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# PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE TRANSITIONS: BARRIERS AND BEST PRACTICES - A SNAPSHOT OF TEXAS WITHIN A NATIONAL CONTEXT

## INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Texas Legislature mandated that the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board work toward improving the college readiness and success of all students to help ensure the state's economic future.

While the population of Texas is growing at a rapid pace, it continues to have a poorly educated workforce and may face a shortfall of qualified workers that possess the skills to compete for middle-income jobs in a global economy. Ethnic and racial minority groups, who will comprise an increasing portion of the state's population, are making gains in educational attainment, but are still underrepresented in higher education. Barriers students face in successfully transitioning into college include a lack of adequate academic preparation, limited financial resources, multiple assessments, and a lack of college information. Texas has adopted several initiatives to improve educational outcomes and college success rates and continues to examine ways to facilitate public school to college transitions. This paper examines the state initiatives within the context of nationally recognized best practices.

It begins with an overview of educational attainment and its economic implications, a discussion of the major barriers to college readiness and success, and nationally recognized best practices and recommendations for addressing some of the barriers. This is followed by a summary and discussion of the states college readiness initiatives for improving educational outcomes and college success for all students.

## GAPS IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

While ethnic and racial minorities are making gains in educational attainment, African American and Hispanic students still lag far behind White students in both high school and college graduation rates. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) places national high school completion rates from 2002 to 2004 for African Americans at 77.8 percent, Hispanics at 64.4 percent, and Whites at 87.6 percent. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), which publishes annual high school attrition rates in Texas, found that the overall attrition rate is about 40 percent for the fifth consecutive year, meaning that about 60 percent of students entering high school as freshmen

graduate four years later. In 2005–06, 65 percent of the freshman class of 2002–03 graduated within four years. The percentages of students who graduated from Texas public schools within four years by ethnicity were 53 percent for Hispanics, 60 percent for African Americans, 79 percent for Whites, and 83 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders. The educational gap by ethnicity continues in the number of high school graduates who pursue higher education. According to a report released by the American Council on Education in 2006, from 2002 to 2004, 47.3 percent of White high school graduates age 18 to 24 attended colleges or universities, compared with 41.1 percent for African American graduates and 35.2 percent for Hispanic graduates.

A report published by the Education Trust shows that while the percentages of individuals age 25 to 29 with bachelor's degrees increased for each ethnic group, the gaps between groups widened between 1980 and 2005. The percentage of Hispanics with bachelor's degrees increased from 8 percent to 11 percent; for African Americans the percentage increased from 9 percent to 18 percent; for Whites from 20 percent to 34 percent; with the greatest increase for Asian Americans from 36 percent to 46 percent.

Many studies and policy papers document the inequities in educational opportunities by race, ethnicity, and income. For example, ethnic minority and low-income students are much more likely to attend schools with inexperienced teachers, high drop-out rates, and a lack of adequate instructional materials than are White middle-class students.

The college enrollment gap as measured by wealth in four-year postsecondary institutions reflects the lack of resources and a good quality public education for all students. According to NCES data, two of every three students from the wealthiest quartile of the general population enroll in a four-year college or university while one in five from the lowest socio-economic quartile enrolls in such an institution. Seventy-five percent of students from the wealthiest quartile obtained bachelor's degrees in 2003 compared to 9 percent from the bottom quartile.

In Texas, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) established *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, a plan to close the college participation gaps. Using 2000 enrollment figures as a baseline, THECB planned to add 630,000

additional students for a total of 1,650,000 students by 2015. While the state exceeded the overall growth target it set for 2005, a progress report issued in 2006 by the THECB noted that the growth peaked from the fall 2001 to the fall of 2002 and declined for most racial/ethnic groups since then. Statewide college enrollment increased from 1,010,517 students in 2000 to 1,220,487 students in 2005 exceeding the state's target, but fell short of making the expected college enrollment gains among Hispanic students. About 80,000 more Hispanic students enrolled in 2005 than in 2000, falling about 20,500 students short of the expected target for 2005. The state exceeded its targets for both African American and White student enrollment with African American student enrollment increasing by 31,271 and White enrollment increasing by 59,169 students.

### **ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF ATTAINMENT GAPS**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, six of every 10 jobs in the U.S. economy depend on highly trained workers with skills only available through postsecondary education. Economists estimate that by 2020, the U.S. could face a shortfall of 14 million workers who have the knowledge and skills to compete for middle-income jobs in a global economy. Population studies indicate that unless the nation can improve the education of all its students, the percentage of the workforce with a college degree will decrease over the next 15 years.

An issue of particular concern is that groups with the lowest levels of education are growing rapidly while the baby boomers (Americans born between 1946 and 1964, and the most highly educated generation in U.S. history) will retire in record numbers. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education projects that from 1980 to 2020, the White working-age population in the U.S. will decline from 82 percent to 63 percent, while the percentage of ethnic/racial minority workers will double from 18 percent to 37 percent. If current population trends continue without a significant improvement in the education of all ethnic/racial groups, the skills and incomes of the workforce are expected to decline over the next two decades along with a decline in the nation's tax base.

Texas, along with Nevada, California, Colorado, Illinois, and Arizona, is expected to have the highest growth in minority populations. According to the Texas State Data Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio, the White population in Texas is expected to decrease from 53.1 percent in 2000 to 37.3 percent by 2020, while the percentage of ethnic and

racial minorities is projected to increase from 46.9 percent in 2000 to 62.7 percent by 2020. **Figure 1** shows the growth projections for Texas by race and ethnicity.

According to the report *Population Change in Texas: Implications for Human and Socioeconomic Resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, published by The University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas was among the high-growth states in the nation between 1990 and 2000 with a 22.8 percent growth rate. This rate is almost twice the national population growth rate over that decade according to the 2003 report *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State Income, and Race/Ethnicity*, published by ACT, The College Board, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

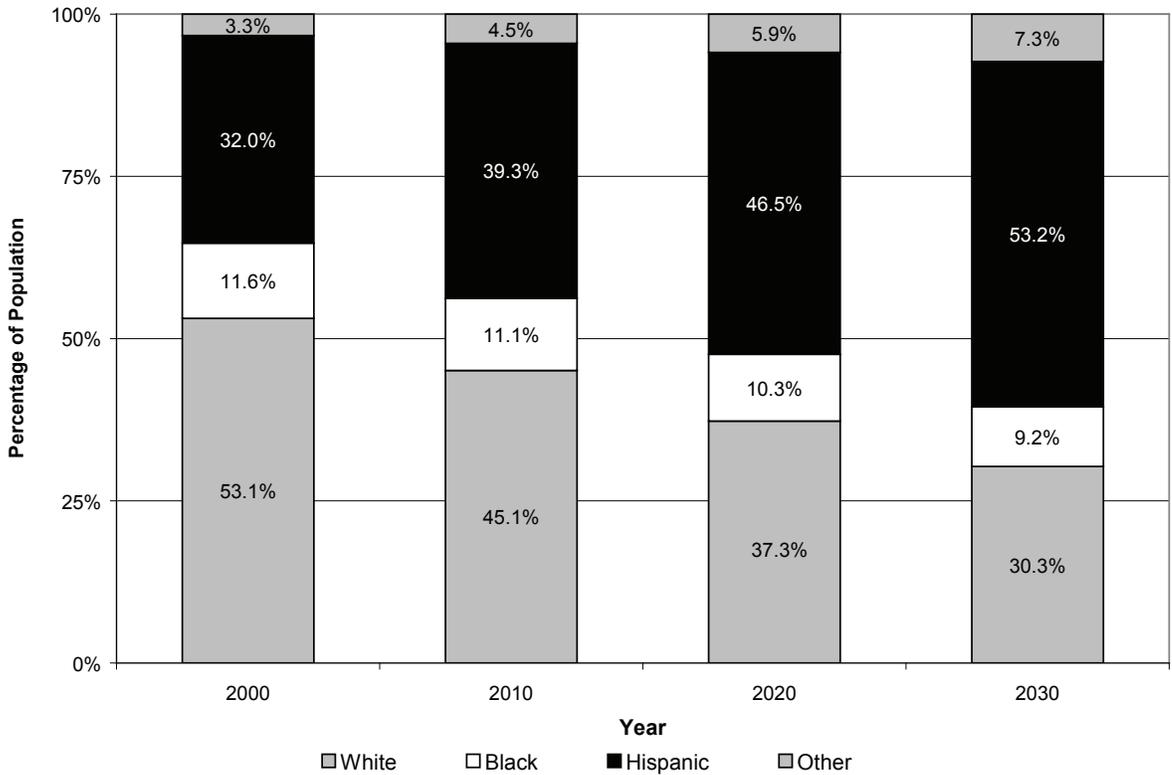
While Texas is growing at a rapid pace, it continues to have a poorly educated workforce. According to U.S. Census data for 2000, 21.7 percent of Texas' population age 25 to 64 lacks a high school diploma. Texas has one of the poorest educated workforces in the nation. Only California and Mississippi rank higher with 21.8 percent and 22.4 percent lacking high school diplomas. The 2004 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education report (The Emerging Policy Triangle: Economic Development, Workforce Development, and Education) revealed that because of its poorly educated workforce, Texas relies on in-migration to fill jobs requiring advanced skills—leaving menial jobs to Texans. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, Texas imports human capital and is a low producer of college graduates. **Figure 2** shows the highest level of education completed by Texans age 25 and over.

The educational achievement gap of an increasingly diverse population has serious economic implications for the nation as a whole, and especially for the states, including Texas, which have a large percentage of their population lacking higher education. The population growth projections, given the current educational achievement gap, emphasize the need for implementing large-scale initiatives for improving the college readiness and success rates of students of racial/ethnic minorities and low-income families.

### **BARRIERS TO COLLEGE SUCCESS**

Several nationally published reports have identified the major barriers that students of racial/ethnic minorities and low-income families face when entering college. These barriers include academic preparation, affordability, inadequate assessments, policy and structural issues, accountability systems, and student awareness of college requirements.

**FIGURE 1**  
**GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR TEXAS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**  
**2000–2020**



SOURCE: Texas State Data Center, University of Texas at San Antonio.

**INADEQUATE ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

A lack of academic rigor in public education, little collaboration between higher and secondary education, and an inadequate supply of experienced teachers are often cited as underlying the high rates of college remediation and low college success rates.

