

2025 MIDPOINT UPDATE

Building a Talent Strong Texas

Fostering the skills and spurring the
innovation vital to the Texas economy.



**Texas Higher
Education**
COORDINATING BOARD

www.highered.texas.gov/about/talent-strong-texas/



GREG ABBOTT
GOVERNOR

“In Texas, we invest in higher education because we know the strength of our state comes from hardworking Texans. When we provide Texans with the education, training, and opportunities to succeed, we build a stronger workforce and fuel our state’s robust economy. With these investments, we will put Texas on the pathway to be the No. 1 state for education in the nation.”



WYNN ROSSER
COMMISSIONER OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

“As we look to Texas’s future, our charge is clear: We must not leave any talent on the sidelines. By aligning education with the needs of our workforce and communities, we’re creating more pathways for Texans to thrive — and ensuring our state has the talent to continue moving Texas forward to a bright future.”

The Texas Way

We're now at the midpoint of *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, the state's 10-year strategic plan for higher education. Since the plan launched, our state's economy has surged to become the eighth-largest in the world. Texans are earning more degrees, certificates, and credentials than ever before, and Texas now has more jobs and a larger workforce than at any point in history.

Yet the pace of change only continues to accelerate. When the plan was launched, few could have predicted how quickly new technologies like artificial intelligence would reshape workforce needs. At the same time, the number of jobs requiring education beyond high school continue to grow.

Texas higher education is meeting these challenges. With support from the Texas Legislature and Governor Abbott, the state introduced a transformative approach to community college funding, aligning dollars with outcomes and expanding opportunities in high-demand fields, while also increasing financial aid for students across sectors of higher education. Institutions are responding, delivering more pathways that lead to credentials of value, many in high-demand fields, opening doors to good jobs and meaningful careers.

Still, our work is far from finished. Achieving our 2030 goals will require urgency, innovation, and focused collaboration equal to the scale of our state and the speed of changing workforce needs.

Fortunately, that is the Texas way.

Raising the Bar for Higher Education in Texas

Building a talent-strong Texas means raising the bar for our state and nation. Meeting the demands of our economy, employers, and students requires three measurable goals.

ATTAINMENT OF CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES

With our attainment goal expanded to include all working-age Texans, we increase employment opportunities and incomes for individuals, creating a deeper talent pool for employers and aligning skills with the jobs our economy demands.

Metric:

60% of 25- to 34-year-olds with a certificate, degree, or credential of value.

Metric:

60% of 35- to 64-year-olds with a certificate, degree, or credential of value.

POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS OF VALUE

Credentials from Texas institutions of higher education are equipping graduates for continued learning and lasting, successful careers, with no or manageable student debt.

Metric:

550,000 students completing postsecondary credentials of value.

Metric:

95% of graduates with no debt or manageable debt by earnings.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, & INNOVATION

Texas is a leading state in generating knowledge through basic and applied research and translating discoveries into innovations that benefit individual Texans' lives and drive economic development.

Metric:

\$4.5 billion in private and federal R&D expenditures.

Metric:

7,500 research doctorates awarded annually.

These goals create opportunities for all Texans.
That's how we build a talent-strong Texas.



Building a Talent Strong Texas **GOALS**

Attainment of Postsecondary Credentials

Historically, efforts to strengthen higher education were focused primarily on expanding access to college. *Building a Talent Strong Texas* has shifted that focus to completion with purpose and value, helping more Texans earn credentials that advance their careers.

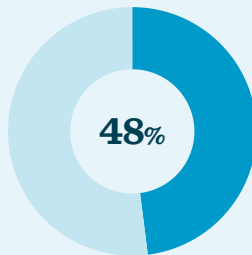
Meeting tomorrow's workforce needs means serving traditional-age students while also engaging those who never enrolled after high school and the approximately 5.4 million Texans with some college credit but no credential. Providing opportunities for these workers to reskill and upskill is essential for employers and communities alike to thrive.

For these reasons, in addition to younger Texans ages 25-34, we are now aiming for 60% of those aged 35-64 to hold a degree, certificate, or other credential of value by 2030. Institutions are adapting with more flexible programs and short-term credentials, opening doors for a broader range of students.

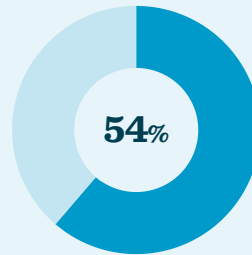
Progress Indicators

Indicator 1:

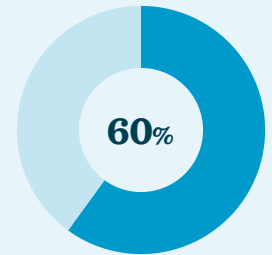
60% of Texans ages 25-34 with a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value.



