

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board announces 2019 Star Awards

Nov. 22, 2019, Austin, Texas – Today at its annual Leadership Conference luncheon, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board) presented the 2019 Star Awards to Austin Community College, El Centro College/Garland ISD/Garland Fire Department, and The University of Texas at San Antonio.

“The Coordinating Board is proud to recognize three Texas public higher education institutions for innovative programs that support student success and the state’s 60x30TX plan,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Harrison Keller. “There were many excellent programs to choose from among this year’s Star Award finalists, but the ACC, El Centro, and UTSA initiatives are remarkable for their efforts to lower the cost of education, provide job-readiness training and educational pathways, and support high-risk students.”



The Austin Community College [Z-Degrees \(Zero Cost Textbooks\) at ACC](#) initiative incorporates free Open Educational Resources (OER) into the college’s highest enrolling courses. ACC’s new Z-Degree plans reduce student debt by enabling students to complete an entire course of study without having to purchase a single textbook. From fall 2016 through summer 2019, ACC classes using OER materials saved students an estimated \$3.5 million.

El Centro College (part of the Dallas County Community College District), the Gilbreath-Reed Career and Technology Center (part of the Garland Independent School District), and the Garland Fire Department partnered to develop the [Triple Credit Model Fire Academy](#). This rigorous three-year training program yields much needed job-ready candidates for state fire service and related positions. The training program provides students with marketable skills and culminates in a postsecondary credit certificate that leads to an associate degree with a path to a bachelor’s degree.

The University of Texas at San Antonio implemented cost-effective strategies and programming that aim to increase the number of students completing a bachelor’s degree. Housed under the Division of Student Success, UTSA Academic Advising identifies and targets the institution’s most vulnerable student populations. The [Resilience and Retention Academic Advising Program](#) establishes a two-pronged approach for working with and supporting students who are at a high risk of either stopping out or being dismissed from the university.

The Coordinating Board received 45 nominations and 37 applications for this year’s Star Award program. Seven finalists were announced in August and included:

- Citizens 1st Bank, Perkins Foundation, Rusk & Tyler Junior College – [Rusk TJC Citizens Promise](#)
- El Paso Community College – [Pasos Program](#)
- San Antonio College – [Student Advocacy Center](#)
- The University of Texas at Arlington – [Supporting Innovation, Diversity, Excellence, Access, and Success \(I.D.E.A.S.\) for High-Need Students](#)

(more)

The Star Award program recognizes exceptional contributions toward meeting one or more of the goals of [60x30TX](#). The [Star Award](#) was established in 2001. Winners are selected by a review committee consisting of Coordinating Board members, out-of-state higher education experts, and Texas community leaders. Representatives of institutions, organizations and groups from across Texas have been recognized for their efforts to develop and implement the state's most successful programs, projects, activities and partnerships.

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THECB Mission Statement

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is to provide leadership and coordination for Texas higher education and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through 60x30TX, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.