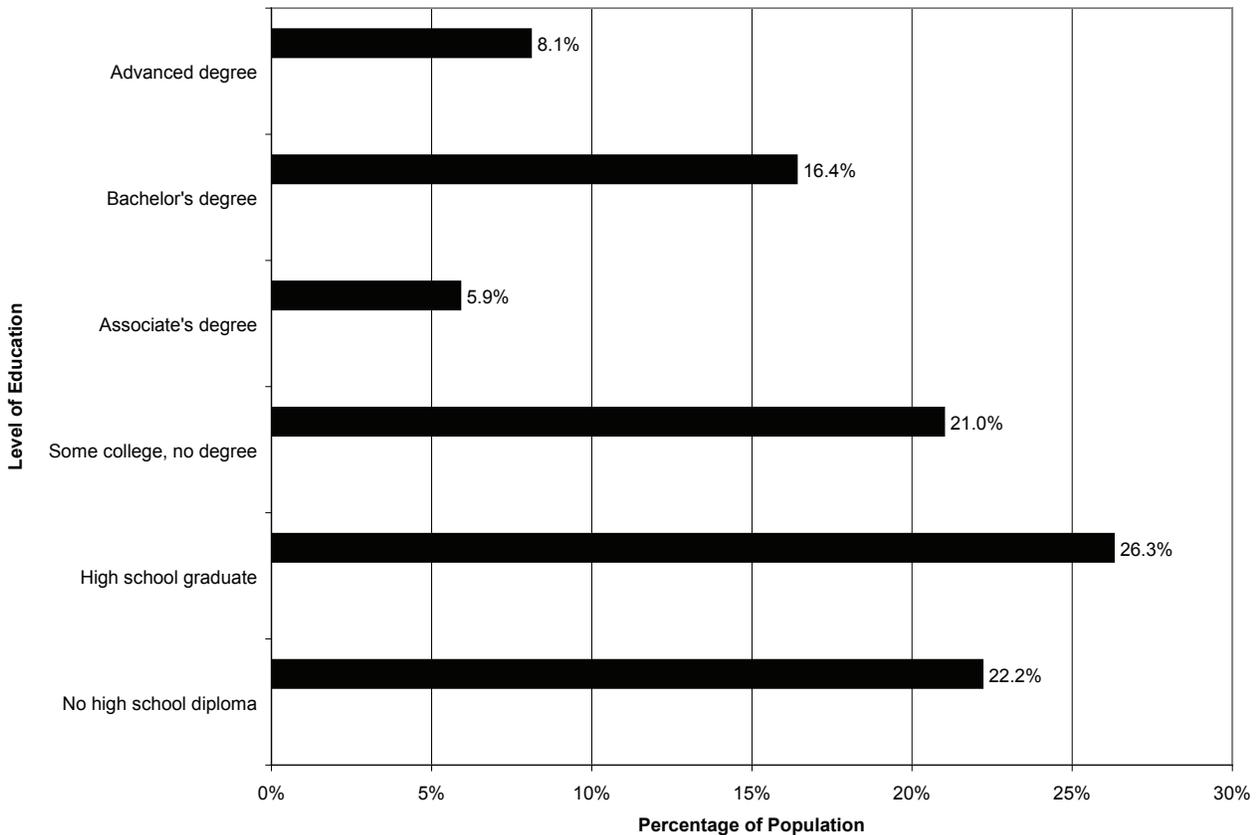
The difference between the rigor of courses required for high school graduation and those required for success in entry-level college courses makes it difficult for students to transition into college. Nationally, about 50 percent of all students entering college must take remedial courses that do not count toward college credit. According to a 2003 Stanford University report (*Betraying the College Dream: How Disconnected K–12 and Postsecondary Education Systems Undermine Student Aspiration*), three in five students at public two-year colleges and one in four at four-year colleges take at least a year of remedial classes. Students in remedial courses are less likely to continue college than those who enter college well prepared for entry-level college work.

Furthermore, the Stanford University study found that community college students with the intention of completing basic course work before transferring to a four-year institution, who require a year of remedial course work, are unlikely to successfully transfer to a four-year college for a bachelor’s degree .

The students most at risk for taking remedial courses in college are those who attend public schools with inadequate access to rigorous coursework. Research has found that the effect of a high-quality, rigorous, high school curriculum on college completion is more pronounced, positively for African American and Hispanic students than any other pre-college indicator; yet nationwide, ethnic minority students are underrepresented in the college tracks.

More than half of the incoming students in Texas’ public colleges and universities require remedial course work. To improve the academic rigor of its public schools, Texas enacted legislation that makes the college preparatory plan the default curriculum beginning with grade 9 in

**FIGURE 2**  
**HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED BY TEXANS (AGE 25 AND OVER)**  
**2003**



SOURCE: United States Census.

2004–05. In addition, the legislation requires all students to take four years of English, math, science, and social studies as part of the recommended and advanced academic programs effective with the entering freshman class in 2007–08.

A lack of collaboration between institutions of higher education and secondary education is also a barrier to college readiness. While there has been a widespread trend at the state levels to increase student enrollments in the college preparatory tracks, college remediation rates remain high and college completion rates remain low. A 2006 study by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education attributes these rates to the lack of collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions to ensure that high school classes prepare students to succeed in entry-level college work. Colleges have traditionally set standards for college level coursework and remedial courses while public education (at local or state levels) defines the curricula for the honors and college tracks at the secondary schools.

A lack of experienced teachers also contributes to the inadequate academic preparation of students. Low-income students are more likely to be taught by teachers who lack content knowledge for subjects taught; are less experienced; teach on emergency credentials; score lower on standardized tests, teacher licensing tests, assessments of basic skills, and college admission tests; and are more likely to have attended noncompetitive undergraduate colleges/universities than teachers at higher socio-economic status schools. Texas has made progress in the percentage of middle and high school students taught by teachers with majors in their subject, but this percentage is still significantly lower than the top ranked states. According to the *Measuring Up* report published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in 2006, the percentage of Texas teachers with a degree in their subject area increased from 46 percent in 1992 to 58 percent in 2005 compared to 81 percent in the top-ranked states.

**LACK OF HIGHER EDUCATION AFFORDABILITY**

The rising cost of higher education is also a major barrier to college access and success. A 2005 College Board report showed that in the past five years tuition and fees at public universities across the nation have risen by 40 percent after adjusting for inflation making college costs increasingly unaffordable for moderate- and low-income families. The federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance estimates that cost factors prevent 48 percent of college-qualified high school graduates from attending four-year institutions and 22 percent from attending any college at all. In some states, the cost of tuition and fees at four-year institutions accounts for nearly 30 percent of family income according to the report *Informing Public Policy: Financial Aid and Student Persistence* published by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) in 2003.

According to the 2003 study published by WICHE, as the cost of tuition has increased, need-based financial aid awarded through grants, scholarships or tuition waivers, loans (unsubsidized and subsidized), and work-study jobs has declined. The decline in financial aid left up to 22 percent of low-income, academically qualified students unable to attend college and many unable to complete college. Need-based grant aid decreased from 61 percent of the share of federal student aid awarded in the mid-1970s to 22 percent in 2004, while the share of loans increased from 34 percent to 70 percent. In 2004, Federal Pell Grants paid for about 34 percent of the average cost of college attendance, down from 84 percent in the mid-1970's. The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income students to promote access to higher education, and unlike loans they do not have to be repaid. These grants are awarded primarily to undergraduate students, but certain post baccalaureate students may be eligible, for example those seeking teaching certification.

With less grant aid available, students and families are accruing increasing amounts of educational debt. In 2004, 66.4 percent of students graduating from four-year colleges and universities had educational debt compared to less than 50 percent in 1993, according to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study. Not only are more students borrowing money to pay for college, average student debt has increased significantly. Graduates of public universities in 2004 averaged \$17,250 in debt compared to \$8,000 in 1993, a 65 percent increase after accounting for inflation. Parents are also borrowing to support their dependent students. In 2004, about 12 percent of parents of students attending public

universities accrued an average of \$14,056 in PLUS Loans. These are low-interest loans sponsored through the Federal Family Loan Program available to parents of dependent undergraduate students.

Low-income students are more likely to take out student loans, and in larger amounts, than other students. Eighty-nine percent of Pell Grant recipients, who graduated in 2004, had student loan debt compared to 52 percent for non-Pell Grant recipients, and their educational debt was 12 percent higher than for other students.

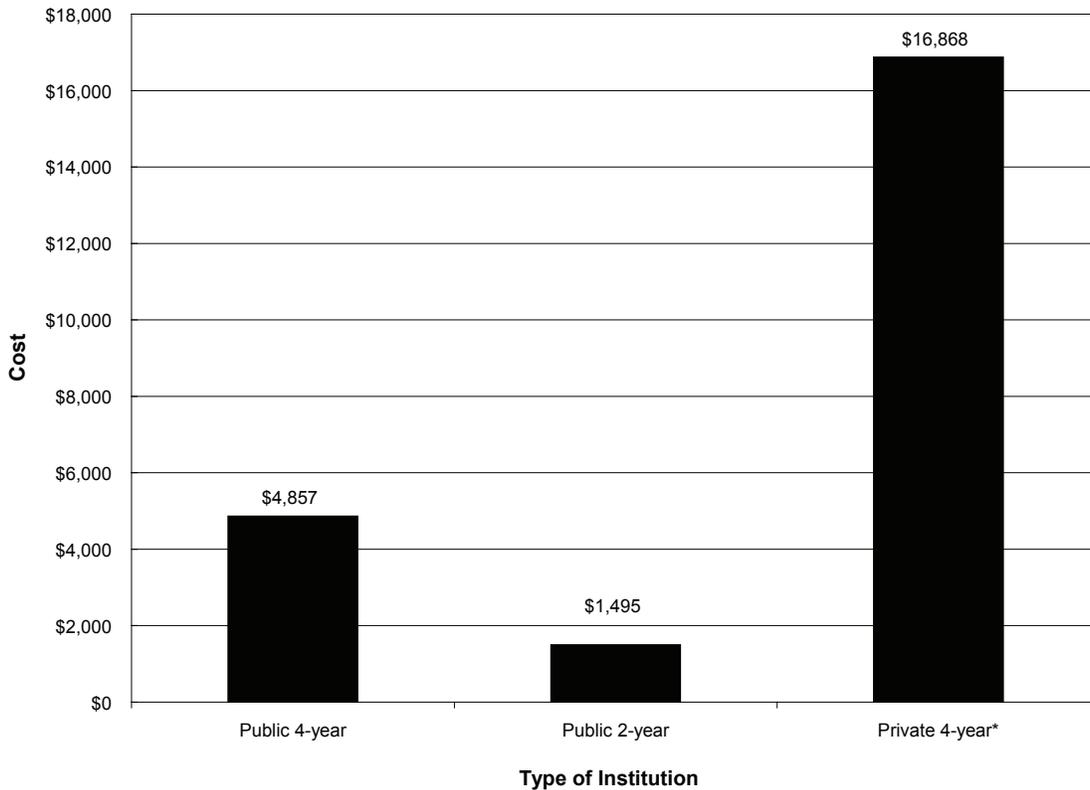
The availability and type of financial aid directly affects the likelihood of students completing their degree programs. Grants and work-study jobs are the most likely forms of financial aid to promote college persistence according to the 2003 Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education report. In Texas, the THECB found that the small group of students who were awarded work-study jobs as part of their financial aid packages had the highest graduation rate at 55.4 percent.

Limited financial resources often keep students from attending school full-time, which in turn decreases their rates of college persistence. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education report also found that students attending school part-time were 19.6 percentage points less likely to obtain their degrees than were full-time students. Part-time students are not eligible for Pell Grants or for many state-funded programs that restrict awards to financially dependent students and/or students in traditional age groups making it difficult for students who need to work to support themselves or their families to attend college.

In Texas, average tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities increased by 41 percent between 2002 and 2005, from \$3,441 to \$4,857. **Figure 3** shows average Texas tuition and fees at four- and two-year public institutions of higher education, and tuition at four-year private colleges and universities in 2004–05.