2019



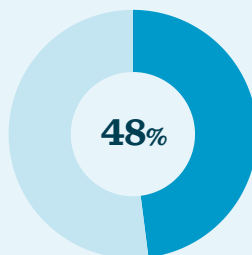
2023



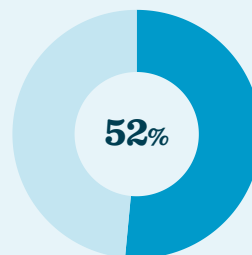
2030 Goal

Indicator 2:

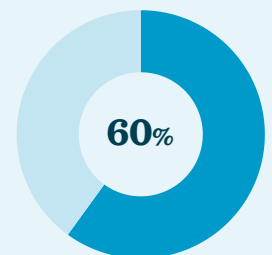
60% of Texans ages 35-64 with a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value.



2019



2023



2030 Goal

*Middle column includes data from most recent available year.

Strategies

Modernize the state's education and workforce data systems to collect and share more occupation-specific information – helping students, educators, employers, and leaders understand the talent pipeline while protecting student privacy.

Leverage the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative (THECB, Texas Workforce Commission, and Texas Education Agency) to expand high-quality education and workforce training that empower Texans to reach their full potential.

Create and maintain a statewide repository of all credentials offered by Texas institutions of higher education and other providers, including non-degree postsecondary credentials of value.

Successes

At the midpoint of *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, our state has made real progress in giving students, families, and employers clearer pathways to attain credentials of value.

- ▶ Tools like the **Texas Talent Trajectory (T3)** and **DataBridge** are transforming robust state data into actionable insights that track progress from education into the workforce.
- ▶ Collaboration across agencies continues to deepen through the **Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative**, which brings together K-12 education, higher education, and workforce partners to connect Texans with high-demand careers. As part of this coordinated effort, the Tri-Agency is expanding access to new data tools, enhanced advising resources, and apprenticeship opportunities that help students navigate clear education-to-career pathways.
- ▶ A new state **credential library** is being developed to clearly demonstrate the value of different credentials and better measure their return on investment.

“At North Central Texas College, we know that for our region and our state to continue thriving, every student must have the opportunity to enroll in and complete credentials that provide real value in the workforce and open doors to future opportunity.”

G. Brent Wallace, PhD

Chancellor, North Central Texas College



Postsecondary Credentials of Value

By building a talent-strong Texas our state is playing an unprecedented national role in prioritizing credentials of value.

Credentials of value provide students a positive return on their higher education investment: this means that economic benefits exceed costs, and college graduates are better off financially than they would otherwise be. Texas institutions are putting this principle into action as they work with employers to align programs with needs, expand short-term credentials and work-based learning, and help students complete credentials aligned more closely to careers.

Value also comes from affordability, and managing debt remains essential to achieving economic mobility. That's why the Legislature has expanded financial aid to record levels, for both two-year colleges and four-year universities. Maximizing value and promoting affordability requires the coordinated efforts of the legislature, institutions, and students.

“Colleges and universities across the state prepare the next generation of workers for the jobs we have today and help current employees gain the skills they need to stay competitive, ensuring our state has the talent to keep moving forward.”

Bobby Jenkins

Owner

ABC Home & Commercial Services

Strategies

Support Texas higher education through a balanced mix of state appropriations, tuition, philanthropy, and financial aid to keep student debt low.

Streamline student pathways to credentials of value with course redesign, digital tools, credit for prior learning, flexible options, and stronger advising through key transitions.

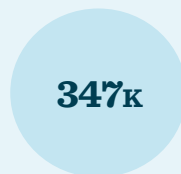
Make costs more transparent, predictable, and affordable for students while bolstering their financial literacy.

Expand high-quality, work-based learning through employer partnerships that provide paid internships, apprenticeships, and other career-focused experiences.

Progress Indicators

Indicator 1:

550,000 students completing postsecondary credentials of value each year.



2019



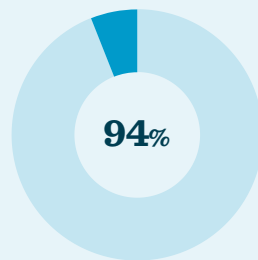
2024



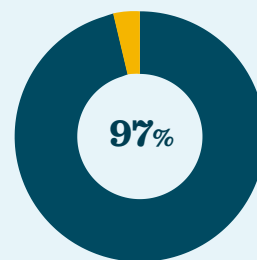
2030 Goal

Indicator 2:

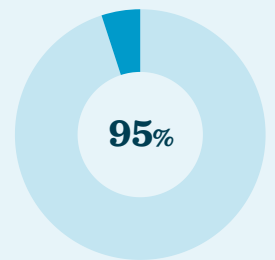
95% of graduates with no undergraduate student debt or manageable levels of debt in relation to their potential earnings.



