60 percent of “Generation Texas” will have a postsecondary credential or degree by 2030
## Table of Contents

Preamble ................................................................................................................. i
Executive Summary ................................................................................................. ii
Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
The Work Ahead ...................................................................................................... 3
Some Benefits of Higher Education ........................................................................ 5
Into Higher Education and Through Completion .................................................... 6
Vision Statement ..................................................................................................... 7
  Overarching Goal ................................................................................................. 8
  Completion Goal ................................................................................................. 10
  Marketable Skills Goal ....................................................................................... 14
  Student Debt Goal .............................................................................................. 17
The Challenge for Higher Education in Texas ......................................................... 21
References .............................................................................................................. 22
Appendix A: History of the Texas Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee .......... 23
Appendix B: Glossary ............................................................................................... 24
Higher education institutions improve the lives of Texans. They educate our teachers, nurses, and technicians. They find cures for life-threatening diseases and develop technologies that make our lives easier. They inspire, educate, and equip our students to be their best, encouraging them to be more civic-minded, helping them interact in diverse communities, and giving them a passion for lifelong learning. They retrain our adult population, including veterans, helping them find meaningful careers. They enrich us through the arts and new ideas. The impact of higher education is immeasurable.

Because of the importance of higher education, Texans united around the goals of the previous statewide plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. Over a 15-year period, beginning in 2000, the Legislature approved and funded new higher education institutions, appropriated $3.3 billion for TEXAS Grants to help low-income students attend college, and increased funding for programs in critical fields. Institutions of higher education in the state responded by increasing access and improving completions. In 2014, they enrolled more than 1.6 million students – an increase of almost 600,000 since 2000. The institutions also awarded almost 250,000 bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, and certificates – approximately 130,000 more than in 2000.

Texas institutions have distinctive strengths that include conducting world-class research, serving underrepresented student populations, and developing new certificate and degree programs quickly in response to local workforce needs. Yet they have one thing in common: They help students succeed. The new higher education plan, *60x30TX*, focuses on this common goal by striving for 60 percent of the 25- to 34-year-old Texas workforce to hold a certificate or degree by 2030. The plan seeks to increase student success through the combined expertise and resources of many stakeholders. Because of these collaborative efforts, Texas institutions of higher education will have more opportunities to develop their unique institutional identities, which will enrich the state.

The *60x30TX* higher education plan is bold. Because of the creativity and hard work of the faculty, administrators, and staff at our institutions of higher education over the past 15 years, Texas is ready. Our foundation is strong. We have the potential to achieve things we could not have imagined 15 years ago. We invite you to join us as we work together to make higher education attainable for Texans of all backgrounds.
Executive Summary

The 60x30TX higher education strategic plan contains four broad goals. Each goal contains a set of targets that will move the state toward reaching one or more goals. Many stakeholders across Texas will need to develop and implement a wide range of strategies to meet each target.

The Overarching Goal – 60x30

By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree.

The 60x30 Goal is essential to the future prosperity of Texas. Without bold action, Texas will face a future of diminished incomes, opportunities, and resources.

The 60x30TX plan is designed to ensure that a competitive and prosperous future remains for students seeking to better their lives and the lives of their families.

The first goal in the plan, the 60x30 Goal, aims to increase the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds in Texas who hold a certificate or degree. The goal focuses on 25- to 34-year-olds as an indicator of the economic future of the state. Because of the state’s considerable population, the Texas economy is similar in size to many countries. Within this global context, Texas has seen a decline in educational attainment in this younger population. The goal also uses 25- to 34-year-olds as a yardstick to answer the question, “How educated is Texas?” Through the focused efforts of industry, government, community organizations, K-12, and institutions of higher education, the state can achieve this goal.

The Second Goal – Completion

By 2030, at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor’s, or master’s from an institution of higher education in Texas.

The Completion Goal complements the 60x30 Goal by supplying graduates of all ages from all two- and four-year institutions of higher education in Texas. Texas will need to continue the degree production increases of recent years to reach this goal, with large increases required among targeted groups.

The Third Goal – Marketable Skills

By 2030, all graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.

The Marketable Skills Goal emphasizes the value of higher education in the workforce. Students need to be aware of the marketable skills embedded in their academic programs. This goal charges two- and four-year public institutions in Texas with documenting, updating, and communicating the skills students acquire in their programs. Private institutions of higher education in Texas may opt in to participate in this goal.

It is important to note that the Marketable Skills Goal does not diminish higher education’s obligation to produce well-rounded and well-informed individuals familiar with all fields of human activity and with a strong understanding of our country’s founding principles.

The Fourth Goal – Student Debt

By 2030, undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.

The Student Debt Goal aims to help students who graduate with debt complete their programs with manageable debt. This goal is designed to balance the levels of student loan debt with a graduate’s earning potential during the first year after college.

Maintaining Excellence, Focusing on Skills

Since the adoption of the last higher education plan in 2000, Texas has become increasingly engaged in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers. Many of those workers must come from the state’s institutions of higher
While continuing to pursue increased knowledge and higher standards of excellence in teaching, research, and innovation, two- and four-year colleges in Texas will need to consider more explicitly the primary reason most students attend college: to get a better job and achieve a better life.

For Texas to solve problems and address public concerns now and in the future, it must have a large workforce with the skills and knowledge to push the state forward. This workforce must be educated and able to adapt and compete at the highest levels to maintain a strong state economy.

Shifts in Demographics
As this plan moves forward, the 25- to 34-year-old population in Texas will be increasingly Hispanic. Hispanics, along with African Americans, are traditionally underrepresented in the state’s higher education institutions and will be critical to this plan’s success. The 60x30TX plan includes key targets for these and other critical groups. Reaching this plan’s targets will be important for reaching its goals.

