

Senate Bill 17: Biennial Study

Per Texas Education Code, Chapter 51, Section 51.3525

December 1, 2024

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Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to serve as a resource, partner, and advocate for Texas higher education, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The THECB’s core values are:

Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

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Introduction

This is the inaugural report produced by THECB to evaluate the impact of Senate Bill 17 (SB 17) on student success metrics as outlined by the 88th Texas Legislature.

“(j) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in coordination with institutions of higher education, shall conduct a biennial study to identify the impact of the implementation of this section on the application rate, acceptance rate, matriculation rate, retention rate, grade point average, and graduation rate of students at institutions of higher education, disaggregated by race, sex, and ethnicity.”

Based on the reporting deadline of December 1st in even-numbered years, THECB's most current data reflect 2022 and 2023 metrics. These figures should be considered baseline numbers or a precursor to future SB 17 reports. Student success metrics for 2024 are not available at this time.

This study will examine the past two years of data to address key questions about students' access to higher education, progression through their academic journey, and time to completion. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

Application Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, has there been an increase in the number of Texas residents applying to four-year Texas public institutions by sex and race/ethnicity?

Acceptance Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do acceptance rates vary for applicants by sex and race/ethnicity statewide?

Matriculation Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do matriculation rates (students enrolling after being accepted) vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

Retention Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do retention rates (e.g., first-year to second-year persistence and second-year to third-year persistence) vary by sex and race/ethnicity for two-year and four-year public institutions in Texas?

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do the percentages of students earning a grade point average (GPA) above 2.0 after their first year vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

Graduation Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do graduation rates (three-year, four-year, and six-year) for students attending two-year institutions vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do graduation rates (four-year, five-year, and six-year) for students attending four-year institutions vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

Findings

Tables 1 through 4 provide a comprehensive snapshot of the 2022 and 2023 outcomes for students attending Texas public two-year and four-year institutions. These outcomes are based on the six student success metrics required under SB 17.

Table 1. 2022 Student Success Rates for Students Attending Two-Year Institutions

Student Population: Full-Time, First-Time Attending College Institution Type: Public Two-Year Institutions Most Recent Year of Data: 2022		Sex		Race/Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Other	White
		Progression	First-Year Persistence Rate	69%	65%	57%	81%	68%
Second-Year Persistence Rate	56%		49%	42%	73%	54%	48%	54%
First-Year Grade Point Average Above 2.0	75%		75%	65%	85%	73%	76%	81%
Completion	Three-year Graduation Rate	27%	23%	18%	27%	25%	26%	27%
	Four-year Graduation Rate	38%	30%	23%	41%	34%	34%	38%
	Six-year Graduation Rate	49%	40%	29%	59%	45%	43%	48%

Table 2. 2022 Student Success Rates for Students Attending Four-Year Institutions

Student Population: Full-Time, First-Time Attending College Institution Type: Public Four-Year Institutions Most Recent Year of Data: 2022		Sex		Race/Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Other	White
		Access	Application Rate Increase from Previous Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acceptance Rate	88%		85%	84%	91%	86%	83%	86%
Matriculation Rate	52%		56%	56%	65%	50%	31%	61%
Progression	First-Year Persistence Rate	87%	84%	78%	94%	85%	83%	88%
	Second-Year Persistence Rate	80%	77%	70%	91%	76%	78%	82%
	First-Year Grade Point Average Above 2.0	88%	84%	77%	93%	82%	88%	91%

Completion	Four-year Graduation Rate	49%	37%	28%	63%	38%	44%	51%
	Five-year Graduation Rate	65%	55%	42%	79%	54%	60%	69%
	Six-year Graduation Rate	70%	61%	51%	83%	60%	66%	73%

Table 3. 2023 Student Success Rates for Students Attending Two-Year Institutions

Student Population: Full-Time, First-Time Attending College Institution Type: Public Two-Year Institutions Most Recent Year of Data: 2023		Sex		Race/Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Other	White
		Progression	First-Year Persistence Rate	69%	65%	58%	83%	67%
Second-Year Persistence Rate	56%		51%	43%	72%	54%	44%	55%
First-Year Grade Point Average Above 2.0	75%		75%	66%	84%	73%	81%	79%
Completion	Three-year Graduation Rate	30%	26%	20%	33%	29%	27%	30%
	Four-year Graduation Rate	36%	30%	23%	29%	33%	33%	37%
	Six-year Graduation Rate	48%	40%	30%	57%	44%	42%	48%