In Texas, funding for financial aid has not kept pace with the increase in tuition. According to the THECB, funding for The Towards EXcellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant has remained relatively flat at \$164 million in 2003 and \$166 million in 2007. After accounting for financial aid, Texas families pay an average of 22 percent of their incomes on community colleges and an average of 30 percent at four-year colleges and universities. *Measuring UP 2006* gave Texas a failing grade on affordability.

**FIGURE 3**  
**AVERAGE TEXAS COLLEGE TUITION AND FEES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2004–05**



NOTE: \*Includes only tuition.

SOURCE: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (public institutions); The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2006.

As the cost of higher education increased, median household income in Texas declined from \$42,069 in 2000 to \$40,674 in 2003 according to U.S. Census data. In 1999, the breakdown in median family income by race and ethnicity was highest for Asian-Americans and lowest for African Americans as **Figure 4** shows.

**FIGURE 4**  
**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN TEXAS**  
**BY RACE/ETHNICITY**  
**1999**

| RACE /ETHNICITY  | MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Asian-American   | \$50,049             |
| White            | \$47,162             |
| Hispanic         | \$29,873             |
| African American | \$29,305             |

SOURCE: U.S. Census.

Historically, Texas has had low state investment in need-based aid compared to the federal investment, but it has made progress over the past decade. It increased its share of investment in financial aid from 7 percent of the federal investment in 1992 to 36 percent in 2003, and 34 percent in 2005 according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education *Measuring UP 2006* report.

The TEXAS Grant is one of the state’s initiatives for helping financial needy students pay for college. The grant was created as an incentive for low-income students to graduate under the college preparatory plan and enroll in college. The grant is equal to the average tuition at public universities and colleges and is available to qualifying high school graduates entering four-year institutions as freshmen, community colleges, or those with an associate’s degree who enroll in four-year colleges within 12 months of graduating from community colleges. Funding for the TEXAS Grant scholarship program has remained relatively flat since 2003

and is currently funding only students already in the program. Approximately 31,000 eligible students, more than one-third of all eligible students, did not receive a grant under this program in 2004–05 according to the 2005 report, *State of Student Aid and Higher Education in Texas*.

#### **MULTIPLE AND CONFUSING ASSESSMENTS**

The multiple assessments students must take to meet graduation requirements, gain college admission, and determine college placement are also a barrier for successful college transitions. A report published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (*Governance Divide: A Report on the Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success, 2005*) found that postsecondary admission and placement officials have little knowledge of the kindergarten to grade 12 (K–12) assessment standards and that K–12 educators are equally unaware of specific postsecondary admission and placement policies. The postsecondary position has been that K–12 policies are politically volatile and may change quickly, so there is little reason to tie college placement decisions to high school assessments.

Most states benchmark the assessments required for graduation at grades 8, 9, or 10 and do not adequately measure entry-level college skills. Nationally, there are few standards for the senior year of high school or connected to college expectations.

In Texas, the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is administered in grade 11. The THECB developed a college readiness indicator based on TAKS performance. Students meeting a set score between the “met” and “commended standard” are considered ready for entry-level college courses and are exempt from taking a college placement exam. Meeting a set score on college entrance exams, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing (ACT) exam, also exempts students from college placement exams. Students who are not exempt must take a college placement exam that assesses their skills in reading, math, and writing. Scores on these exams determine the student’s need for remedial course work.

#### **POLICY AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS**

Governmental structure and state policies create barriers for successful student transitions from secondary to higher education. In many states, legislative committees associated with K–12, higher education, adult basic education, and workforce and economic development often reinforce divisions between education sectors. These committees do

not create an environment conducive to joint budgeting or policymaking between K–12 schools and higher education according to the 2005 Governance Divide report. For example, there is often a lack of communication between those who determine higher education appropriations or institutional tuition funding levels and those who oversee financial aid allocations. This issue has become more problematic as the cost of higher education has risen while state support has been flat or has declined.

*Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policies 2003*, a study of Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Missouri, and Oregon, found that while state support of higher education declined and tuition increased, there was no joint consideration of the intersection between higher education financing and financial aid policies. There was little consideration of how double-digit tuition hikes would affect a student’s ability to pay for college.

Also, state policies can affect transfer from two- to four-year institutions of higher education. Many students begin community college with plans to transfer to four-year colleges and universities, but few do so because of structural, financial, and information barriers. According to the *Changing Direction* study, only 36 percent of community college students who intend to transfer to four-year institutions transfer within three years of entering college. Barriers to successful transfers include the lack of course alignment between institutions and the lack of affordability.

#### **ACCOUNTABILITY/DATA SYSTEMS**

Another barrier to creating a seamless secondary school to college transition is the lack of adequate systems for gathering education data to help in policy-making.

For the most part, states lack systems that can track student progress as they transition from high school to college. These systems could identify and address the barriers students face in this process.

According to the 2005 *Governance Divide* report, there are few accountability systems in place for postsecondary education and even fewer that connect the pre-kindergarten through grade 12 (PK–12) and higher education systems. State accountability systems typically track graduation rates and proficiency on state assessments and stem from the position that state and local governments are responsible for the performance of PK–12 schools. In contrast, higher education has largely been free of accountability for its education of students. Students are perceived as being

responsible for their own performance. Furthermore, there have been no financial incentives for higher education to collaborate with PK–12 educators. High college dropout rates are not a fiscal problem as long as new students keep attending; however, public school funding is tied to student attendance. The report, *Claiming Common Ground*, published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in 2006, found that without adequate data systems, policy makers lack the information necessary to address specific weaknesses and to strengthen the PK–16 educational system.

Texas has a well-developed data gathering and accountability system at the PK–12 level, but does not have a similar system for assessing higher education, nor does it have a system that follows student progress from elementary school through college and into the workforce.

#### **LACK OF COLLEGE AWARENESS**

A barrier to attending college, especially for low-income and minority students, is their lack of awareness of college admission requirements and their college readiness. Studies indicate that college readiness should begin in middle school with school counselors informing students of the courses they need to take to begin to prepare for college, including algebra and other gatekeeping courses that will prepare them for Advanced Placement (AP) classes in high school. Students should also be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities and begin to learn about financing a college education.

Historically, it has been the role of school counselors to guide students in taking college preparatory classes and informing families about financial aid resources. Studies indicate that students who meet regularly with counselors are more informed of financial aid resources and more likely to enroll in college than those who do not. However, many studies have found that low-income students are less likely to get college counseling than more affluent students and that minority students have historically been steered into vocational education tracks instead of the honors/college preparatory tracks.

To help their children access college, parents need to be aware of the courses their children should take to prepare for college, the cost of colleges, and the financial aid system. In 2004, the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute found that nine out of 10 Hispanic parents surveyed said they believe a college education is necessary to be successful, yet two-thirds said

they did not receive any student financial aid information before their student left high school. Some parents also believe students are prepared for college based on student grades with little knowledge of the courses required to adequately prepare students for college-level work.

While school districts expect counselors to provide adequate college counseling to students and families, the average ratio of students to school counselors is high. A 2004 study reported the national average of 490 students to one counselor; but in schools serving large numbers of low-income and minority students, the ratios are 1,055 students to one counselor or higher. In addition, counselors in low-income schools are more likely to have administrative and other duties than those in more affluent schools. In Texas, the average ratio was 423 students to one counselor in 2001–02, which likely is a reflection of the high number of small rural school districts in the state. The Houston Independent School District had the highest student to counselor ratio at 691 students to one counselor.

In recent years, school counselors have increasingly been asked to take on administrative duties, including the role of testing coordinators, leaving less time for counseling. Because counselors are often unavailable, many students rely on teachers for help with learning about and applying to college. Teachers are not as connected to colleges nor do they have the training or materials to provide students with accurate up-to-date information. They get college information from former students, student teachers, newspapers, and their own college experience, not from institutional resources.

In Texas, a report published in 2003 showed that less than 35 percent of students knew the policies related to the college placement exam and that the knowledge gaps were based on socio-economic status and whether the students were enrolled in honors classes. Students had many misconceptions about the courses they needed to prepare for college and less than 12 percent knew the course requirements for admissions into the colleges they wanted to attend. Students in community college expressed embarrassment that they did not have adequate reading, writing, or math skills and said they had not been told in high school that they would need more than two years of math to succeed in college.

#### **NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED BEST PRACTICES**

Several states have implemented strategies or programs to address the major barriers to successful college transitions, including strengthening academic preparation, making

college affordable for low and moderate-income families, and combining data systems for greater accountability and to have data readily available to facilitate policy decisions.

#### **ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

California and Oregon have taken steps to help ensure that entering college freshmen have the academic skills necessary to succeed. The California State University (CSU) system initiated a partnership with the California Department of Education (CDE) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to reduce the high rates of remediation and the associated costs. The partnership established the Early Assessment Program (EAP) to help ensure that graduating seniors who are interested in higher education are prepared for college-level studies. It joined with CDE and SBE to examine the extent to which K–12 assessments could be used for placement purposes at CSU. The state added 15 additional test items and an essay to the eleventh-grade assessment to measure student readiness for college-level math and English. All students are required to take the state assessment, but answering the additional test questions is voluntary. Students who meet the college-readiness standards are exempt from additional placement testing after admission to CSU. The state college system works with high school teachers to develop senior-level English and math courses for students who need additional skills to meet the threshold required for college-level work. CSU also provides professional development to K–12 educators to help them develop strategies to strengthen students' math and reading skills. CSU's impetus for this collaborative was to reduce its remediation rates while continuing to draw its students from the top third of high school graduates who have at least a "B" average and who have taken the required college preparatory curriculum. CSU's goals are to ensure that students who enroll in the state college system are prepared to succeed in college-level classes and to reduce its remediation rates, which were at 60 percent for first-time freshmen in 2003.

In Oregon, the Board of Higher Education and the Board of Education partnered to align the standards from kindergarten through college entry. The Proficiency-Based Admission Standards System (PASS) aligns admission to Oregon University System schools with the standards and performance measures in public education. Each of the PASS standards is linked with a curriculum goal beginning in grade 8, so that students are preparing for proficiency in college-entry work beginning in middle school.

#### **FINANCIAL AID**

To address the high burden of college costs, Oklahoma and Indiana established programs to keep higher education affordable for low and moderate-income families. Oklahoma promises to pay college tuition for students who perform well in school, stay out of trouble, and whose families earn less than \$50,000 annually when the student enrolls in the program. The Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program is available to students beginning in the grade 8 and up through grade 10. Participating students must agree to take a core curriculum, graduate with a 2.5 grade point average, remain drug and alcohol free, and stay out of trouble both in school and in the community. Students who successfully complete the requirements of the program and enroll in a college or university are eligible for the tuition scholarships. The students have up to three years after graduating from high school to enroll in college and may receive the scholarship for up to five years as long as they maintain acceptable academic standing. To maintain this commitment to its students, Oklahoma appropriates funding for financial aid that is adequate to cover the cost of tuition.

Oklahoma also created the Educational Planning and Assessment System in partnership with ACT to provide pre-ACT assessments in 500 school districts and succeeded in increasing the number of students taking the ACT from 50 percent in 1992 to 74 percent in 2004. Because of these initiatives, Oklahoma increased the number of minority students enrolled in college and decreased the number of students requiring college remediation.

Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program offers a supplemental scholarship to students of low- to moderate-income families that guarantees the cost of college tuition is paid in return for good grades and good citizenship. The program is open to grade 7 and 8 students who qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program. Participants pledge to finish high school, maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average, remain drug and alcohol free, apply for college and financial aid, and enroll in an Indiana postsecondary institution within two years of completing high school. The program staff encourages the scholars to pursue a college preparatory curriculum, provides support services, and pays tuition and fees (after other financial aid awards) at a public university or a similar portion at a private college.

Indiana also leverages its state-sponsored Frank O'Bannon Grant, a needs-based grant, to encourage all students to take

the most challenging curriculum offered in high school. The state pays college tuition (based on the previous year's rates) at 80 percent for students graduating under the regular program, 90 percent for the recommended program, and 100 percent for most rigorous curricula. The percentage of traditionally underrepresented students taking college preparatory classes in high school increased, as well as the percentage of all students taking such courses. The percentage of students taking a college preparatory curriculum increased from 12 percent in 1993–94 to 65 percent in 2003–04. While the gaps in educational attainment by race and ethnicity persist, they are narrowing and the performance of each racial/ethnic group is improving. The percentage of African American and Hispanic students taking the most rigorous curricula almost doubled. In 1998, 23 percent of the African American students and 29 percent of the Hispanic students enrolled in the most rigorous curriculum and in 2004, the percentages improved to 47 percent and 51 percent, respectively. Overall, the percentage of Indiana students enrolling in postsecondary education rose from 50 percent to 62 percent from 1994 to 2002.

#### **POLICY**

To address the barrier caused by the disconnect within government entities responsible for setting tuition rates and appropriating funds for financial aid, Illinois developed a system to monitor how changes in tuition and financial aid policies affect students and families. Illinois used measures of the net cost of college attendance to track how affordability is changing over time for families at different income levels and uses this data to make informed policy decisions. The state's integrated financing policies have earned it recognition from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's *Measuring Up* report cards.

#### **DATA SYSTEMS**

To address the barriers created by a lack of usable data on which to base policy and funding decisions, Florida, Georgia, and Oregon are now designing or implementing integrated data systems. Florida's system, the *Data Warehouse and the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program*, is the most advanced. The system includes the workforce, corrections, welfare, and education systems in an effort to develop common standards, eliminate duplicated functions and services, provide for improved accountability and public reporting, and establish longitudinal reporting about the status and performance of students and other

public program participants. The Data Warehouse uses a common student identifier to combine longitudinal data from public schools, community colleges and technical centers, and the university system. The Data Warehouse is managed by the Information and Accountability Division of the Office of K–20 Education. The underlying premise of tracking the progress of all individuals from kindergarten through graduate school was that it would lay the foundation for education funding. The Department of Education plans to assess the relationships between K–12 programs and postsecondary education achievement throughout the K–20 continuum. The state has been able to assess college completion rates and is now examining college retention issues.

The Florida Legislature's official charge was for the state to establish a "unified K–20 accountability system that holds each education delivery sector responsible for high student achievement; seamless articulation and access; a skilled workforce; and quality, efficient services." The legislation also requires a performance-based funding formula that applies accountability standards for the public education system at every level, K–graduate school. It calls for 10 percent of Florida's education budget to be dedicated to performance-based funding. The Department of Education created the following four task forces that are working to develop measures for each sector: K–12, community colleges, workforce training institutes, and universities. These task forces will measure performance of the following four goals: high student achievement, articulation and access, employment and earnings, and quality and efficiency. An issue is how to assess postsecondary education for effectiveness and efficiency.

#### **NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is nationally recognized research that recommends the following strategies for improving college readiness, access and success:

##### **ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

- Create pre-kindergarten through college collaboratives responsible for aligning curriculum and high school exit skills with those required for college entry and success.
- Align postsecondary education placement exams and the K–12 exit-level standards and assessments and allow students to take college placement exams in high school.

- Create common course agreements so that college-level work in high school counts toward a postsecondary credential.
- Expand successful dual and concurrent enrollment programs to include all students not just the “college-bound” students.
- Implement a more rigorous K–12 academic curriculum for all students.
- Create small K–12 learning environments.
- Establish or reinvigorate teacher preparation programs and partnerships with low-performing middle schools and high schools.
- Improve teacher effectiveness by providing professional development initiatives for pre-service and in-service teachers, especially in key areas like math, science and English.

#### **AFFORDABILITY**

- Link financial aid awards to the actual costs of attending college, and base renewals on GPA to promote college persistence.
- To make college affordable for students transferring from two- to four-year colleges and universities, states should consider factors other than income to determine financial aid eligibility, since non-traditional students often have to work to support families.
- Be flexible in linking financial assistance to attendance requirements since many nontraditional students are unable to attend school full-time due to other responsibilities.

#### **RECONFIGURE EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION**

- Create state finance structures that integrate systems of education together. For example, create education finance systems including the legislative committees and staff functions that oversee finance and budgetary considerations from elementary school through postsecondary institutions.
- Reconfigure resource allocation as K–16 and investigate how to maximize state facility usage across the entire system.

#### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Develop strong student-level data systems and use them to measure the effect of state policies on specific student populations. Such systems can help legislators and policymakers assess and prioritize needs, and evaluate the impact of reforms.
- Publicly report on student progress and success from high school through postsecondary education, including the percentage of students who complete high school prepared for college; the percentage that enrolls in college; the percentage that persists in college from one year to the next; and the percentage that graduates from college.
- Strengthen transfers from two- to four-year institutions by collecting data on transfer patterns; creating statewide articulation guides; and common course numbering.

#### **COLLEGE AWARENESS**

- Increase access to resources and information to help students prepare for college and make well-informed decisions
- Assist parents in understanding their role in supporting college aspirations and motivating students.
- Structure information and organize activities that support students’ college aspirations and understanding of college and its importance.

### **POSTSECONDARY PREPARATION IN TEXAS**

The following section provides an overview of Texas’ college readiness initiatives and programs. It begins with a discussion of how the state defines college readiness and is followed by a discussion of the initiatives and programs the state implemented to prepare students for college-level work and ease the high school to college transition.

#### **DEFINING COLLEGE READINESS**

The State of Texas does not have an official definition of college readiness. Instead, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) use different methods to determine a student’s postsecondary preparedness. These include graduation under the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or Distinguished Achievement Plan (DAP); scores on college entrance exams (the SAT or ACT); scores on the Higher Education Readiness Component of the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS); and scores on college placement exams.

To help ensure that students have the skills necessary to succeed in entry-level college work before enrolling in such classes, the Seventy-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, established the Texas Success Initiative (TSI), which requires students to show proficiency in reading, math, and writing skills. The level of proficiency required for success in entry-level college work was established by the THECB and is measured by the Higher Education Readiness Indicator on the exit-level TAKS, which Texas students must take in grade 11. The THECB has statutory authority to establish this Higher Education Readiness Component and has set the college-readiness standard at a score of 2200 on the math and English/language arts tests. This score falls between the “Met” and “Commended” standards of the TAKS. Students who meet this standard do not have to take additional college placement exams.

Under the provisions of TSI, students meeting state-set scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT) scores are also exempt from taking college placement exams. Students must score a 1070, with a minimum score of 500 in both critical reading and mathematics on the SAT or a score of 23 on the ACT, with a minimum score of 19 in both English and mathematics to be exempt from college placement exams. While student performance on the ACT and SAT are not tied to the public school accountability system, in December 2006, the Senate Committee on Education included a recommendation in its Interim Report to the Eightieth Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, to require an exit-level norm-referenced test such as the ACT or SAT be administered to all students in place of the comprehensive eleventh grade exit-level TAKS.

Students who have not met the TAKS Higher Education Readiness Component or the SAT or ACT standards must take a college placement exam selected by the Texas college or university they are attending. The assessments include Asset, ACCUPLACER, COMPASS and the Texas Higher Education Assessment (formerly the Texas Academic Skills Program test). Students must pass each section of the exam before they may enroll in classes, which count for college credit. Based on student performance on the assessment, each college or university determines what remediation is required for students who do not pass one or more parts of the test.

### **COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVES**

There are several initiatives in Texas that either focus entirely on postsecondary preparation or contain a significant college

readiness component. These initiatives include enactment of legislation that defines curriculum and academic rigor, the adoption of a state plan for higher education, and formation of a council to coordinate programs between secondary and postsecondary education.

### **RECOMMENDED CURRICULUM**

Legislation enacted in 2001 established the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) as the state’s default graduation plan effective with the entering freshman class of 2004–05. The RHSP is the state’s standard college preparatory curriculum, while the DAP is the most rigorous curriculum. It includes an additional foreign language requirement and restrictions on the science classes that count toward the plan. Students may only transition from the RHSP or DAP graduation plan to the Minimum plan with parental and counselor or administrator approval.

### **ENACTMENT OF THE COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVE**

House Bill 1, enacted by the Seventy-ninth Legislature, Third called Special Session, 2006, addresses the issue of college readiness with initiatives addressing academic rigor, P–16 curricular alignment, and dual high school/college credit.

This legislation increased the courses required for students to graduate under the college preparatory plans to include four years of math, science, social studies, and English in what is commonly referred to as the “4x4 curriculum.” Previously, the RHSP and DAP included four years of English, three and one-half years of social studies, one semester of economics, and three years each of science and math. The State Board of Education tentatively set which courses may apply to the new course requirements in late 2006 and increased the course requirements to require 26 credits. These new course and credit requirements will take effect beginning with students entering grade 9 in 2007–08.

In a second initiative to improve rigor, the enacted legislation requires the P–16 Council to develop a college readiness and success strategic action plan per modification to the Texas Education Code (TEC) §61.0761. The plan must include standards and expectations for college readiness, describe the components of an individualized graduation plan sufficient for college success, describe how TEA will provide model curricula to be used by school districts, and include recommendations for improvement in teacher training to improve student college readiness.

The legislation addresses curricular alignment through TEC §28.008, which requires the Commissioner of Education

and the Commissioner of Higher Education to establish discipline-based college-readiness vertical teams. These teams will be organized by academic discipline and will focus on English/Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. They will evaluate existing public school curriculum to determine whether students are adequately prepared for postsecondary expectations and then develop college-ready curriculum standards and provide recommendations to the present statewide curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), based on their analysis. These recommendations must be completed by September 1, 2011.

It also establishes the College Credit Program that requires school districts to offer students the opportunity to earn the equivalent of at least 12 hours of college credit in high school. TEA interprets this to mean that non-credit, college-level courses such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or a Tech Prep articulated series of courses may be counted towards this requirement. Higher education institutions are required to offer assistance if requested by a school district in order to aid school districts in meeting the requirements of this statute.

The legislation also added an additional \$275 in state funding per student in grades 9 to 12 based on average daily attendance (TEC §39.114). Districts must use the high school allotment to reduce dropout rates and prepare students for college. This allotment can include supporting students in college preparatory classes or increasing the number of students who take college entrance exams, dual and concurrent enrollment courses, and AP and IB courses. These funds may be used to meet House Bill 1's '4x4' curriculum.