Student-Centered
By charting a student-centered course and prioritizing higher education completion and workforce readiness, this plan enables the state, institutions of higher education, and the private sector to set Texas on a path toward continued prosperity. To compete and remain relevant in the future, Texas students must earn quality postsecondary credentials with skills that employers need. Furthermore, if graduates are to contribute to the state’s revenue and have the means to pursue personal goals, they must complete their programs with no debt or with manageable debt, relative to their starting wage after college.

Latitude in Pursuing the Goals
Although the 60x30TX plan focuses on higher education in Texas and its relationship to the workforce, one size does not fit every institution of higher education in the state. The plan provides latitude for two- and four-year institutions and encourages local creativity in pursuing the 60x30TX goals, as institutions continue to pursue their own unique missions.

The 60x30TX plan addresses students’ desires for a better life, employers’ desires to remain competitive, and the state’s need for a robust economy. This plan also strengthens the excellence and quality in Texas higher education by challenging the state’s two- and four-year institutions to prepare students for the jobs of the future, while inspiring them to contribute to a greater Texas society. The 60x30TX plan sets goals for Texas higher education that cannot be postponed without postponing the progress of Texas.
Introduction

Texas has become increasingly engaged in a global economy dependent on skilled and knowledgeable workers. Most of those workers must come from higher education. Although the state is doing better at increasing college completions for students who have not traditionally earned certificates or degrees in large numbers, it has not improved quickly enough or broadly enough to keep up with changes in the state’s demographics. Completions in higher education in Texas must reflect the population as a whole.

The challenge is clear: Students from all backgrounds, especially those traditionally underrepresented in higher education, must complete certificates and degrees in large numbers if the 25- to 34-year-old workforce in 2030 is to remain globally competitive and prosperous. Failure to do so will result in lower incomes and a lower percentage of educated Texans in 2030 than in 2015, losses that will spell a decline in the economic future of Texas and the opportunities available to its people.

While continuing to pursue increased knowledge and higher standards of excellence in teaching, research, and innovation, two- and four-year colleges in Texas will need to consider more explicitly the primary reason most students attend college: to get a better job and achieve a better life.

Local Creativity Encouraged

In light of the mission of higher education, the expectations of students, and the reality of a global marketplace, the question is how can Texas two- and four-year colleges achieve their missions, as well as educate students to enter the workforce and compete in a global market? The 60x30TX plan responds to this question by laying out ambitious goals for statewide educational attainment, completions of two- and four-year certificates and degrees, marketable skills, and student debt.

The aim of the plan is to help students achieve their educational goals and help the state remain globally competitive for years to come. Although the 60x30TX plan focuses on higher education and its relationship to the workforce, one size does not fit every institution of higher education in Texas. The 60x30TX plan provides the latitude for institutions to pursue the plan’s goals while also pursuing their unique institutional missions and goals. This plan encourages local creativity in pursuing the 60x30TX goals and targets.

Skills Deficits, Attainment, and Completion

In 2012, the globally focused Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) listed Texas as one of several states experiencing skills deficits. The OECD found that some sectors of the state’s economy could not hire enough workers with the required skillsets to meet workforce demand, resulting in lost revenue for the state. Although Texas saw a large in-migration of workers and the state met most of the goals and targets set in the previous higher education plan, only 35 percent of the 25- to 34-year-old population held an associate or higher degree in 2013, far less than many other states and nations. Adding certificates earned by this age group only increased the number of graduates with a postsecondary credential to about 38 percent.

The percentages suggest a link between the number of Texans holding a

Some sectors of the state’s economy could not hire enough workers with the required skillsets to meet workforce demand.
certificate or degree and the state’s deficit in skilled workers. Certainly, Texas made big strides during the years of the previous higher education plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015. At the outset of that plan in 2000, about 116,000 students annually completed an associate, a bachelor’s, or a certificate. The goal of that plan was to reach 210,000 postsecondary awards annually by 2015. The state reached this goal in 2011, four years ahead of schedule. By Fiscal Year 2014, the annual number of undergraduate awards had increased to about 251,000.

**Workforce Alignment**

Yet those successes are only the beginning. The demand for skilled and knowledgeable workers continues to outpace workforce supply in Texas. For the state to remain competitive and prosperous, it will need approximately 60 percent of its 25- to 34-year-olds to hold a quality certificate or degree by 2030. (Indeed, some experts, such as Anthony Carnevale of Georgetown University, believe that Texas will need to reach this goal even sooner.) Without this kind of bold action, Texas will face a future of diminished incomes, opportunities, and resources.

The 60x30TX plan, however, recognizes that differences of interpretation exist about workforce needs for the future. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates, for example, are used sometimes to show that significantly fewer than 60 percent of workers will need a college credential to satisfy future workforce demand. The BLS, however, has clarified that its estimates, while useful for a range of purposes, are based on current education requirements for typical entry-level workers. These estimates are not meant to account for workers needed at all levels or to project overall educational demand for future workers. Specific details aside, what everyone can agree on is that having a degree matters—and employers are willing to pay for it.

A degree isn’t enough, though. Texas students will need to match their credentials to employer needs. The role of higher education in helping students and employers coordinate their efforts will be essential. Otherwise, as Jeff Strohl of Georgetown University points out: “Without this [collaboration], increased education can just mean increased unemployment and higher levels of mismatch.” Alignment with the workforce is very important, but teaching students in broad ways that allow for flexibility in career choices is also important. Texas students need both skills and broader learning to succeed in the workplace.