Table 4. 2023 Student Success Rates for Students Attending Four-Year Institutions

Student Population: Full-Time, First-Time Attending College Institution Type: Public Four-Year Institutions Most Recent Year of Data: 2023		Sex		Race/Ethnicity				
		Female	Male	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Other	White
		Access	Application Rate Increase from Previous Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acceptance Rate	88%		84%	83%	89%	87%	82%	87%
Matriculation Rate	51%		54%	53%	61%	50%	30%	60%
Progression	First-Year Persistence Rate	87%	85%	78%	95%	85%	83%	89%
	Second-Year Persistence Rate	81%	78%	68%	91%	78%	76%	82%

	First-Year Grade Point Average Above 2.0	88%	85%	77%	93%	84%	88%	91%
Completion	Four-year Graduation Rate	50%	38%	29%	64%	38%	44%	53%
	Five-year Graduation Rate	65%	55%	43%	79%	55%	59%	69%
	Six-year Graduation Rate	70%	60%	48%	84%	60%	65%	73%

Application Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, has there been an increase in the number of Texas residents applying to four-year Texas public institutions by sex and race/ethnicity?

While it is important to examine access at the university level, this analysis does not extend to community colleges. Community colleges operate with an open-access approach to student enrollment, meaning they accept all students who meet their basic qualifications. As such, metrics related to application, acceptance, and matriculation rates are not applicable in the same way for community colleges as for universities.

The data indicate that application rates for all groups (by sex and race/ethnicity) increased for both years (2022 and 2023) for students applying to four-year public institutions in Texas.

Acceptance Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do acceptance rates vary for applicants by sex and race/ethnicity statewide?

In 2022 and 2023, acceptance rates varied by sex and race/ethnicity statewide. By sex, females had a higher acceptance rate (88% in 2022 and 2023) than males (85% in 2022 and 84% in 2023). By race/ethnicity, Asian applicants consistently had the highest acceptance rates, while African American applicants had the lowest.

Matriculation Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do matriculation rates (students enrolling after being accepted) vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

For 2023, matriculation rates ranged by sex and race/ethnicity (e.g., 50% of Hispanic students to 60% of Asian students) who enrolled in Texas higher education institutions (public or private) after acceptance. Matriculation rates have slightly declined from 2022 to 2023 across all student groups, except Hispanic students, whose rates remained stable at 50 %. Students classified as “Other” had the lowest matriculation rates at 31% in 2022 and 30% in 2023. The “Other” race/ethnicity category includes applicants who identified as Native American, International, or selected multiple ethnicities.

Retention/Persistence

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do retention rates (e.g., first-year to second-year persistence and second-year to third-year persistence) vary by sex and race/ethnicity for two-year and four-year public institutions in Texas?

Given that THECB has access to enrollment data for all public and private two-year and four-year institutions in Texas, retention rates in this report will be defined as persistence rates that account for students who remain enrolled at the same institution or transfer to another institution. This broader definition ensures a more comprehensive understanding of student persistence across the state's higher education system.

The analysis includes the percentage of first-time, full-time credential-seeking students enrolled in 12 or more (full-time) semester credit hours (SCH) in the fall semester who are enrolled at the same or another Texas public or private institution one and two academic fall semesters later. Credential-seeking students are those who intend to earn an associate's degree, certificate, BAT degree, credits for transfer, or did not respond. Those who intend to gain job skills or personal enrichment are not included. If students earned a CERT1, CERT2, Advanced Technology Certificate, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree at any Texas public or private institution and did not persist, they were excluded from the cohort. If a student earned an award and persisted, they remained in the cohort.

The retention rates, measured as first-year to second-year persistence and second-year to third-year persistence, vary by sex and race/ethnicity across two-year and four-year public institutions in Texas.

Two-Year Institutions

Female students consistently showed higher retention rates compared to males in both years. For first-year persistence, females maintained a rate of 69% in 2022 and 2023, while males remained steady at 65%. The second-year persistence rate followed a similar trend, with females at 56% in both years, outperforming males, who increased slightly from 49% in 2022 to 51% in 2023.