#### CLOSING THE GAPS

*Closing the Gaps by 2015* was adopted by the THECB in October 2000 as the state plan for higher education. It identifies four gaps in higher education: participation, success, educational excellence, and research. The plan offers strategies and timelines to address the deficiencies. It includes strategies to encourage a "college-going" culture in Texas with goals for success. These goals include:

- Carry out a sustained public awareness campaign on the value of public education, the preparation required, and financial aid available.
- Establish coordinated P-16+ informational, motivational, and academic programs to prepare students for college.

The first goal of the plan proposes to close the gaps in higher education participation rates by adding 630,000 more students into the state's higher education system by 2015. This goal sets specific enrollment targets from their 2000 figures to the 2015 goals, which include the following: an increase in Hispanic enrollment from 3.7 percent to 4.8 percent, African-American enrollment from 4.6 percent to 5.6 percent, and White enrollment from 5.1 percent to 5.6 percent. To track progress toward this goal, THECB will use the following two benchmarks: the percentage of recent high school graduates enrolled in a Texas college or university, and the percentage decrease in number of students requiring developmental education.

#### TEXAS P-16 COUNCIL

The Texas P-16 Council is a forum for state agencies to encourage coordination of programs that bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary education. This forum includes a particular focus on student academic preparation and readiness. The council began in 1998 as an informal network called the Public Education/Higher Education Coordinating Group and was formalized by the Seventy-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, with enactment of Senate Bill 286, and was renamed the Texas P-16 Council.

TEC §61.076 establishes the following as statutory members of the Texas P-16 Council: the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services Commissioner. The council is required to meet at least on a quarterly basis, but may call additional meetings as necessary.

Statutory responsibilities of the council are to coordinate plans and programs in the following areas:

- Equal education opportunity for all Texans;
- College recruitment, with special emphasis on the recruitment of minority populations;
- Preparation of high school students for further study at colleges and universities;
- Reduction of the dropout rate and dropout prevention;
- Teacher education, recruitment, and retention;
- Testing and assessment;
- Adult education programs;

- Secondary and postsecondary education curriculum and testing alignment; and
- Secondary and postsecondary career and technology education.

**CREDIT BASED TRANSITION PROGRAMS**

Credit based transition programs (CBTPs) provide high school students the opportunity to earn college credit while enrolled in high school. These opportunities are most widely offered through dual and concurrent enrollment and College Tech Prep. There are also some credit-based transition programs being created through government/business partnerships, which will be discussed in a subsequent section.

To offer a CBTP, the participating school district and college or university must develop a formal partnership through an institutional agreement, such as an articulation agreement or memorandum of understanding. These documents delineate which courses can be accepted by both institutions for purposes of credit acquisition and transfer. The credit a student acquires through these partnerships is commonly referred to as articulated credit. These formal agreements can also contain provisions for non-credit related topics, such as how the partnership will address transportation, tuition, textbooks, and/or technology.

**DUAL AND CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT**

Dual and concurrent enrollment are academic programs where college-level courses are available to high school students for college credit. These courses reside within a set of courses designated by higher education institutions as the Core Curriculum. The Core Curriculum consists of 45 semester credit hours of foundation level-college credit, which a student can transfer to any public higher education institution in Texas. They are taught either at a high school, college campus, or through distance-learning opportunities.

In dual enrollment, sometimes referred to as “dual credit,” students enroll in courses that count for both high school graduation requirements and college credit. High school students may only enroll in up to two dual enrollment courses per semester and enrollment does not require application and admission into the college offering the course. Participating students must meet certain state mandated requirements including the following:

- High school standing as a junior or senior. Sophomores may participate with special approval.

- Must meet all curricular requirements of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.
- Must meet the requirements of the Texas Success Initiative.

According to TEA, the dual enrollment is most often offered to high school students as distant learning opportunities. This offering is most common in rural school districts that do not have local access to an institution of higher education, but do have distance learning facilities.

The Texas Administration Code (TAC) Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter D §4.81-5 requires that a school district and institution of higher learning establish an institutional agreement before offering dual credit courses. TAC Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter D §9.144 requires school district-Institution of Higher Education agreements for dual enrollment to contain provisions for the following:

- Student eligibility requirements,
- Faculty qualifications,
- Location and student composition of class,
- Provision of student learning and support services,
- Eligible courses,
- Grading criteria,
- Transcribing of credit, and
- Funding provision.

Outside of these broad topic requirements, the state gives school districts and colleges broad discretion in determining the content of articulation agreements. This discretion gives school districts and higher education institutions the flexibility needed to address specific local issues unique to that community.

Participating colleges and universities may elect to waive tuition and fees for secondary students participating in dual credit courses. According to the TEA, this waiver is a common practice, but not universal to all programs.

With concurrent enrollment, high school students enroll in public and higher education simultaneously. Typically, students are limited to taking no more than two college courses per semester and attend classes on a college campus. Students must first be admitted into the college or university offering the course and pay all tuition-related obligations,

purchase textbooks, and pay any associated enrollment fees. College courses taken as concurrent enrollment do not count toward high school graduation requirements, but let students take advanced courses in their areas of interest. For example, students who have taken the highest level math courses available at their high school may choose to take a college-level math course during their senior year.

State support for dual enrollment comes in the form of the “double dip” provision, which allows districts to count dual enrollment courses taught at the higher education institutions for purposes of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) while the participating college or university may claim contact hours for the same students. For concurrently enrolled students, the school district may claim ADA credit based on the percentage of the day the student attends high school.

**COLLEGE TECH PREP**

College Tech Prep is a college preparatory program within the Tech Prep initiative federally funded by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, which focuses on technical career preparation in specific fields. Participating students must follow the College Tech Prep high school graduation plan, a six-year plan, including both secondary and postsecondary course requirements. It is sometimes called the ‘4-2’ plan because it requires four years of high school and two years of college. The course of study is based on the RHSP and must include two or more career

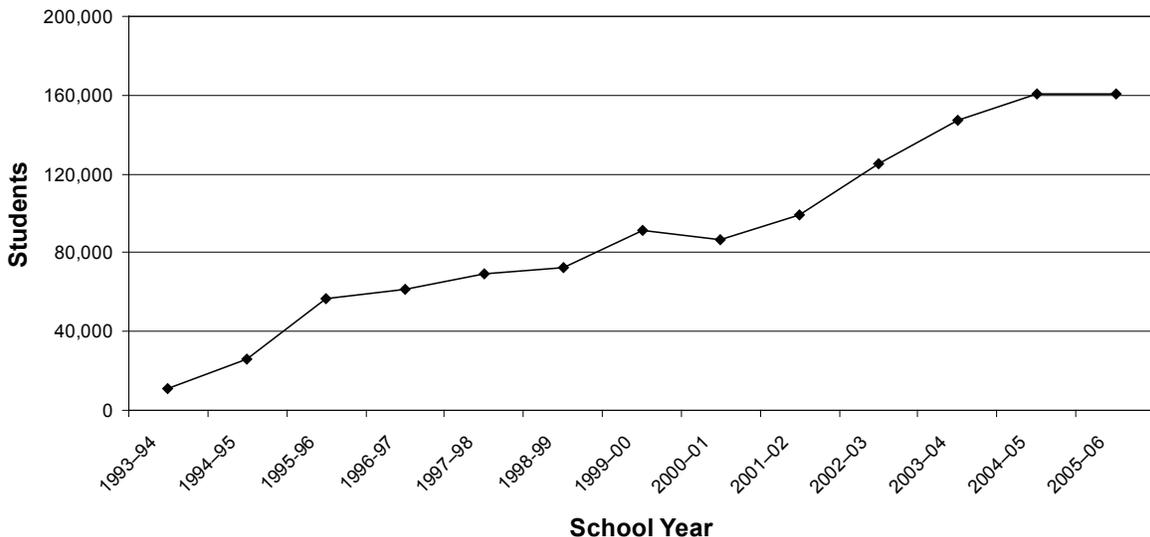
and technology courses. Students are required to choose a sequence of courses, which eventually culminates in attainment of an Associate of Applied Science Degree (AAS). Course sequences are organized by career clusters, which are annually approved through a joint TEA and THECB committee. These career clusters include Business, Health Science Technology, Family and Consumer Sciences, Drafting Technology, and Computer Maintenance Technology, and others. The course sequence the student may take depends upon program availability.

High school students have the opportunity to earn college credit through College Tech Prep course sequences. The amount and manner of acquiring credit vary by individual program. While all Tech Prep programs include college-equivalent coursework, the courses can range between dual-credit, advanced placement, or articulated credit. In general, most College Tech Prep high school students will receive 9 to 14 college credits. These courses are taught at the high school campus, but are aligned in content and rigor to a similar college course.

Figure 5 shows Tech Prep student enrollment for grades 9 to 12 since the program began in 1993. Since 2000–01, student enrollment in the program increased by 85 percent.

To earn college credit for the College Tech Prep course, the student must be in grades 11 or 12 and earn a minimum course grade of 80 (3.0 or higher). Credit earned through

**FIGURE 5  
TEXAS TECH PREP STUDENT ENROLLMENT  
GRADES 9–12  
1993–2006**



SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, PEIMS

College Tech Prep may be accepted upon enrollment into a public two-year college, but a college reserves the right to hold the hours in escrow until a student completes a certain number of additional, non-development college credit hours in any subject area. These hours may be met by dual credit or qualifying scores on Advanced Placement or College Level Examination Program exams.

Similar to traditional dual enrollment, an articulation agreement defines the relationship between secondary and postsecondary institutions. Due to the prevalence of College Tech Prep programs in Texas, and in order to maintain statewide consistency of articulation agreements for the purposes of offering the College Tech Prep program, the THECB, in coordination with TEA, created the Advanced Technical Credit (ATC) program. This program establishes statewide definitions of those secondary courses which correspond with a college course counterpart for purposes of offering articulated credit upon successful course completion. Historically, this credit is recognized by participating two-year colleges, but may not transfer to a four-year university. In recent years, some Texas public universities began accepting more students from Tech Prep programs with a minimal loss of course credit.

The ATC also provides a Standard Articulation Agreement, which sets common statewide standards for articulation agreements between independent school districts and colleges for the purposes of awarding of college credit. Secondary schools and postsecondary institutions may also create articulation agreements for courses not listed within the ATC. In these cases, the credit acquired may only be recognized by the participating institution of higher education and may not transfer to another college or university.

High school faculty who wish to teach articulated credit courses are required to participate in regular meetings with the participating college to ensure content equivalency with the corresponding college course. Teachers of ATC credit courses are required to participate in state mandated professional development.

TEC, Chapter 61, Subchapter T requires funding of Tech Prep consortiums to support the Tech Prep program. The TEA funds 26 regional State Tech Prep Consortia. These collaborations bring together representatives from regional businesses and industry to implement Tech-Prep programs. Their responsibilities include creating a long-term strategic plan for the program, maintaining and reporting of consortium activities, and instituting policies to ensure Tech-

Prep programs are developed and maintained in the consortium's region.

Tech Prep is a federally funded education initiative created within the purview of career and technology education. It addresses the need for high skilled, technically proficient, two-year college graduates. The national program receives its funding through the 1998 Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and is administered by the U.S. Department of Education. This act was reauthorized for the fourth time by Congress in 2006 and is commonly referred to as "Perkins IV." The THECB is the fiscal agent for postsecondary funding (40 percent of total grant funds). The TEA is responsible for secondary funding (60 percent of total grant funds).