**Greater Representation, Demographic Shifts**

The goal of 60 percent attainment by 2030 will require solutions from both public and private sectors but is achievable if a wide and representative range of Texans has access to a postsecondary education. Appealing to a wide range of Texans will be important given the population increase among Hispanics, who accounted for 65 percent of the state’s population growth in the 2010 census. Other minority populations also grew significantly, while the numbers for the white population remained relatively flat. The demographic changes in the state underscore the need to achieve greater educational attainment among Texans of all backgrounds.

**Social Mobility and Affordability**

Preparing students to enter community colleges and universities and supporting them through the completion of certificates and degrees will mean demonstrating that higher education is still the best path toward greater social and economic mobility. Although college is not...
appropriate for every student, striving toward educational parity between economically disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged counterparts is important for achieving an adaptable, innovative, and diverse workforce in Texas. Not all the solutions are up to two- and four-year colleges, but they will play a critical role.

History proves more education is good for the economy and good for the middle class. With its newly educated workforce and the skills they acquired, the GI Bill brought a great economic boon after the 1940s. In *Soldiers to Citizens*, Suzanne Mettler states: “Millions used generous, dignified benefits to seize opportunities and become more actively engaged citizens.”

Supporting students through completion to become more actively engaged citizens and to strengthen the Texas economy means addressing college affordability and making explicit the workplace skills learned in programs.

**Student-Centered**

The 60x30TX plan lays out a comprehensive approach that focuses heavily on the needs of students and will need the support of both public and private stakeholders to succeed. Students, after all, are the ones who will decide to pursue higher education. Their decisions will influence the future prosperity of Texas and will affect the state’s ability to meet its needs for educated and skilled workers.

The intention of the goals and targets described in this plan is to help students, institutions of higher education, employers, and the state to succeed and flourish using a shared vision of excellence for higher education in Texas. Developed with input from school administrators, higher education leaders, community leaders, private industry, elected officials, former faculty, and other stakeholders, the 60x30TX plan establishes ideals for higher education in Texas that will help secure the state’s place in a global economy.

**A Living Document**

Like its predecessor, the 60x30TX plan seeks to create qualitative results built on quantitative foundations. It is also a living document designed to track the state’s progress toward the higher education goals in this plan.

**The Work Ahead**

According to the OECD rankings, the U.S. provides the least economic mobility among developed nations. The OECD does not rank individual states among its list of countries, but the Social Mobility Index, which focuses on higher education policy related to economic disparities among students, ranks Texas higher education 21st in providing students with opportunities for economic and social mobility. These rankings are not likely to improve without bold action.

**Economic Disadvantage, Demographics, and the Workforce**

The pipeline to the state’s higher education starts with a K–12 public school population in which 60 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The 2003 to 2013 graduation report for Texas shows that only about 10 percent of the poorest eighth-grade students in Texas attain a postsecondary credential when tracked for
11 years. Without focused action and attention to these economically disadvantaged students, Texas cannot remain competitive.

Even beyond ethnicity, economic disadvantage is the best indicator in determining an individual’s likelihood of attaining education past high school. For the state to remain competitive in the future, its two- and four-year colleges will need to make substantial efforts to reach out to students from all backgrounds.

Anthony Carnevale (Georgetown University) has stated that a majority of future jobs in the nation and in the state will require a postsecondary credential. He asserts that as early as 2020, “Fewer jobs will be available to people with less than high school or only a high school diploma.” This is important because of the state’s shift in demographics to a largely Hispanic population. The 25- to 34-year-old population, the target age group of the 60x30 Goal, is projected to grow 41 percent among Hispanics between 2015 and 2030. Although the state has made strides among Hispanic Texans, poverty among this population has increased, especially among those with lower levels of education.

As former Texas and U.S. demographer Steve Murdock points out in Changing Texas, without bold action, workers of all backgrounds who possess only a high school education or less will increase from 48 percent in 2010 to 53 percent in 2050, and this increase will lead to more pronounced and long-term workforce shortages. Texas must continue working toward parity for traditionally underrepresented populations in higher education.

Decrease in Global Ranking

The population and geographic size of Texas is greater than that of many countries. Placing the state’s educational attainment in this context highlights the relative decline over time. In 2013, Texans of ages 55 to 64 achieved associate and higher degrees in numbers that placed this age group between the third and fourth highest-ranking OECD nations. Although Texans of ages 25 to 34 attained associate and higher degrees at increased rates during 2013, they did not keep pace with the rest of the world. As a result, this age group fell between the 23rd and 24th highest-ranking OECD nations in educational attainment – a relative and notable decline in the state. Increasing the diversity of students in higher education will help bolster the state’s resources and talent and will lead to a more diverse workforce and greater global competitiveness.

Re-imagining College

Texas also must continue to re-imagine “college” and “college-going” in broader terms. At stake are the state’s workforce needs, the economic viability of its future, and the ability to remain competitive in a global economy.

For some students, college will mean earning a certificate in a yearlong program. For other students, college will mean earning an associate or bachelor’s degree by attending traditional classes or
by participating in competency-based programs. For still others, college will mean earning associate degrees through dual credit or early college high school programs.

College may take place on a brick-and-mortar campus or on a device in a student’s living room. Regardless of the credential or method used to attain it, a college education will translate into more engaged citizens and greater prosperity for individuals, which in turn will translate into greater economic prosperity for the state.

### Some Benefits of Higher Education

Higher education is not only about producing degrees and doing research, but also about spurring new businesses. Economic growth, productivity, and development flourish when paired with the skills and new ideas students gain from higher education. Entrepreneurship programs and small business institutes, for example, nurture new businesses.

