will also set aside work-study funds for participants to help cover the cost of room and board and other educational expenses. Participants may work on campus for approximately 10-12 hours per week to help support their additional costs gaining work experience in a variety of departments while becoming involved in campus life. Participants will also be provided low interest loans to assist with additional education expenses over and above tuition and fees.

Along with financial aid resources, UTSAccess will also provide support to participants that help them continue at UTSA and graduate on time. Support programs include assistance

with increased academic advising, financial aid counseling, money management programs, and tutoring.”

Description of the process to inform freshman about the pilot project.

The University of Texas at San Antonio reports:

“Freshmen students who have submitted applications for admission to UTSA and are determined to be eligible to participate in UTSAcess are sent personal letters informing them of the program and inviting them to participate.”

Appendix I

TEC §61.070. PILOT PROJECT TO AWARD INCENTIVES TO STUDENTS CONTRACTING TO GRADUATE IN A TIMELY MANNER.

Text of section effective until August 31, 2014

(a) The board shall establish a pilot project under which each institution of higher education participating in the project awards incentives to students who contract to graduate from the institution in a timely manner and fulfill all other terms of the contract. The board shall select institutions of higher education to participate in the pilot project from among institutions that apply to participate in the manner prescribed by board rule. An institution of higher education may apply to participate on behalf of a specific degree program, department, college, or school of the institution.

(b) On written request of an undergraduate student, the governing board of an institution of higher education participating in the pilot project shall enter into a contract with the student to award the student an incentive authorized under board rule if the student satisfies the requirement of timely graduation and other requirements established by the institution under the contract. A student is not required to enter into a contract under this section.

(c) A student may not request an institution of higher education to enter into a contract under this section after the end of the student's first academic year at the institution. Each institution participating in the pilot project that offers an undergraduate degree program shall notify each entering undergraduate student of the provisions of this section not later than the sixth week of the student's first semester or term.

(d) Each contract under this section:

(1) must require a student entering into the contract to:

- (A) earn at least 30 required or elective credit hours each academic year;
- (B) maintain good academic standing as prescribed in the contract;
- (C) in consultation with the student's academic advisor, select a degree program not later than the end of the student's first academic year at the institution, in the case of a student enrolled in a general academic teaching institution; and
- (D) earn, as prescribed by the institution in the contract, additional credit hours during one or more regular semesters or summer sessions if the student's degree program requires more than 120 credit hours for a bachelor's degree or more than 60 credit hours for an associate degree; and

(2) may require a student entering into the contract to enroll in any specified courses or types of courses prescribed by the degree program selected as specified in Subdivision (1)(C).

(e) In addition to the provisions required or authorized under Subsection (d), the institution of higher education offering a contract under this section or the board may provide for any other reasonable provision to be included in a contract under this section.

(f) A student who has entered into and satisfies the requirements of a contract under this section and who submits an application that is approved as described by Subsection (i) is entitled to an incentive under this section.

(g) If a contract under this section includes the provision described by Subsection (d)(2), the contract must require the institution of higher education to select one of the following

actions to take if a course required for the student's degree program is unavailable to the student in the sequence required by the degree program selected as specified in Subsection (d)(1)(C):

(1) permanently waive the student's required enrollment in that course;

(2) allow the student at that time to satisfy the course requirement by selecting for the student and substituting:

(A) a different course that the student is eligible to take and that is available to the student; or

(B) an independent study assignment; or

(3) provide for the payment of the student's designated tuition and required fees for the course at the institution.

(h) An institution of higher education required to select an option under Subsection (g) may select an option under Subsection (g)(1) or (2) only if the institution determines that such a selection will not negatively affect the quality of the student's degree program or result in the institution's noncompliance with applicable accreditation standards.

(i) A student who enters into a contract under this section must apply for an incentive under Subsection (f) in the manner provided by the governing board of the institution of higher education awarding the incentive. The governing board shall require an applicant for an incentive to submit satisfactory evidence that the applicant is entitled to the incentive.

(j) An institution of higher education may not contract under this section with a student who transfers to the institution from another public or private institution of higher education. A student's transfer from one institution of higher education to another voids a contract entered into by the student under this section with the prior institution.

(k) This section does not apply to a student seeking a certificate at a public junior college.

(l) In consultation with institutions of higher education, the board shall adopt rules consistent with this section as necessary to implement this section, including rules establishing the manner in which an institution of higher education must apply to participate in the pilot project, rules concerning the types of incentives that an institution may award under this section, and rules allowing an otherwise qualified student to receive an incentive under this section if the student is unable to satisfy a requirement for the incentive solely as a result of a hardship or other good cause. In adopting rules concerning the types of incentives that may be awarded, the board shall authorize incentives such as free membership in an institution's alumni organization or free tickets to one or more athletic events.

