

State of Texas Higher Education

Commissioner Keller: Higher Education is Key to Texas' Economic Recovery

Nov. 19, 2020, Austin, Texas – In his second annual State of Texas Higher Education address, Commissioner Harrison Keller today stated the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most significant disruption to higher education institutions since the end of the Second World War. Despite the challenges, he emphasized higher education as an essential part of the solution for how Texas will overcome and emerge even stronger from the pandemic.

“Texans have a long track record of innovating through adversity, and this year has been no exception. So, while 2020 has brought unprecedented challenges, it has also presented extraordinary opportunities to accelerate the pace of innovation in teaching and learning and exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit of Texas colleges and universities,” Dr. Keller said. “Work is already underway, though it will have to accelerate over the next several months and into the coming years. Our priority needs to be laying foundations for economic recovery and a better, more just future.”

In response to the impacts of COVID-19, Gov. Greg Abbott and legislative leadership [committed](#) \$175 million for higher education from the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER). Distributed earlier this year, the funds have helped institutions adapt to COVID-19 and continue to serve their students. Most of the GEER funds were dedicated to student financial aid, including \$57 million to protect need-based financial aid programs from coronavirus-related budget cuts, and another \$46.5 million for emergency financial aid for students who were adversely impacted by the pandemic. An additional \$46.5 million was allocated to help Texans who have some college credit but no credential and to help displaced Texas workers who need to reskill and upskill with short-term credentials so they can rejoin the workforce, get back on their feet, and help drive the recovery of the state economy. The remaining funds support high-quality digital learning and the modernization of state educational and workforce data infrastructure, enabling the agency to focus resources effectively and efficiently and support continuous improvement.

“This financial support represents a powerful statement from our Texas state leadership — leadership you’re not seeing in every other state. They recognize the critical role higher education needs to play in driving the state’s recovery and are investing in the future of Texas,” Dr. Keller said in his address. “As we look forward to 2021 and the 87th Legislative Session, we must come together for the advancement of higher education in Texas. Together, I believe we can overcome any additional challenges that come our way, especially by expanding opportunities for Texans to achieve new credentials and skills, accelerating educational innovation by leveraging the potential of technology, and working at the frontiers of knowledge to develop the insights and discoveries that will enable a better Texas future.”

A [video](#) and [transcript](#) of Commissioner Keller’s address are available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website.

Today’s address was the capstone of the 2020 Texas Higher Education Leadership Conference. This year’s event was a virtual conference, bringing together regents, trustees and other higher education leaders. The leadership sessions satisfy the training requirement for newly appointed regents and elected trustees (Texas Education Code, Section 61.084).

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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.