Some headlines about student loan debt often fail to acknowledge the skills gained in college, but higher education is a boon for the state’s economy. A report by the group Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) for Fiscal Year 2013 found that money spent by institutions and students on higher education in Texas boosted the state’s economy in a one-year period equal to $143.9 billion, or 11 percent of the gross state product.

Although these numbers validate the recent achievements of higher education in the state, more can be accomplished. Individuals with postsecondary degrees and credentials are less likely to need public assistance programs or to enter the correctional system. By its nature, higher education increases knowledge and skills and results in greater individual marketability, wealth, and self-reliance, which reduces dependence on public programs.

### Individual Return on Investment

Experts from the Brookings Institution’s Hamilton Project found that, “On average, the benefits of a four-year degree are equivalent to an investment that returns 15.2 percent per year.” The EMSI report supports this claim and asserts that...
Texas students who complete degrees will account for $524.9 billion in added income during their working lives.

Savings in public programs means more money for the state and for individuals in Texas. The nationally focused College Board report *Education Pays* found that 12 percent of high school graduates, versus 2 percent of bachelor’s graduates, lived in households that relied on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits in 2011. Higher education benefits the state, the individual, and society in measurable and specific ways that must be encouraged and strengthened.

**Into Higher Education and Through Completion**

The overarching 60x30 Goal of this plan is for 60 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds in Texas to hold a certificate or degree by 2030. Tracking the attainment levels for this age group and asking, “How educated are they?” will provide an indicator of the state’s economic health in the future. Tracking this goal also may reveal future workforce deficits in areas that require postsecondary training.

All Texas two- and four-year institutions of higher education, whether public, independent, or for-profit, will play a crucial role in meeting the 60x30 overarching goal. Aligning postsecondary programs with the state’s workforce needs will require a thoughtful process that not only acknowledges the value of workforce demands, but also acknowledges the creativity, diversity, and varied strengths of students. Many of those workforce skills will include soft skills and knowledge not easily aligned with a specific job or industry. Liberal arts studies, for example, often hone these skills and over time create flexibility and resourcefulness for individuals, allowing them to adapt nimbly to the jobs of the future while meeting the needs of today.

**K-12, Two-year, and Four-year Alignment**

The state will achieve its goals for higher education through many strategies that will influence students to complete certificates and degrees. Creating pathways for students to all careers, including high-demand jobs, will require higher levels of cooperation among higher education, K-12 education, and workforce leadership. For example, two- and four-year colleges will need to collaborate and align lower-division curricula so that students receive a coherent and rigorous general education, while being assured that their courses will transfer and count toward degrees. In addition, Texas will need more online education and innovation, such as applied baccalaureates (e.g., BAT and BAS degrees) offered through traditionally two-year colleges or competency-based programs offered through universities.

Texas institutions of higher education will need to work together more closely on such issues as teacher training, professional development, and college readiness. These strategies and others will help Texas reach the targets in this plan and will produce greater outcomes for students and for the state.

*Figure 5. Many Components Influence Student Completion.*
Vision for the 60x30TX Higher Education Strategic Plan

Higher education is attainable for Texans of all backgrounds through challenging and diverse learning environments that foster individual potential and maximize the societal and economic contributions of graduates.

The 2030 Higher Education Goals for Texas

The pages that follow lay out the goals, targets, and strategies of the 2015-2030 higher education strategic plan for Texas.

Goals: The goals contain broad language to provide latitude in achieving them. Although measurable, each goal’s design allows institutions to respond according to the role institutions have in achieving them within the state’s higher education system. The result of many meetings and discussions, the plan’s goals rest on a careful assessment of the possible.

Targets: The plan’s targets are key to achieving each goal. Additional targets easily could have been included in the plan, but the ones chosen are critical for the state’s future workforce needs and prosperity. One plan cannot respond to every educational aspiration or take into account the missions of every two- and four-year college in the state, but a statewide plan can drive success in key areas through focused goals and targets. If the state and its institutions of higher education implement successful strategies to reach each target, the state will reach each goal.

Strategies: Developing and implementing strategies to reach each target will require the work of many stakeholders across the state. Successful strategies will require both top-down and bottom-up approaches at institutions of higher education and both public and private partnerships. Institutions will need to collaborate with state agencies, such as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and the Texas Education Agency (TEA), as well as local, regional, and national companies. The challenge will be to develop fluid strategies that produce changes over time. The strategies presented are only some of the strategies that will help institutions reach the targets and goals laid out in the 60x30TX plan.
The 60x30 Goal asks industry, government, two- and four-year institutions of higher education, and community organizations in the state to strive for greater prosperity for Texas and its nearly 27 million residents. The goal focuses on 25- to 34-year-olds who hold a degree or certificate because this age group represents the future of the state and its ability to compete and prosper.

Learning leads to earning, and higher education unlocks opportunities for individuals whose resources might otherwise remain limited. The ability to roam intellectually, to aspire, and to realize those aspirations are the hallmarks of higher education and the foundation for the best and most resourceful workers. In turn, those workers can help to create the most dynamic workplaces.

**Higher Education and the Workplace**

Higher education increases freedom from poverty, affords social mobility, and encourages greater participation in the public arena. It often produces individuals who are more skilled at solving problems and have a greater capacity for navigating their lives. A competitive Texas economy depends on its people having opportunities for more financial means and greater social well-being.

Far from resting solely on the shoulders of institutions of higher education in the state, this goal belongs to those who desire to train and retain a globally competitive workforce. It also belongs to those who desire greater prosperity for Texans from all backgrounds.

