

## Commissioner of Higher Ed Harrison Keller delivers State of Higher Education address

**Dec. 16, 2021, Austin, Texas** – Texas is raising the bar for higher education. That was the message Commissioner Harrison Keller delivered during his annual State of Higher Education address on Dec. 3 at the 2021 Texas Higher Education Leadership Conference, hosted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

In front of nearly 200 higher education leaders, Commissioner Keller unveiled an ambitious vision for higher education, including the refresh of the state’s strategic plan called *“Building a Talent Strong Texas.”*

“We have a clear vision for what comes next,” Commissioner Keller said. “It is a vision for how Texas will lead the nation. Texas has set ambitious goals in the past and we’re not backing away from those goals. Instead, we are raising the bar.”

The updated strategic plan for Texas higher education will:

- Maintain the educational attainment goal for Texans aged 25-34, while adding a new goal for 35-64-year-olds who need to reskill or upskill to compete in today’s economy;
- Include a broader range of postsecondary credentials of value that incorporates degrees, certificates, and short-term workforce credentials;
- Include a clearer goal for student debt that is focused on students either having no debt or low, manageable debt given the kinds of credentials they complete;
- Include a greater focus on research and development to drive innovation for the benefit of Texas; and
- Renew the state’s commitment to advancing equity so that all Texans have the opportunity to complete postsecondary credentials of value.

Throughout all of this work to advance higher education, there will be an intentional commitment to advancing equity.

“This has been a priority for our board over the last several years, and I know my fellow Coordinating Board members share my excitement about these important changes that we are implementing,” said Dr. Fred Farias, Chairman of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. This refresh was approved at the October board meeting, and a final plan will be released in 2022.

Commissioner Keller called this time the greatest opportunity since the end of World War II to make an impact in higher education.

“As we emerge from the global pandemic, we arrive at another defining moment in history,” he said. “In Texas, the window of opportunity is open for us to work together to advance and enhance this vision for higher education and enrich the lives of generations to come.”

The conference also included a series of panels and keynote addresses featuring nearly 40 higher education leaders, policymakers, business leaders, philanthropic partners and more. Keynotes included Lisa Gevelber, founder of Grow with Google, and Ruth Watkins, president of Strada Impact. Both keynotes discussed ways

industry can support Texas' goals in higher education, from Grow with Google's strategy for facilitating low-cost, fully online certificates through the Google Career Certificates, to Strada Impact's use of data to close gaps between education and in-demand job skills.

"What we're seeing is a movement that maintains the importance of access and completion but shifts the focus on outcomes achieved after the completion of a credential or degree," Watkins said. "We're redefining success into, through, and beyond completion. We believe that everyone deserves education and training that helps them secure the job, do meaningful work, and lead a fulfilling life."

[Read the full transcript](#) of Commissioner Keller's State of Higher Education address or [watch the video](#).

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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.*