For the 2006–07 school year, Perkins funding for Texas was \$95,086,016. At least 85 percent of this funding was awarded to both secondary and postsecondary institutions by formula. Secondary recipients received \$49,439,998 and postsecondary recipients received \$32,570,882. According to the Tech-Prep Assessment and Evaluation Report for 2005–06, 781 school districts in Texas have one or more Tech-Prep program articulation agreements with one or more colleges. This amount represents 75 percent of all Texas school districts.

#### **ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE**

One of the more common ways that students prepare for higher education is through participation in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. These courses focus on preparing students to take corresponding exams near the end of the school year, which may qualify them for college credit in the course(s) taken. The minimum AP score for obtaining college credit for a particular course is a "3" on a scale of 1 to 5, but it is up to the institution of higher education to set the minimum score acceptable for course credit. The more selective institutions often set a higher score as the minimum for college credit. Student participation in AP classes is determined by the school district and can range from open enrollment to more restrictive based on district-specified criteria such as grade-point average, attendance, or gifted and talented designation.

The AP program, which the College Board designed and organized, comprises more than 30 courses and corresponding exams. School districts wishing to offer AP courses do not need an institutional agreement with a higher education institution to offer them, but teachers do need special training

to teach these classes. School districts have the option of beginning to prepare students for AP courses with pre-AP courses offered beginning in junior high school and through the first two years of high school.

The IB is a comprehensive, two-year curriculum that includes six academic areas: language, second language, individuals and societies, experimental sciences, mathematics and computer science, and the arts. Community service and an independent project are also included. There are currently 50 high school campuses in Texas that offer the IB program. Colleges may offer credit to students who score a “4” or higher on IB exams.

The Seventy-fourth Legislature, Regular Session, 1995, enacted the AP/IB Incentive Program to encourage district and student participation in these programs. Additional funding to the program by the Seventy-ninth Legislature, Regular Session, 2005, allowed for continuing of the various components that comprise the program. These components include:

- TEA assumes \$30 of the cost for every AP/IB exam taken by an eligible Texas high school student. This reduces the student’s share of the exam cost from \$82 to \$52 per AP exam and \$24 per IB exam. Additional funding is available for students in financial need: \$22 fee reduction from the College Board, waiving of the \$8 administrative fee charge from testing centers, and \$17 exam fee reduction by TEA through a U.S. Department of Education grant. Due to these collective reductions, students in financial need pay \$5 per AP and IB exam.
- AP/IB Teacher Training Reimbursement: The College Board requires faculty wishing to teach an AP/IB course to receive staff development prior to instructing the course. The AP/IB Incentive program reimburses the school district up to \$450 per teacher to cover the cost of training.
- AP/IB Campus Awards: Campuses receive incentive funding for high student performance on the AP and IB exams. In May 2005, this funding was \$100 for each student meeting the exam criterion (3 or higher for AP and 4 or higher for IB).

### **STATE-SPONSORED FINANCIAL AID**

#### **TEXAS GRANT**

The Towards EXcellence, Access, and Success (TEXAS) Grant program is a state-supported, need based, financial aid grant program created as an incentive for Texas students to

take the more rigorous Recommended High School Program instead of the Minimum graduation plan.

Eligibility requirements include Texas residency, completion of the Recommended High School Program or Distinguished Achievement Program, enrollment in a public or independent institution of higher education within 16 months of graduating, and demonstration of financial need. Students apply for this grant through submission of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Per THECB Rule §22.233, higher education institutions are allocated an amount of grant funds based on the number of students attending the institution who demonstrate financial need. The institutions have the discretion to distribute these funds according to their own financial need practices.

For the 2005–06 biennium, the TEXAS Grant program was appropriated \$331.7 million. This financial aid award was provided to 61,086 students in 2005–06. For 2005–06, the amount per student was \$2,375 per semester for public universities and state college students, \$735 per semester for public community college students, and \$1,325 per semester for public technical college students.

#### **TEXAS EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY GRANT**

The Texas Education Opportunity Grant (TEOG) is a need-based grant available to students attending two-year colleges including community colleges, public technical colleges, and public state colleges. The basic requirements for this grant are that the students show financial need, Texas residency, and enrollment in at least 6 hours per semester for the first 30 hours.

#### **TEXAS B-ON-TIME LOAN PROGRAM**

The Texas B-On-Time Loan program was created by the Seventy-eighth Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, as a no-interest student loan program designed to provide financial relief for students attending a Texas college or university. This loan program bears many of the same characteristics as the TEXAS Grant. Eligibility requirements include: Texas residency, graduation under the RHSP or DAP, full-time enrollment in an undergraduate degree or certificate program, and completion of the FAFSA.

Also similar to the TEXAS Grant, the higher education institutions are responsible for determining student eligibility and granting the award. If the funding level is not sufficient to provide a loan to all eligible applicants, then priority must be given to students exhibiting the greatest financial need.

The B-On-Time Loan program was appropriated \$20 million for the 2005–06 biennium. Annual loan amounts per student for this period were \$2,375 per semester for public universities and state college students, \$735 per semester for public community college students, and \$1,325 per semester for public technical college students.

**BUSINESS-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS**

Texas has embarked on several partnerships with the private sector to enhance educational opportunities for traditionally underserved students, and to increase the number of students pursuing study in the math, science, and technology fields.

**TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT**

The Texas High School Project (THSP) is a public-private partnership between the TEA and several private foundations. Established in 2003, the project seeks to increase high school graduation rates and to improve the academic preparedness of high school students. The project is targeting program development in urban areas and districts along the Texas-Mexico border.

The THSP provides funding and technical assistance to school districts to increase student achievement, build new schools, and create partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education.

The partnership has established the following four priorities:

- Improve the effectiveness of administrators and teachers through leadership innovations and professional development, including professional growth opportunities for training to teach AP courses;
- Improve science education in Texas through the T-Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) Initiative;
- Create new models for high schools that are small, rigorous, and personalized learning communities with an emphasis on partnerships between the school and an institution of higher education; and
- Implement tutoring, counseling and other outreach programs for students at risk of dropping out, and other programs that build study skills, offer tutoring, or scholarships to low-income students.

The Communities Foundation of Texas manages the THSP’s philanthropic investments of \$114 million. The TEA manages the THSP’s combined state and federal funds of

**FIGURE 6  
THSP GRANT DISTRIBUTION  
2006**

| PROGRAM CATEGORY       | ACTUAL DISTRIBUTION<br>(IN MILLIONS) |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Educational Leadership | \$2,620,000                          |
| T-STEM                 | \$31,440,000                         |
| New Models*            | \$91,700,000                         |
| Student Programs       | \$117,900,000                        |

\*NOTE: Includes Early College High Schools.  
SOURCE: Texas High School Project, 2005.

\$148 million. **Figure 6** shows the THSP’s grant distribution by program category as of December 2006.

**EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS**

The Early College High School (ECHS) program is an integration of secondary and higher education that gives students an opportunity to earn both a high school diploma and 60 credit hours toward an associate’s and/or baccalaureate degree. The Texas program is managed by the THSP and is part of a broader national ECHS Initiative sponsored by a private foundation. The program emphasizes the “the three R’s”: rigorous instruction, relevant curriculum, and supportive relationships. The THSP is administering the program with assistance from the THECB. There are 441 ECHS in Texas as of January 2007.

The ECHS function as autonomous high schools located on either a university or high school campus. Participating students must provide their own transportation to the campus. Students enrolled in an ECHS have full access to all of the college’s facilities, and academic and support services. Additionally, the ECHS purchases textbooks for its students.

ECHS provide a rigorous curriculum set within a small and personalized learning community. Schools may offer grades 6 to 12 or 9 to 12, though the later grade range is the most common. All participating students are required to follow the DAP course of study and must have an academic plan (individualized education plan) which sets forth how the student will meet their academic goals.

Enrollment is limited to 100 students per grade level and must contain a 50 percent majority of students who traditionally do not complete high school or attend college. This includes students categorized as at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and first-generation college students. Due to limited student capacity, students must apply for admission.

Outside of the required student body compositions, admission criteria are largely determined by the school district.

Each ECHS set its expectations for students. For example, they may require students to maintain a 90 percent attendance rate, enroll in summer college coursework after grade 10, and attend summer academies or other types of supplemental instruction programs. Similar to Tech Prep, some ECHS focus on career clusters such as engineering or the health sciences. Students in these programs are required to select a field of study for specialized coursework.

By their senior year in high school, ECHS students take primarily AP/IB and dual enrollment courses. This approach maximizes student credit acquisition and ensures students will graduate in four years with a goal of 60 college credits. To accommodate the large number of college credit-bearing courses that ECHS students must take, the THECB modified dual credit eligibility requirements for this program. Students may take dual credit courses before grade 11 and are exempted from the THECB rule limiting dual enrollment to two courses per semester. All students who wish to take dual credit courses are still required to meet the requirements of the Texas Success Initiative before enrolling in these courses. Legislation enacted by the Seventy-ninth Legislature, Third Called Special Session, 2006, allows the ECHS flexibility in determining the number of hours a student is required to attend school each day or the number of days a week a student attends school.

The public and private arms of the THSP administer the principal funding for the ECHS Initiative. Public funding is provided to selected school districts through three separate grants from the TEA: the Middle College/Early College High School Expansion grant, the Early College High School Initiative, and the Early College High School grant. Combined, these grants total \$13,590,708 in funding to ECHS.

#### **TEXAS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH INITIATIVE**

Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Initiative (T-STEM) addresses the shortage of Texas students who graduate with degrees in math and science fields, numbers that are significantly lower among minority and economically disadvantaged students. To address this shortage, the T-STEM Initiative will establish 35 T-STEM academies in areas of high need across the state and seven supporting T-STEM centers by 2010. These academies and centers will

work together to increase awareness of STEM fields and increase postsecondary participation. This initiative will include a Best Practices Network for disseminating innovative teaching methods to improve math and science instruction in Texas public schools. As of January 2007, there are 18 academies in addition to five T-STEM centers, which will open in 2007.

T-STEM academies are autonomous secondary schools located within an independent school district (ISD) or charter school. They may function as stand-alone campuses or as smaller learning communities within a larger school. Student enrollment is limited to 100 students per grade level and enrollment must be maintained at a 60 percent representation of high-need students who are traditionally underrepresented in math and science. Enrollment is based on a non-selective lottery of eligible, interested students within the school district or charter school and can serve students in either grades 6 to 12 or grades 9 to 12, depending upon which grade range the district offers.

Students who participate in these academies are required to have an individualized graduation plan. This plan addresses a student's academic strengths and weaknesses and includes TAAS/TAKS scores, coursework, and credit accrual with a goal of students graduating with between 12 to 30 hours of college credit. Each student must take a specified sequence of four years of math and science courses and participate in existing extra-curricular activities centered on STEM. These may include University Interscholastic League competitions, service learning, and technology or science fairs. All students are required to participate in either an internship focused on the state's economic development clusters or a senior capstone project. The capstone project is an independent study that bridges the gap between academic knowledge and workplace application.

In addition to the academies, five T-STEM centers will open in 2007 to support T-STEM academies with TEA projecting at least two more centers to open in the future. The centers are located at universities and regional education service centers, which will serve as the fiscal agents for the centers.