**Big State, Bold Numbers**

The 60x30 Goal takes into account both graduates of Texas institutions and the in-migration of new residents who hold certificates or degrees. Whether someone living in Texas earns a certificate or degree in or out of state, it will be counted. For this reason, the state will need to retain graduates from Texas institutions of higher education, as well as attract graduates from other states. To achieve this, in fact, the state will need to improve at a higher rate of attainment than the average of the five best years since 1998. Bold but achievable, the 60x30 Goal will translate into 2.7 million 25- to 34-year-olds in Texas who hold certificates or degrees in 2030.

American Community Surveys data showed in 2013 that an estimated 1.3 million Texans in the target age group held a certificate or degree. For Texas residents of ages 25-34 to reach
the U.S. educational attainment level of 42 percent, the state would need 234,004 more residents with associate and bachelor's degrees. Continuing this trend will result in a poorer and less-competitive state. For Texas to remain globally competitive and for its people and communities to prosper, achieving the 60x30 goal is critical.

### For Texas to remain globally competitive and for its people and communities to prosper, achieving the 60x30 goal is critical.

**Strategies to Achieve this Goal**

TEA data show that Hispanics and African Americans make up more than 60 percent of the K-12 pipeline for higher education in Texas – a reason for government, institutions, community organizations, and business leaders to rally around the common cause of ensuring Texans of all backgrounds have access to higher education and the means to pursue it.

Leaders also will need to encourage and support economically disadvantaged students in pursuing higher education. More than 60 percent of high school graduates in Texas are economically disadvantaged as well. The state cannot hope to reach the 60x30 Goal without their participation and completions.

Two-year institutions can support efforts to reach this goal by strengthening connections and partnerships with local and regional organizations and local school districts. Four-year institutions can help by building or strengthening their connections to local or regional organizations and independent school districts. In short, for 60 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds in Texas to hold a certificate or degree by 2030, industry, government, community organizations, K-12, and higher education will need to work together.

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<th>Goal and Interim Benchmarks</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
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<td>Increase the percent of Texans ages 25-34</td>
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<td>with a certificate or degree to at least ...</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td><em>These benchmarks ensure progressive improvement of state educational attainment throughout the plan years. (38.3% as of 2013)</em></td>
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**Strategies**

Respond to the needs of the changing population of Texas so students are supported into and through higher education.

**For example:**

1. Aggressively **promote college attainment** to students and parents prior to high school.

2. Develop and implement **education and curriculum delivery systems** to make higher education available to a broader and changing population.

3. Provide high-quality adult education programs to improve educational attainment for educationally underserved adults.

4. Improve opportunities for **students** to pursue and complete higher education, including developing practices to encourage **stop-outs** with more than 50 semester credit hours to return and complete a degree or certificate.

5. Collaborate with the TWC to identify **critical fields** and to update them periodically.
The Completion Goal, unlike the 60x30 Goal, pertains solely to credentials produced by Texas institutions of higher education, and it applies to students of all ages. To meet the future workforce needs of Texas, the state’s two- and four-year colleges will need 550,000 completions by students in 2030, a significant annual increase in the number of postsecondary awards. In total, during the 15 years this goal is measured, Texas will award 6.4 million certificates and degrees, if the goal is reached.

**The Target Populations for this Goal**

The increase in awards not only accounts for an annual growth rate of about 4 percent for certificate and degree completions but also accounts for large population increases. This rate of growth may not seem aggressive until stakeholders examine the targets for this goal. Its aim is not only to achieve a large number of completions from Texas institutions but also to achieve parity in Texas higher education for underrepresented populations, such as African Americans, Hispanics, males from these and other populations, and economically disadvantaged students.

In addition to those populations, institutions will need to target female STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) students, veterans, adults who have completed courses and left without completing degrees, and students in adult basic education programs, among others. Reaching this goal also will require greater numbers of college-ready high school graduates and will mean directing more participants from the state GED and adult basic education programs toward certification and degree programs. Reaching, enrolling, and graduating students who are at risk of foregoing or stopping out of higher education without a degree because of economic factors will be important, and institutional innovation can address some of these issues. Although overlap exists among the targets (e.g., a student may be both Hispanic and economically disadvantaged), reaching each target will make a difference in the state’s future and move it toward greater prosperity.

**Time-to-Degree Factors**

Substantial evidence suggests that institutions need to be more prescriptive in their efforts to help students narrow their choices as they navigate higher education. Of students who “stopped out” of higher education between 2008 and 2012, 48,000 four-year students had stopped out with 90 or more semester credit hours, and 161,000 two-year college students had stopped out with 55 or more semester credit hours.

**At a Glance**

- Measures the number of credentials Texas institutions of higher education produce each year
- Targets students of all ages in higher education
- Identifies the number of credentials needed to reach this goal into completions by ethnicity, gender, and economic disadvantage

In total, during the 15 years this goal is measured, Texas will award 6.4 million certificates or degrees, if the goal is reached.
Since 2000, Texas has made measurable progress in improving graduation rates, but it must sustain and strengthen these efforts for the state to compete successfully with other states and countries. As of 2014, the state’s six-year graduation rate was 60.5 percent for public, four-year institutions, but if the two most selective public universities in the state are extracted from the data, the state’s overall graduation rate falls to around 53 percent. For two-year institutions, the current six-year graduation rate for associate degrees is about 28 percent.