2019



2023*
ahead of schedule



2030 Goal

Successes

At the midpoint of *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, the state has made significant progress toward ensuring students have affordable, clear, and effective pathways to earn credentials of value.

- ▶ During the past two legislative sessions, Texas has expanded financial aid, helping more students graduate with no or manageable debt. **The 88th Legislature** created a new community college finance model, which links funding to outcomes, as well as the **Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST)** program, which offers free dual credit opportunities to eligible students.
- ▶ Initiatives such as **Texas Leadership Scholars** expand access to four-year degrees while **Texas Direct** strengthens transfer pathways.
- ▶ Digital tools are also transforming the student experience. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's **My Texas Future** helps students plan for both career and education, and **Direct Admissions** lets students know where they will be automatically accepted before they start applying. Programs such as the **Texas Statewide Course Sharing Exchange** expand access by allowing students to enroll in courses at participating colleges across the state, and **Open Educational Resources** reduce costs, keeping credentials within reach.



Research, Development, & Innovation

Our state is advancing research as a pillar of workforce and economic strength – building a talent-strong Texas to generate knowledge that meets today’s needs, prepares for the workforce needs of tomorrow, and expands opportunity for all Texans.

Texas research universities and health science centers are investing in basic and applied research, partnering with industry to translate discoveries into real-world solutions. Many of these innovations are being commercialized, creating companies, jobs, and stronger economies.

These institutions are recruiting world-class scholars, upgrading research infrastructure, and expanding partnerships. Together, they produce new discoveries and skilled graduates that reinforce Texas’s leadership in research, development, and innovation.

“At UT-Tyler, we serve East Texas through education, research, and innovation – advancing solutions for our region and preparing students to lead in a rapidly changing world.”

Julie V. Philley, MD

President

The University of Texas at Tyler

Progress Indicators

Indicator 1:

\$4.5 billion in annual private and federal research and development expenditures.

**\$3.5
Billion**

2020

**\$4.5
Billion**

2024*
ahead of schedule

**\$4.5
Billion**

2030 Goal

Indicator 2:

7,500 research doctorates awarded annually by Texas institutions of higher education.

4,188

2020

4,495

2024

7,500

2030 Goal



Strategies

Recruit top researchers and innovators through the Governor's University Research Initiative and other programs while supporting universities in hiring high-potential, early-career faculty.

Align state funding and programs with state priorities for university research and development.

Develop and mentor world-class future faculty in high-demand fields, such as nursing, software development, and data sciences.

Expand research capacity with high-impact university research parks, modern infrastructure, and incubator capabilities that foster private sector partnerships, innovation, and commercialization.

Successes

At the midpoint of *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, our state is advancing rapidly as a leader in research and innovation.

- ▶ The state now has **16 R1 universities** – more than any other state. They are fueling discoveries that drive competitiveness and attract top talent from around the world.
- ▶ The **Texas Research Leadership Scholars** program is developing the next generation of researchers and future faculty in high-demand fields such as nursing, software development, and data science.
- ▶ With new investment through the **Texas University Fund**, institutions are strengthening research capacity, expanding infrastructure, and building stronger partnerships with industry to accelerate innovation and commercialization.

How Collaboration is Driving the Plan

Building a Talent Strong Texas continues to be guided by the insight and engagement of leaders across higher education, industry, and government. From its earliest stages, the plan has reflected the shared belief that Texas succeeds when students, employers, and communities work together to align education with workforce opportunities.

State officials continue to bring that collaboration to life through varied commissions, task forces, and other engagements. These efforts span the public and private sectors, drawing on the input of educators, institutional leaders, policymakers, employers, students, and families.

By listening, testing ideas, and sharing data openly, Texas has created a model that keeps the state's higher education goals grounded in real-world needs.

Ongoing Collaborative Efforts

Texas Commission on Community College Finance: Brought together leaders from higher education, industry, nonprofits, and the Legislature to reimagine community college funding. Its recommendations formed the foundation for the new community college funding model, and the THECB standing advisory committee, made up of community college leaders across the state, continues to shape implementation, ensuring alignment with student outcomes and workforce needs.

Short-Term Credential Task Force: Now meeting to define and evaluate short-term credentials of value, ensuring Texans can earn badges, certificates, and degrees that deliver clear returns in the job market.

Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative: Aligns education and workforce strategies to strengthen pathways from learning to employment across the state through a partnership among the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Education Agency, and Texas Workforce Commission.

Commissioner's Philanthropic Council and Economic & Workforce Council: Bring together leaders from a broad range of partner organizations across Texas to provide a forum for ongoing collaboration, shared perspectives, and alignment around key priorities in higher education, philanthropy, and workforce development.

Resources

To bring *Building a Talent Strong Texas* to life, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has launched a series of tools and initiatives that translate policy priorities into practical resources – helping students, institutions, and employers connect talent with opportunity.



My Texas Future: Empowers students to explore careers, compare colleges, plan finances, and apply with confidence – including through a Direct Admissions feature that shows where they qualify before applying.

mytexasfuture.org



DataBridge: Modernizes and connects Texas's education-to-workforce data systems, giving policymakers, employers, and educators clearer visibility into outcomes and needs.

databridge.highered.texas.gov



Texas Talent Trajectory (T3): This tool transforms education and workforce data into insights gathered from tracking the progress of students moving from high school through higher education across the state.

databridge.highered.texas.gov/the-texas-talent-trajectory



Texas Statewide Course Sharing Exchange: Enables students to enroll in online courses offered by partner institutions, expanding access to needed classes and helping them stay on track.

coursessharing.highered.texas.gov



Texas OnCourse: A comprehensive resource hub for educators, counselors, and advisors, providing professional learning and networking opportunities focused on college and career advising.

texasoncourse.org



Ask ADVI: ADVI is an AI chatbot that texts students quick, accurate answers about college – around topics such as deadlines, financial aid, and campus life – and connects them to real advisors when needed.

askadvi.org

Texas Higher Education

COORDINATING BOARD



WYNN ROSSER, PhD
COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

With a background in cultivating cross-sector collaboration, Dr. Wynn Rosser has extensive experience partnering with others to advance shared goals for education across Texas. Through these experiences, he brings deep knowledge and commitment to advancing Texas higher education and *Building a Talent Strong Texas*.



STACY A. HOCK
CHAIR

Stacy Hock is a private investor and philanthropist. She serves on the boards of Atlas Energy Solutions, Aminex Therapeutics, the African Dream Initiative, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation. She also serves on the Blanton Museum of Art National Leadership Board and University of Austin Board of Advisors.



WELCOME WILSON JR.
VICE CHAIR

Welcome Wilson Jr. is president and CEO of Welcome Group LLC, a real estate development firm specializing in single-tenant office buildings and industrial buildings, including lab, warehouse, and manufacturing facilities in the state of Texas. He is also the joint venture partner in Kingham Dalton Wilson Ltd., a design/build construction affiliate of Welcome Group, and is a director of River Oaks Financial Group Inc.



JAVAID ANWAR
SECRETARY OF THE BOARD

S. Javaid Anwar was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and immigrated to the United States after high school. His 40-year career in Texas oil and gas has led to his foundation and ownership of several oil and gas exploration companies and related entities.



RICHARD L. CLEMMER

Richard L. (Rick) Clemmer is a global technology CEO, most recently leading the turnaround of NXP Semiconductors as Chief Executive Officer and President, a position he held from 2009 to May 2020. He continues to serve NXP as Chairman of NXP NA and as a Strategic Advisor.



EMMA C. NEVAREZ

Emma C. Nevarez is the President of the Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) Foundation, a nonprofit operating in El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico. Nevarez founded the MCA along with her board in 2006 to be the “keeper of the vision” of the newly forming medical campus in El Paso. Since then, the MCA has completed three master plans for the medical campus and continuously oversees its coordinated planning programs.



JUAN J. NEVAREZ

Juan J. Nevarez of Dallas, Texas, is Executive Vice President of Scout Energy Partners and is a registered professional engineer in Texas. He has over 28 years of experience in upstream oil and gas.



ASHLIE A. THOMAS

Ashlie A. Thomas is Vice President of C.L. Thomas Inc., based in Victoria, Texas. Her role encompasses various aspects of the company, including store development, food service, and operations. Additionally, she is responsible for managing the company’s various real estate and other investment portfolios.



DANIEL O. WONG

Daniel O. Wong, PhD, PE, is President and CEO of Tolunay-Wong Engineers Inc., headquartered in Houston with 10 offices in Texas and Louisiana. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of Houston.



LISA D. CANTU

Lisa D. Cantu of Mission, Texas, was appointed to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board by Governor Greg Abbott in June 2025. She will serve as the board’s student representative through May 31, 2026.

**Texas Higher
Education**
COORDINATING BOARD