These centers will design innovative science, technology, engineering, and math curricula to be used in T-STEM academies; deliver teacher professional development to T-STEM educators; research, create, and report on best practices for innovative teaching and learning of STEM education as learned by the academies; and create and sustain

strategic regional partnerships among businesses, higher education entities, and participating school districts.

A collaborative effort between all Centers during 2006 will develop the T-STEM Innovation Network. This network, which will be launched in 2007, will focus on strengthening the efforts of T-STEM schools and programs by providing stability and support, creating systems of accountability, and building capacity for the entire Initiative.

The T-STEM Initiative is financially supported through a series of grants from the THSP, which total \$31,440,000.

### **COLLEGE AWARENESS**

The THECB launched the College for Texans Campaign in 2002 to help meet the college participation goals set forth in the state's higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. The THECB targeted the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Gulf Coast and South Texas regions as areas of particular campaign emphasis based on state demographic data projecting a significant and sustained growth in the Hispanic population—a group that has been traditionally underserved in higher education.

As part of the campaign, the THECB is encouraging and assisting schools and colleges in establishing Go Centers at middle, high school, and college campuses to promote a college-going culture in the schools and college awareness in the surrounding communities. Go Centers are administered by school sponsors and staffed by peer educators, called a G-Force. They are located in spaces that are open and accessible and contain racks stocked with college/university catalogs and brochures, and shelves or drawers for various scholarship, college admission and financial aid applications, posters promoting higher education, and prominently displayed information on application and testing deadlines. Depending on available resources individual schools can equip their Go Centers with additional resources, such as computers and internet connectivity. Go Centers may also organize and conduct various outreach projects designed to educate and motivate students to pursue a college education. As of 2006, there are 182 centers statewide.

The philosophy underlying the G-Force approach is that students can be effective in motivating peers to pursue college degrees and in the process of volunteering as peer educators develop leadership skills. Students in middle school, high school, and college can join the G-Force. In return for their service, students are eligible for college scholarships funded through the THECB.

THECB field specialists provide regional support for the development of the Go Centers and help create partnerships between school districts and local colleges and universities.

### **TEXAS COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED BEST PRACTICES**

Texas is taking steps consistent with nationally recognized best practices to better prepare students for higher education through initiatives to better align the public school curriculum and rigor with that required for academic success in entry-level college courses, opportunities for earning college credit while in high school, and a college awareness campaign targeting ethnic minority and low-income students. The state also established a financial aid program to promote college attendance among low-income students, but has not adequately funded this program. This section compares the states academic preparation, financial aid, accountability, and college awareness programs to nationally recognized best practices and recommendations.

#### **ACADEMIC PREPARATION**

Within the past few years, Texas passed legislation to better prepare students for academic success in entry-level college courses. In 2001, legislation set the Recommended High School Program as the default for all incoming freshmen effective in 2004–05. The only way a student can get out of this requirement is by parental request and counselor or administrator approval. This legislation helps ensure that students graduating high school have the reading and math skills to succeed in entry-level college courses and to reduce the need for college remediation. It also helps counter student and family misconceptions that graduating high school with good grades adequately prepare a student for college. The College Readiness Initiative (House Bill 1) enacted in 2006, adds a fourth year each of math, science, and social studies to the core curriculum requirements, effective with the freshman class of 2007–08.

States cited as having best practices in the area of academic preparation have created PK–16 collaboratives whose focus is to align curriculum and ensure that the rigor at the secondary level prepares students for the critical thinking, analytical, synthesis, and writing skills needed for entry-level college courses. Texas is in the beginning stages of establishing a working collaborative.

The Texas legislature established a P–16 Council in 2003. Its membership includes the commissioners of Education and Higher Education, the Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission, and the commissioner of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. In 2004, the Council established the Office of P–16 Coordination, staffed by a director and a program specialist and housed at the TEA. Its role is to provide policy guidance and staff support for the statewide PK–16 initiatives and to the P–16 Council. The council has a broad agenda, as discussed in a previous section of this paper, and includes addressing alignment of curriculum and testing to ensure that students are prepared for entry-level college work. The council has four committees, one of which focuses on academic preparation and college readiness. In November 2006, the council adopted a P–16 College Readiness and Success Plan that includes as objectives, the alignment of exit-level assessments of public education with entry-level expectations of higher education and the workforce, and defining what students must know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level college/university courses and in the skilled workforce.

The 2006 College Readiness Initiative requires the THECB and TEA to establish disciplinary vertical teams to help ensure that students are prepared for college-level work. The vertical teams are to include public school educators and higher education faculty; and they will recommend to THECB and the Commissioner of Education college readiness standards and expectations that prepare students for entry-level college work, evaluate the high school curriculum to see whether or not it adequately prepares students for college, and recommend how the school curriculum can be better aligned with college readiness standards. The vertical teams are expected to complete their work by 2011.

Texas is also moving toward making dual enrollment more widely available to all students. The College Readiness Initiative requires school districts to offer all students the opportunity to earn a minimum of 12 hours of college credit. Public institutions of higher education must help schools develop college-credit earning programs, if the school districts ask for help. According to TEA administrators, school districts can meet this requirement through offering dual or concurrent enrollment, AP, Tech Prep courses, or IB courses. Earning college credit while in high school can serve as an impetus for students to pursue higher education.

Texas school districts currently offer dual credit and Tech Prep classes through articulation agreements with local

colleges that establish which classes will be offered, how and where they will be taught, and who will pay tuition and fees. Some small school districts in Texas offer dual enrollment via distance learning in lieu of AP courses and limit the program to gifted and talented students. In other school districts, the dual enrollment classes are offered as Tech Prep meaning the classes completed in high school count toward credit for a certification in a specific field offered by the college in which the student is dually enrolled. A challenge Texas school districts will face in implementing the College Readiness Initiative mandate requiring 12 hours of college credit opportunities is whether and how they will offer core curriculum courses as dual enrollment. For example, will students be able to take entry-level English, or math classes through dual credit which will transfer to whatever college they choose to attend after graduating. Another issue is who will pay the cost of tuition, fees, and books for students seeking dual enrollment. Currently, this is a local decision made by the school district and the college or colleges with which it has articulation agreements. Groups underrepresented in higher education are the least likely to have the resources to pay the costs associated with dual and concurrent enrollment.

#### **MULTIPLE ASSESSMENTS**

Texas public school students, like those in many other states face numerous assessments in the process of graduating high school, gaining acceptance into college and determining placement in college. As discussed in previous section of this paper, the THECB developed a college readiness indicator based on a student's score on the exit-level TAKS test that if met exempts students from having to take a college placement exam. In other states, colleges and universities have worked with K-12 administrators to develop a specific set of questions added to the regular state assessment that determine a student's readiness for college. Students take these tests in their junior year of high school so that if they fail to meet college-readiness criteria they can strengthen their skills during their final year of high school. In California, students who meet the college readiness standards, as measured by the additional questions on the state assessments, do not have to take college admissions tests for entry into the California State University system.

#### **FINANCIAL AID**

Texas funds three grant programs, the Towards Excellence, Access and Success (TEXAS) Grant Program, Texas Education Opportunity Grant (TEOG), and the Texas Equalization

Grant Program (TEG) to help low-income students transition into and complete two- and four-year colleges and universities.

The TEXAS Grant program is based on average annual tuition at public four-year colleges and universities and is available to both entering freshmen and students transferring from two-year colleges. Entering freshmen must have completed the Recommended High School Program or Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP). The program helps students obtain bachelor's degrees and students are eligible for annual renewal for up to five years (three years if they have completed an associate's degree), provided they make adequate academic progress. During the freshman year, adequate academic progress is established by the institution. In subsequent years, the student must maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA, complete 75 percent of the hours attempted, and complete at least 24 semester-credit-hours per year. Eligibility is determined by the institution through the FAFSA. In 2005–06, 61,086 students received aid through this program, which is currently funding only students already in the program due to its limited funds.

The TEXAS Grant differs from the college-tuition-assistance programs administered in Oklahoma and Indiana. The Texas Grant it is based on average tuition, not on the actual tuition at the student's college of choice. The Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program pays for the actual cost of tuition at public two-year colleges and four-year universities. It also pays for part of the tuition at private universities and for courses at public technology centers that transfer to two-year colleges. The scholarship does not cover the cost of books, living expenses, or other fees. In Indiana, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholar's Program guarantees the cost of tuition and regularly assessed fees but is a supplemental scholarship, meaning that it covers the costs not covered by other tuition-specific aid. Indiana's Frank O'Bannon Grant, a needs-based grant, pays a percentage of the previous years tuition based on the student's graduation plan: it pays 100 percent for the most challenging plan, 90 percent for the recommended plan, and 80 percent for the regular program.

TEOG is similar to the TEXAS Grant, but helps students attending public two-year colleges (including community colleges, public technical colleges, and public state colleges). A student must be enrolled at least 6 hours per semester (part-time) for the first 30 hours and must maintain at least a 2.5 GPA to be eligible for grant renewal. Students may receive awards for up to 75 semester hours within four years, or until they obtain an associate's degree, whichever comes

first. For both the TEXAS Grant and the TEOG, the institutions determine student eligibility based on the FAFSA (a family's expected contribution cannot exceed \$2,000). In 2005–06, 3,906 students participated in this program.

The TEG helps financially needy students attend private, non-profit colleges or universities. It is open to Texas residents or non-residents who are National Merit Finalists. Students must attend school full-time and maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA. The general program maximum is approximately \$3,500 and can go up to approximately \$5,000 in any given year if the expected family contribution is less than \$1,000. The college determines the amount of the award based on the FAFSA application.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY/DATA SYSTEMS**

Accountability/data systems track student progress through the public education system and can serve to identify a school's areas of academic strengths and weaknesses. Texas has an accountability/data system at the PK–12 level that is electronically available to the community at large through TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System. The College Readiness Initiative strengthens it by requiring TEA to make all the financial and academic data submitted through the Public Education Information Management System available to the public in an easily understood format by August 2007. The same level of accountability does not hold true for higher education. Texas does not have a system for following student progress through college. Florida has the most comprehensive system for tracking individual student progress through public and higher education. It tracks student progress from kindergarten through graduate school, and tracks individuals through the workforce, criminal justice, and welfare systems.

### **COLLEGE AWARENESS**

As part of its *Closing the Gaps by 2015* initiative, the THECB implemented the Education: Go Get It campaign. As discussed in a previous section, this campaign promotes a college going culture in Texas to help meet the *Closing the Gaps* goals. As part of its plan for increasing college participation rates, the THECB is helping to create Regional P–16 Councils with representatives from school districts and colleges from specific areas to help support student participation and success in higher education including academic development programs, financial aid awareness, and career counseling. It is also supporting the creation of community councils including business, media, public health, and community representatives whose goal is to

support the work of the Regional P–16 Councils with scholarships and other activities supporting high academic performance. As yet, there is no data available to measure the campaign’s success.