**Strategies to Achieve this Goal**

To reach the Completion Goal, Texas institutions of higher education will need to support students early to help them persist in their higher education. This may include:

- Expanding co-requisite course opportunities for developmental education students. These courses allow students to take credit-bearing courses while they take developmental education courses to improve their skills.
- Considering competency-based programs that allow an adult student to move through blocks of classes based on what the student knows, for a fixed semester cost, regardless of the number of courses the student completes successfully in one semester.
- Using assessments, such as the Texas Success Initiative Assessment, which will enable institutions to accurately determine students’ strengths and weaknesses and give advisors the ability to provide better counseling to students based on this information.
- Implementing electronic degree plans that allow students to input majors and receive a list of the required courses needed to complete a specific degree in four years could help students avoid taking classes unnecessarily and could shorten the time to a degree.

P-16 councils, adult education learning programs, dual credit programs, early college high school programs, and affordable baccalaureates will help connect institutions to local and regional groups and will support more completions statewide. Two- and four-year institutions working together can also support each other in reaching this goal.

Studies show that achieving 30 semester credit hours (SCHs) in Texas during the first year of college is critical for students to persist and complete. Achieving 30 SCHs in the first year might happen in a number of ways, including: (1) by students taking two semesters of 15 SCHs during the traditional academic year, or (2) by students taking two semesters of 12 SCHs during the traditional academic year and one session of 6 SCHs during the summer. Reducing the time to a degree will help students persist in completing postsecondary credentials, which will increase the number of graduates and help the state to reach this goal.

Inherent in increasing completions is the need to strengthen guided pathways between two- and four-year colleges and to align lower-division curricula across institutions and degree programs. Doing so will place students on paths to receive coherent and rigorous educations that will transfer between colleges and count toward degrees.

**How the Completion and 60x30 Goals Differ**

The Completion Goal closely relates to, but differs from, the 60x30 Goal in important ways. The Completion Goal tracks annual awards earned for students of all ages; the 60x30 Goal tracks the educational level of the state’s 25- to 34-year-old population.

The Completion Goal contains targets that build toward 550,000 awards earned only from two- and four-year colleges in Texas. Growth in certificates and degrees among two- and four-year colleges will be critical for reaching 60 percent in the 60x30 Goal, but it will be only part of the solution for reaching that goal.

The Completion Goal helps ensure that growing numbers of Texans, and the state as a whole, reap the personal and societal benefits that come from completing high-quality degrees and certificates.
Goal and Interim Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of students completing a certificate, associate, bachelor’s, or master’s from an institution of higher education in Texas to at least ...</td>
<td>376,000</td>
<td>455,000</td>
<td>550,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first four targets are directly related to the Completion Goal. To reach this goal, Texas will need to maintain the strong degree production increases that it has experienced in recent years. (298,989 as of 2014)

Targets to Reach the Goal

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of Hispanic students completing a certificate or degree to at least ...</td>
<td>138,000</td>
<td>198,000</td>
<td>285,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This target and the next one will help increase parity across completers for groups that have traditionally been underrepresented. (Hispanics 89,355 as of 2014; African Americans 37,658 as of 2014)

| Increase the number of African American students completing a certificate or degree to at least ... | 48,000  | 59,000  | 76,000  |

| Increase the number of male students completing a certificate or degree to at least ... | 168,000 | 215,000 | 275,000 |

The percentage of women enrolled in and graduating from higher education institutions has grown and men are not keeping pace. This target provides a means to monitor progress toward gender parity. (122,744 as of 2014)

| Increase the number of economically disadvantaged undergraduate students (Pell Grant recipients) completing a certificate or degree to at least ... | 146,000 | 190,000 | 246,000 |

Economically disadvantaged students are less likely to succeed in higher education than their non-economically disadvantaged peers. This target emphasizes the importance of improving completion rates for this subgroup. (107,419 as of 2014)

| Increase the percentage of all Texas public high school graduates enrolling in an institution of higher education in Texas by the first fall after their high school graduation to at least ... | 58%     | 61%     | 65%     |

Students who enroll directly from high school into college are much more likely to be college ready. This target helps to ensure high school graduates enroll in higher education at rates that support the Completion Goal. (54.2% as of 2014)
Strategies

Support the completion pipeline by providing access to multiple postsecondary options.

For example:

- Scale up and share practices that guide students to higher education.
- Increase the participation of economically disadvantaged high school students in dual credit and other college-level courses.
- Build credentials at each level with the aim of reducing course work duplication and time to subsequent degrees.
- Reach out to K-12 to collaborate in improving college and career readiness.

Improve academic preparation and academic support for students to enter and complete higher education.

For example:

- Scale up and share practices that support students in their academic preparation for postsecondary education.
- Streamline credential pathways through the P-16 continuum to ensure that secondary education prepares high school graduates for completing a postsecondary credential.
- Scale up and share practices that support underprepared students to increase persistence and completion and to reduce their time to degree.

Structure programs and support services to be responsive to the changing needs of the student population to help students persist through key transitions in higher education.

For example:

- Use innovative approaches for content delivery (e.g., block scheduling) and assessment to improve completion and reduce student cost.
- Employ High-Impact Practices (HIPs). HIPs are evidence-based teaching and learning practices shown to improve learning and persistence for college students from many backgrounds. Various practices demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback.
- Increase use of predictive analytics to identify and assist students at risk of not completing.
This higher education plan defines marketable skills as:

Those valued by employers that can be applied in a variety of work settings, including interpersonal, cognitive, and applied skill areas. These skills can be either primary or complementary to a major and are acquired by students through education, including curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities.