Asian students demonstrated the highest persistence rates among racial and ethnic groups. Their first-year persistence rate increased slightly from 81% in 2022 to 83% in 2023, while their second-year rate slightly declined from 73% in 2022 to 72% in 2023. African American students faced the most significant challenges, with first-year persistence rates at 57% in 2022 and 58% in 2023 and second-year rates at 42% and 43%, respectively. Hispanic students displayed a slight decline in retention, with first-year rates of 68% in 2022 and 67% in 2023 and second-year rates holding steady at 54%.

Four-Year Institutions

Retention rates for females were higher than for males in both years, with first-year persistence at 87% in both 2022 and 2023 for females, compared to 84% in 2022 and 85% in 2023 for males. Second-year persistence rates reflected this trend, with females at 80% in 2022 and 81% in 2023, while males remained at 77% in 2022 and increased to 78% in 2023.

Asian students again led all groups, with first-year persistence rates improving from 94% in 2022 to 95% in 2023 and second-year persistence rates holding steady at 91%. African American students

had the lowest rates, with first-year persistence at 78% in both years and second-year persistence declining from 70% in 2022 to 68% in 2023. Hispanic students exhibited slight improvements, with first-year persistence remaining at 85% and second-year persistence increasing from 76% in 2022 to 78% in 2023.

Student Grade Point Average (GPA)

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do the percentages of students earning a GPA above 2.0 after their first year vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

GPA is calculated based on the course grades students received during their first year of enrollment. Each course's grade point value is determined using a four-point scale, as reported on the THECB state report CBM00S. The GPA can range from 0.00 to 4.00. A 0.00 GPA would indicate students received zero points for the semester (e.g., failed "F" their courses, withdrew "W" from their courses, or received an incomplete "I"). A 4.00 GPA would signal those students received the maximum grade point values for each course they registered for within a given semester (e.g., "A"). Students with a GPA below 2.0 may be placed on academic probation or academic suspension, students' qualifications to register for future courses within a degree plan may be restricted, or their ability to progress in a chosen major may be limited, depending on institutional policies.

This analysis categorizes students into specific entering cohorts, either as first-time college (FTIC) students, with first-year GPA results presented for the 2022 and 2023 cohorts. We tracked each cohort over their first academic year. For example, students in the 2022 cohort completed courses during the 2022-2023 academic year, resulting in a GPA for that time frame.

The percentage of students earning a GPA above 2.0 after their first year reveals distinct patterns by sex and race/ethnicity across two-year and four-year public institutions. At two-year institutions, both male and female students performed equally in 2022 and 2023, with 75% achieving a GPA above 2.0. At four-year institutions, female students slightly outperformed their male counterparts. In 2022, 88% of females earned a GPA above 2.0 compared to 84% of males, and in 2023, these rates were 88% for females and 85% for males, indicating consistent academic performance over time with a small gender gap favoring females.

Among racial and ethnic groups, Asian students consistently exhibited the highest academic performance in both institution types and years. For example, at two-year institutions, 85% of Asian students earned a GPA above 2.0 in 2022, decreasing slightly to 84% in 2023. Similarly, at four-year institutions, 93% of Asian students achieved this benchmark in both years. African American students had the lowest percentages across all groups and years. At two-year institutions, only 65% of African American students earned a GPA above 2.0 in 2022, slightly improving to 66% in 2023. At four-year institutions, this figure remained steady at 77% for both years.

Graduation Rate

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do graduation rates (three-year, four-year, and six-year) for students attending two-year institutions vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

Based on data from 2022 and 2023, do graduation rates (four-year, five-year, and six-year) for students attending four-year institutions vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

Graduation rates, measured as three-year, four-year, and six-year rates for two-year institutions, and four-year, five-year, and six-year rates for four-year institutions, exhibit clear disparities by sex and race/ethnicity for 2022 and 2023.

Two-Year Texas Public Institutions: Student Completion at three, four, and six Years

Females consistently achieved higher graduation rates than males across all timeframes. The three-year graduation rate for females increased from 27% in 2022 to 30% in 2023, while males improved from 23% to 26%. Similarly, females outpaced males in four-year graduation rates (38% in 2022 vs. 36% in 2023 for females, and 30% for males in both years). For six-year graduation rates, females maintained a steady advantage (49% in 2022, 48% in 2023) over males (40% in both years).