## SUMMARY

As discussed in this paper, along with being one of the fastest growing states in the nation, Texas has one of the least educated populations. To address this issue, the state is implementing several strategies to better prepare students for higher education, including the following: establishing the RHSP as the default curriculum; increasing the rigor of the RHSP by requiring four years of math, science, social studies, and English; requiring the P–16 Council to develop a plan to ensure that high school students graduate with the skills necessary to succeed in entry-level college work; and requiring school districts to offer students the opportunity to earn a minimum of 12 college credit hours while enrolled in high school. While the state continues to examine ways to better prepare all students for college to close the educational gaps and ensure the state has the workforce to compete in a global economy, it faces a number of challenges including the following:

- Keeping higher education affordable for low- and middle-income families. Average tuition and fees rose by 41 percent between 2002 and 2005, while the median family income dropped.
- Holding higher education accountable for ensuring student success
- Creating a culture of collaboration between institutions of higher education and local school districts to help teachers understand the skills students need to succeed in entry-level college courses
- Ensuring that Recommended High School Program is taught with the rigor needed to build the skills necessary for college success
- Finding ways to free school counselors of administrative/testing responsibilities so that they can provide college counseling to students and families
- Developing a data system that would track student progress from elementary through higher education to inform policy decisions.



# APPENDIX

The following figures reflect the percentages of Texas students who are prepared for entry-level college courses as measured by performance on the Higher Education Readiness Indicator on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and on the SAT/ACT; and by participation in dual enrollment or (AP/IB) courses and exams.

**Figure A-1** shows the percentage of students who met the Higher Education Readiness Indicator on the English/Language Arts component of the TAKS from 2004 to 2006. In 2006, 40 percent of all grade 11 students met the standard with African American, Hispanic, White, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander students meeting the standard at 28 percent, 31 percent, 49 percent, 43 percent and 57 percent, respectively. All the groups made significant gains in 2004 and 2005, and relatively no gain in 2005 and 2006.

**FIGURE A-1**  
PERFORMANCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION READINESS INDICATOR ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS COMPONENT BY ETHNICITY 2004 TO 2006

|                        | 2004       | 2005       | 2006       | PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2004 TO 2006 |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>State</b>           | <b>29%</b> | <b>39%</b> | <b>40%</b> | <b>37.9%</b>                     |
| African American       | 19%        | 28%        | 28%        | 47.4%                            |
| Hispanic               | 20%        | 30%        | 31%        | 55.0%                            |
| White                  | 36%        | 48%        | 49%        | 36.1%                            |
| Native American        | 31%        | 44%        | 43%        | 38.7%                            |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 43%        | 53%        | 57%        | 32.6%                            |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2004 to 2006.

**Figure A-2** shows the percentage of students who met the Math Component of the Higher Education Readiness Indicator of the TAKS, from 2004 to 2006. In 2006, 51 percent of all grade 11 students met the standard with African American, Hispanic, White, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander students meeting the standard at 29 percent, 39 percent, 64 percent, 46 percent, and 77 percent, respectively. With the exception of Native Americans who experienced a steady and significant decline in meeting this standard, the groups made steady improvement. The state as a whole experienced an 18.6 percent increase in the percentage of students who met this standard.

**FIGURE A-2**  
PERFORMANCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION READINESS INDICATOR MATH COMPONENT BY ETHNICITY 2004 TO 2006

|                        | 2004       | 2005       | 2006       | PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2004 TO 2006 |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>State</b>           | <b>43%</b> | <b>48%</b> | <b>51%</b> | <b>18.6%</b>                     |
| African American       | 21%        | 26%        | 29%        | 38.1%                            |
| Hispanic               | 29%        | 34%        | 39%        | 34.5%                            |
| White                  | 56%        | 62%        | 64%        | 14.3%                            |
| Native American        | 55%        | 51%        | 46%        | -16.4%                           |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 69%        | 74%        | 77%        | 11.6%                            |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2004–06.

**Figure A-3** shows the percentage of Texas high school seniors from 2001 to 2005 who took either the SAT or ACT. In 2005, the percentages of high school seniors who took the college entrance exams by ethnicity were 66.2 percent African American, 50.7 percent Hispanic, 70.7 percent White, 80.4 percent Native American, and 86.9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. African American students have seen the largest gains in participation at 13 percent.

**Figure A-4** shows average statewide student performance on the ACT from 2001 to 2005. Texas experienced a slight decrease in scores over the past five years with relatively unchanged gaps between ethnic/racial groups.

**Figure A-5** shows average statewide performance on the SAT from 2001 to 2005. Scores for all ethnic/racial groups indicate only a slight improvement with the largest gains from the Asian/Pacific Islander and African American populations. African American and Hispanic students score on average between 150 points to 200 points lower than White and Asian/Pacific Islander students.

**Figure A-6** shows the number of high school students in Texas who earned college credit through dual enrollment courses for the years 2000–01 to 2004–2005. The number of students taking dual enrollment courses increased by 21.1 percent during this period.

**FIGURE A-3**  
**PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING THE SAT OR ACT**  
**2001 TO 2005**

|                        | 2001         | 2002         | 2003         | 2004         | 2005         | PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2001 TO 2005 |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>All Students</b>    | <b>62.9%</b> | <b>61.9%</b> | <b>62.4%</b> | <b>61.9%</b> | <b>65.5%</b> | <b>4.1%</b>                      |
| African American       | 58.6%        | 58.5%        | 59.5%        | 60.9%        | 66.2%        | 13.0%                            |
| Hispanic               | 46.5%        | 45.2%        | 45.7%        | 46.3%        | 50.7%        | 9.0%                             |
| White                  | 70.0%        | 67.9%        | 66.4%        | 67.2%        | 70.7%        | 1.0%                             |
| Native American        | 76.9%        | 75.8%        | 69.3%        | 76.3%        | 80.4%        | 4.6%                             |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 85.2%        | 81.7%        | 79.3%        | 80.3%        | 86.9%        | 2.0%                             |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2001–05.

**FIGURE A-4**  
**AVERAGE STATEWIDE ACT PERFORMANCE**  
**2001 TO 2005**

|                        | 2001        | 2002      | 2003        | 2004        | 2005        |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>All Students</b>    | <b>20.2</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>19.9</b> | <b>20.1</b> | <b>20.0</b> |
| African American       | 17.1        | 17        | 16.8        | 17.1        | 17.0        |
| Hispanic               | 18.0        | 17.8      | 17.8        | 17.9        | 17.8        |
| White                  | 21.6        | 21.5      | 21.6        | 21.8        | 21.8        |
| Native American        | 21.0        | 20.5      | 20.5        | 20.7        | 20.9        |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 22.0        | 21.8      | 22.0        | 22.3        | 22.4        |

Source: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2001–05.

**FIGURE A-5**  
**AVERAGE STATE SAT PERFORMANCE**  
**2001 TO 2005**

|                        | 2001       | 2002       | 2003       | 2004       | 2005       |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>All Students</b>    | <b>987</b> | <b>986</b> | <b>989</b> | <b>987</b> | <b>992</b> |
| African American       | 839        | 839        | 843        | 843        | 855        |
| Hispanic               | 892        | 893        | 891        | 894        | 902        |
| White                  | 1048       | 1047       | 1051       | 1047       | 1059       |
| Native American        | 989        | 990        | 977        | 993        | 1004       |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1074       | 1073       | 1078       | 1072       | 1095       |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2001–05.

**FIGURE A-6**  
**STUDENTS IN GRADES 9–12 WHO HAVE COMPLETED AT LEAST ONE DUAL ENROLLMENT COURSE**  
**2000–01 TO 2004–05**

| COURSE SEQUENCE | 2000–01       | 2001–02       | 2002–03       | 2003–04       | 2004–05       | PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM 2000–01 THROUGH 2004–05 |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| One Semester    | 14,388        | 14,863        | 15,082        | 16,073        | 18,351        | 27.5%  |
| Two Semesters   | 31,050        | 29,484        | 31,935        | 31,034        | 36,725        | 18.3%  |
| Three Semesters | 25            | 46            | 17            | 4             | 19            | -24%   |
| Four Semesters  | 66            | 38            | 280           | 1             | 28            | -57.6%   |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>45,529</b> | <b>44,431</b> | <b>47,314</b> | <b>47,112</b> | <b>55,123</b> | <b>21.1%</b>                                   |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, PEIMS.

**Figure A-7** shows the percentage of Texas grade 11 and grade 12 students who have taken at least one AP or IB course from 2001 through 2005. While all groups have made significant gains in the percentage of students taking these classes, the percentage of African American and Hispanic students remains low at 9.8 percent and 14.7 percent compared to the participation rates of White students at 21.8 percent and Asian/Pacific Islander students at 42.3 percent. African American students made the largest percentage gain at 58.1 percent improving their AP/IB participation rates from 6.2 percent in 2001 to 9.8 percent in 2005.

**Figure A-8** shows the percentage of scores for all AP and IB exams that met criterion (3 or above on an AP exam or 4 or above on an IB exam) from 2001 to 2005. There has been a decrease of 4.1 percent in performance on these exams statewide with gaps in achievement across ethnic groups remaining relatively consistent over a five-year period. African American and Hispanic students have the lowest rates of meeting criterion at 25.2 percent and 40.2 percent respectively. Hispanic and African American students experienced an overall decrease in the percentage of students who met criterion on the AP/IB exams of 9.5 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively

**FIGURE A-7**  
**GRADE 11 AND GRADE 12 STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN**  
**AT LEAST ONE AP/IB COURSE**  
**2001 TO 2005**

|                        | 2001         | 2002         | 2003         | 2004         | 2005         | PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM 2001 TO 2005 |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>All Students</b>    | <b>14.3%</b> | <b>15.0%</b> | <b>16.1%</b> | <b>17.4%</b> | <b>18.4%</b> | <b>28.7%</b>                        |
| African American       | 6.2%         | 6.7%         | 7.8%         | 9.2%         | 9.8%         | 58.1%                               |
| Hispanic               | 11.1%        | 11.4%        | 12.2%        | 13.2%        | 14.7%        | 32.4%                               |
| White                  | 16.9%        | 18.0%        | 19.5%        | 21.0%        | 21.8%        | 29.0%                               |
| Native American        | 13.8%        | 12.8%        | 17.0%        | 18.3%        | 17.3%        | 25.4%                               |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 34.5%        | 34.3%        | 37.6%        | 39.8%        | 42.3%        | 22.6%                               |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2001 through 2005.

**FIGURE A-8**  
**GRADE 11 AND GRADE 12 STUDENTS MEETING CRITERION ON AT LEAST ONE AP OR IB EXAM**  
**2001 TO 2005**

|                        | 2001         | 2002         | 2003         | 2004         | 2005         | PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM 2001 TO 2005 |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>All Students</b>    | <b>54.0%</b> | <b>56.8%</b> | <b>56.0%</b> | <b>53.9%</b> | <b>51.8%</b> | <b>-4.1%</b>                        |
| African American       | 27.6%        | 30.6%        | 30.0%        | 26.6%        | 25.2%        | -8.7%                               |
| Hispanic               | 44.4%        | 45.2%        | 46.4%        | 44.9%        | 40.2%        | -9.5%                               |
| White                  | 58.5%        | 62.2%        | 61.1%        | 59.5%        | 59.1%        | 1.0%                                |
| Native American        | 46.5%        | 42.0%        | 55.3%        | 43.3%        | 51.7%        | 11.2%                               |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 68.0%        | 72.0%        | 69.8%        | 68.0%        | 66.0%        | -2.9%                               |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS Reports 2001 to 2005.