(m) Not later than December 31, 2007, and not later than December 31 of each year after 2007, the board shall submit a report to the legislature on the level of participation in the pilot project under this section and on the effectiveness of project contracts in encouraging students to graduate from institutions of higher education in a timely manner.

(n) A student may not enter into a contract under this section after the end of the 2009-2010 academic year. This section expires August 31, 2014.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 781, § 1, eff. June 17, 2005.

Appendix II

Text of email message sent to participating institutions on October 29, 2008

Greetings!

If you are reading this message, your institution either contributed to, or expressed an interest in joining, the Pilot Project to Award Incentives to Students Contracting To Graduate in a Timely Manner, which was enacted by the 79th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature as Texas Education Code §61.070. A condition of the legislation is that participating pilot institutions will provide information annually on the progress of the pilot program to the Coordinating Board, which must make a report to the Legislature by December 31 of each year of the pilot, beginning in 2007.

The initial report was submitted based on information that we received through a similar survey last year. I have attached it for your convenience; a copy of that legislation is included in the report. Two public institutions of higher education participated in the pilot for 2006-2007 (UH and TTU), with four more expressing the intent to join the program for 2007-2008 (Grayson) or in the fall of 2008 (UTT, UTB, and UTSA).

As promised, we are once again requesting some minimal information about your institution's pilot project and its most recent year of implementation. A brief survey instrument is attached to this message. Please complete it (you may need assistance from your registrar or institutional research staff) and **return it to me by email attachment before the end of the business day on Wednesday, November 19, 2008**. We will use the information you provide as part of the report we will send to the Legislature later in December.

You may have received this message because the person who responded to the original invitation to participate is no longer with your institution, or because you have been identified as someone who would be able to provide the information we seek at this time. Because of the legislative deadline, we will not have any option to extend the deadline for receipt of your institution's information beyond the specified due date. If we do not receive the completed survey by the due date, we will conclude that your institution is no longer participating in the pilot project.

If you have questions, please contact me immediately. As always, we are grateful for your assistance and for your efforts to increase the timely graduation of college and university students across Texas.

Appendix III

November 2008 Survey for Institutions Participating in the Pilot Project to Award Incentives to Students Contracting to Graduate in a Timely Manner

Please complete this survey and return it to Dr. Catherine Parsonault, catherine.parsonault@theeb.state.tx.us, no later than the end of the business day on Wednesday, November 19, 2008. If we do not receive a response from you, we will remove your institution from the list of participating institutions for the duration of the pilot project.

Table One: Pilot Participation Information by Pilot Cohort

Students must request and sign a contract within their first year of enrollment. All first time entering students who complete the contract should be considered as the pilot project cohort for the academic year in which they sign their contract.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Academic Year	Total number of 1 st time entering students	Number of 1 st time entering students who signed pilot contracts	Number of returning pilot project students	Percent of 1 st time entering students who signed pilot projects	Percent of returning pilot project students
2	2006-2007			-----		-----
3	2007-2008					
4	Fall 2008					

Instructions for completing Table One: Enter the information for each year your institution has participated in the pilot project.

Column B: Enter the total number (headcount) of first time entering students for the academic year indicated (whether or not they request and sign a pilot project contract).

Column C: Enter the number of first time entering students who signed contracts to participate in the pilot project during the academic year indicated.

Column D: Enter the number of students who signed a contract under the terms of the pilot project, who were still participating as of the beginning of the subsequent academic year/s indicated.

Column E: Enter the percentage of the first time entering class who signed a contract under the pilot project during the year indicated.

Column F: Enter the percentage of the first time entering class who were still participating as of the beginning of the subsequent academic year/s indicated.

Table Two: Students in the cohort who did not meet the terms of the pilot project

	A	B	C
1	Academic Year	Number of pilot project cohort students who failed to meet the contract terms	Percent of pilot project cohort students who failed to meet the terms
2	2006-2007		
3	2007-2008		
4	Fall 2008	-----	-----

Instructions for completing Table Two: Enter the information for each year your institution has participated in the pilot project.

Column B: Enter the number of first time entering students who signed a contract under the terms of the pilot, but who failed to meet the terms of the contract within the year indicated.

Column C: Enter the percentage of the original class of first time entering students who signed a contract under the terms of the pilot, but who failed to meet the terms of the contract within the year indicated.

Other Information

1. Were there any students in the pilot project cohort for whom the institution failed to honor its agreements under the contract? If so, describe in general terms the resolution/outcome. (e.g. was the student accommodated through a different course; was the course waived; or was the student compensated by the institution paying the course costs to enroll in the course during a semester different than the one specified in the contract?)
2. Describe the incentive promised by your institution under the pilot program contract available to freshman students. (Describe here or attach an additional file with details.)
3. Describe the ways that freshman students at your institution are informed about the pilot project (catalogue, advising, etc.)

Thank you for your participation in the Pilot Project to Award Incentives to Students Contracting to Graduate in a Timely Manner!

This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Website: <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>

For more information, contact:

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