In an era of increasing global competitiveness, what is the best way to meet workforce needs? Some say, for example, colleges and universities are not meeting workforce needs by graduating too many English and philosophy majors for the job market. The assumption is that some programs of study result in graduates who lack marketable skills. This is not so, especially in Texas where public institutions of higher education have implemented the Core Curriculum, which has six Core Objectives, three of which often are thought of as marketable skills: communications, critical thinking, and teamwork. A student who completes the Core Curriculum will exit with those skills at a basic level.

As students move through progressively higher levels of degree attainment, i.e., an associate to a bachelor’s, they gain progressively higher skill levels. If they are not doing so already, two- and four-year institutions will be able to advance this work by making students aware that they are learning marketable skills in the Core Curriculum.

In 2014, more than 90 percent of employers who participated in a national survey conducted by Hart and Associates identified these skills and abilities as important for new hires:

- Capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems
- Ability to demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity
- Ability to demonstrate intercultural skills
- Capacity for continued new learning

This list makes it clear that liberal arts and other majors have much to contribute to the workforce, but how can the state ensure that all graduates not only gain marketable skills but also can articulate them to potential employers? Students in Texas are currently graduating from two- and four-year colleges with many marketable skills. This goal simply asks institutions to think more explicitly about the programs they offer.

**Thinking Explicitly about Skills**

The programs at many Texas institutions already include learning outcomes within the framework of their courses. The Marketable Skills Goal goes a step further and asks institutions to think explicitly about the job skills students learn within programs. The goal also asks institutions to consider the educational experiences within each program and the functional value of those experiences in the workplace. In other words, this goal asks institutions to think about how students succeed in the workplace.
This change in thinking will result in students being able to articulate their acquired skills to potential employers on a résumé or in a job interview. The capacity to articulate acquired skills will help students to succeed in greater numbers and will help Texas meet its workforce needs. This goal also may incentivize students to complete their degrees as they take courses and begin to see how finishing their programs will benefit them in the workplace.

**Marketable Skills for All Programs, All Types of Degrees**

Identifying marketable skills for each program of study may seem daunting, but this task speaks to why many students pursue higher education. In a 2012 UCLA study, 88 percent of surveyed students identified getting a better job was the motivation for going to college. Given students’ desires to get better jobs and employers’ desires to hire the best workers, identifying marketable skills gained through higher education is essential for both students and employers.

All program types will undergo the process of creating, identifying, and updating marketable skills for this goal, which takes into consideration the complex and diverse nature of the state’s workforce that will affect those tasks. The list of marketable skills that institutions of higher education develop for their programs will be varied and extensive and may require frequent updates, but continuously updating skills will be important because neither academia nor business can predict how skills will evolve or emerge over the next 15 years. Although this goal focuses on Texas public two- and four-year colleges, private and independent institutions of higher education may choose to opt in to this process to align with the efforts of public institutions.

Reaching the 60x30 Goal of 60 percent, however, will be a great achievement only if the skills attained by Texas students – coupled with the skills of those who migrate into the state – meet the demands of the workplace. If most graduates, for example, hold an associate degree, but the available jobs require bachelor’s degrees, Texas will not meet market demand. For this reason, the types of awards held by Texans will be tracked to ensure that the supply of degrees aligns with workforce demand.

**Benefits for Institutions, Students, Employers**

Mapping marketable skills within individual programs of study is central to this goal. This process will make students more aware of the skills and knowledge they are learning, will help institutions identify the skills and knowledge that accompany programmatic learning outcomes, and will help employers understand how those skills align with prospective jobs. To reach this goal, Texas institutions of higher education will need to forge and maintain close partnerships with business organizations and prospective employers to get feedback about the skills needed in specific fields.

**Strategies to Achieve this Goal**

Institutions will need to implement strategies, such as building networks of paid internships, which count as college credit for students. Institutions also may need to consult chambers of commerce, workforce development boards, and other workforce-related organizations to identify marketable skills for particular jobs and industries.

**How this Goal Connects to the 60x30 and Completion Goals**

The Marketable Skills Goal connects to the 60x30 Goal by aligning higher education with workforce needs. It connects to the Completion Goal by providing students with a clearer picture of how their courses relate to workplace success, which may encourage them to persist toward degree completion.

This goal will create new lines of communication between institutions and employers that will open doors to student opportunity and employer satisfaction and innovation. At the same time, this goal will create greater institutional awareness of unique program offerings and opportunities.
Targets to Reach the Goal | 2020 | 2025 | 2030
---|---|---|---
* By 2020, institutions will have created and implemented a process to identify and regularly update marketable skills for each of their programs, in collaboration with business and other stakeholders. | 100% Implemented | Continuously Updated |

Students need to be aware of the marketable skills affiliated with their programs. The targets above ensure that institutions document, update, and communicate to students the skills acquired in their programs so that students can communicate those skills to potential employers. Target years can be modified to accommodate institutional program review cycles.

* Maintain the percentage of students who are found working or enrolled within one year after earning a degree or certificate. | 80% | 80% | 80% |

Having a substantial portion of Texas completers who remain in the state and are employed or pursuing additional education after completing a credential is important for the state’s future. (77.1% as of 2013)

Strategies

**Identify marketable skills in every higher education program.**

**For example:**
- **Convene a statewide group** to explore general characteristics of marketable skills by meta-majors. This group should include representatives from institutions, industry, and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Establish collaborations** among institutions, state, regional, and local employers to define desirable skills, and identify in-demand programs and courses that offer those skills.
- **Leverage existing efforts** (e.g., using Liberal Education and America’s Promise – LEAP – initiative) to ensure that marketable skills are addressed in every program.