Asian students had the highest graduation rates across all timeframes. Their three-year rate increased from 27% in 2022 to 33% in 2023, and their six-year rate decreased slightly from 59% in 2022 to 57% in 2023. African American students had the lowest rates across all timeframes. Their three-year rate was 18% in 2022 and rose slightly to 20% in 2023, while their six-year rate improved marginally from 29% to 30%. Hispanic students showed steady improvement, with their three-year rate increasing from 25% to 29% and their six-year rate remaining at 44% in both years.

Four-Year Texas Public Institutions: Student Completion at four, five, and six Years

Female students continued to graduate at higher rates than males across all timeframes. The four-year graduation rate for females increased from 49% in 2022 to 50% in 2023, while males improved from 37% to 38%. For five-year graduation rates, females outperformed males (65% in both years for females vs. 55% for males in 2022 and 2023). Similarly, females had a higher six-year rate, holding steady at 70% in both years, compared to 61% for males in 2022 and 60% in 2023.

Asian students led across all timeframes, with their four-year rate increasing from 63% in 2022 to 64% in 2023, and their six-year rate improving slightly from 83% to 84%. African American students had the lowest rates, with the 4-year rate increasing from 28% to 29%, and the six-year rate declining slightly from 51% to 48%. Hispanic students demonstrated modest gains, with their four-year rate remaining stable at 38%, while their six-year rate increased from 60% to 60%. White students consistently performed above average, with steady improvements in their four-year (51% to 53%) and six-year rates (73% in both years).

Graduation rates highlight persistent gender and racial disparities across two-year and four-year institutions. Female students consistently graduate at higher rates than males, and Asian students lead all racial and ethnic groups in both types of institutions. African American students consistently achieve the lowest graduation rates across all timeframes.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Future Reporting and Analysis Suggestions

Future reports could leverage predictive modeling to control for external factors such as socioeconomic status, high school rank, and college readiness.

Data Limitations and Recommendations

This report provides a two-year perspective on the student success outcome metrics outlined in SB 17. However, the following limitations affect the ability to fully assess the impact of SB 17 at this early stage.

Time Aspects of Data Collection and Reporting

The timing of SB 17's enactment and the first reporting deadline creates inherent limitations. SB 17 took effect on January 1, 2024. Given the timing of institutional data submissions and state certification processes, there is an unavoidable lag in reporting key metrics. The most recent available data is from fiscal year 2023, which is one year prior to SB 17's implementation. Therefore, *the data in this first report primarily serves as a baseline for future reports to reference and compare against, rather than reflecting SB 17's impact.*

Understanding the Interaction between Sex and Race/Ethnicity

Initial descriptive statistics reveal differences in several student success outcome metrics for different groups of students when disaggregated by sex and race/ethnicity. However, these broad trends do not fully capture each of the different racial/ethnic backgrounds by sex. To better understand these dynamics, future reports could disaggregate student success outcomes by both sex and race/ethnicity, examining the interaction between these two characteristics. Disaggregating the data in this way would allow for more granular analysis, to more accurately identify differences within racial/ethnic groups.

Limited Scope of Student Success Administrative Data

The study relies on a finite list of student success outcome metrics as defined by SB 17. While these metrics, such as application rates, persistence, and graduation rates, provide valuable insights, they do not account for the full set of factors that may influence student success.

Conclusion

More than 60% of all new jobs require education beyond high school to keep pace with Texas' booming economy. In line with our state's higher education plan, *Building a Talent Strong Texas*, it is essential that we prepare our rapidly growing population for these opportunities. Particularly since 95% of the state's population growth is driven by Texans of African American, Hispanic, and "Other" race/ethnicity. Ensuring all Texas students have the opportunity to succeed will directly strengthen our workforce and economy. While it's too early to assess the impact of SB 17, continuous monitoring of student outcomes is critical to improving efficiency and maximizing the potential of our future workforce.

As we move forward, focusing on the current SB 17 metrics, as well as in conjunction with new metrics like time to degree and student loan debt, will help ensure taxpayer dollars are being used

efficiently to produce skilled graduates who are prepared to contribute to the state's economic growth. Tracking additional student outcome metrics will enable data-driven decisions that benefit Texas in the long run.