**Communicate marketable skills to students, families, and the workforce.**

**For example:**
- Increase the quality and availability of information targeted to students about the transition from higher education to the workforce, including information about the transferability and alignment of skills. This information should be available through academic and career advising strategies.
- Ensure marketable skills are integrated into curricula so that students can demonstrate and communicate those skills through established mechanisms.
The Student Debt Goal addresses balancing and managing student loan debt. The intention is to address student loan debt in Texas before it becomes unmanageable and deters greater numbers of students from seeking a degree. Each Texas public institution of higher education may address this goal and its targets differently, but every institution should seek to create an environment in which the debt students carry after graduation is manageable.

Who Influences College Affordability

College affordability impacts student debt load, and unchecked student debt impacts life choices such as buying a house, raising a family, and saving for retirement. The health of Texas depends on a population that is economically healthy and has discretionary income. College affordability is key, and three groups directly influence college affordability:

- **Students** – Students can make an impact by maintaining the lowest possible debt levels and making good decisions about their time and finances during and after college, by maintaining affordable college lifestyles, and by understanding the total cost of borrowing money.
- **Two- and four-year colleges** – Colleges can affect affordability by striving to reduce expenses, while maintaining quality and ensuring that students know what they are buying and where their educational choices will lead them after college.
- **The state** – The state can influence affordability by adequately funding higher education.

As with other states, about half of the Texas budget comes from taxes. The more discretionary income individuals have, the greater their purchasing power and the greater the state’s potential revenues. Individual purchasing power also affects local governments that heavily depend on property taxes for their operating budgets. A population that can contribute to these tax bases is vital, and students saddled with unreasonable loan debt will be hard pressed to contribute.

The Challenge of More Efficiency

Texas is close to the national average for the cost of a certificate or degree at 1.3 credentials per $100,000 in expenditures. The state’s public institutions ranked 28th nationally in 2013 in state funding, with students receiving an amount of state support also on par with the national average, at about $5,300 per full-time student equivalent.

The challenge is that Texas ranked 23rd in the U.S. in 2013 in the percentage of undergraduate students considered economically disadvantaged, a population projected to grow. To achieve the
Completion and Student Debt Goals, higher education must become more affordable to more of the population. One way to do that is for all stakeholders to work together to reduce the cost per degree.

**Texas Student Debt on the Rise**

Although Texas student debt has not reached national levels, it is on the rise at a rate of 8 to 9 percent annually. At this pace, student debt will become a deterrent to much larger numbers of Texans making decisions about pursuing higher education.

To help students avoid debilitating debt after graduation, Texas public institutions of higher education will need to examine the affordability of attaining a certificate or degree. The less affordable a higher education is, the more debt students will accrue and the more access will be denied for those with the greatest financial need.

This goal focuses on student loan debt in relation to first-year earnings with the understanding that college affordability is critical to achieving this goal and the other higher education goals in this plan.

**Students with Debt but No Degree**

The Student Debt Goal also considers default rates in maintaining a healthy balance between debt levels and earning power. Data from Texas Guaranteed, which are included in the *State of Student Aid and Higher Education in Texas* report, indicate default rates have risen in the last 10 years and that a larger share of students with small loans default when compared to students with large loans. For students who borrow and do not complete their degrees, the average default rate is higher. The state comptroller’s data shows that about one-quarter of Texas student borrowers borrow less than $5,000 and leave college without a degree; of those, one in four defaults.

This issue highlights the connection between the Student Debt and Completion Goals in this plan. Because loan debt undermines the perceived return on investment in higher education, this issue affects the decisions of potential students to pursue college, which has long-term repercussions for students’ earning power and the state’s workforce needs. Given the higher income and tax base associated with education past high school, the state’s revenues will suffer if some students perceive that higher education is an option reserved only for some Texans.

**Strategies to Achieve this Goal**

To achieve this goal, institutions will need to steer students toward degree plans early in their postsecondary careers. Complete College America and others suggest that institutions of higher education need to be more prescriptive in helping students narrow their choices when navigating through higher education. Emphasis in this area will help students avoid taking excessive SCHs, which lead to greater costs and more debt in pursuit of an associate or bachelor’s degree. As of 2014, Texas Guaranteed found that students in Texas averaged 98 SCHs to complete a two-year degree and 145 SCHs to complete a four-year degree, while most programs of study require only 60 and 120 SCHs, respectively. Excessive semester credit hours for degree completion in Texas contribute to student debt and less than timely completions.

Continued institutional emphasis on on-time completion will be integral to helping students avoid the higher costs associated with attending college for a fifth or sixth year in pursuit of a degree. Many studies have shown that the costs associated with the fifth and sixth years of continuous study among six-year graduates are much higher than the first four years and produce much greater student debt. Returning to an expectation that students graduate in four years will help to reduce student debt.

**Student Choices Based on Talent, Interests**

Another intention of this goal is to balance costs relative to areas of study so...
that students can choose programs based on their talents and aspirations and not solely based on the needs of the job market or the starting salary for a particular field. Loan debt, for example, might discourage some students from pursuing a career in K-12 teaching because teachers’ starting salaries are generally lower than the mean for all starting salaries of four-year graduates. The same is true for social workers, journalists, artists, and community workers. As a result, the state could experience greater shortages in important fields, such as teaching and social work, if student loan debt spikes to the point at which a majority of students choose programs based entirely on their potential income.

**Connection to the 60x30 Goal**

The intent of this goal is to increase access and persistence, expand students’ options for careers after graduation, and advance other life choices. Helping students complete credentials and balance debt load will help the state reach the 60x30 Goal and will help two- and four-year colleges in Texas reach the Completion Goal. This goal also will lead to healthier individual finances among graduates and a stronger state economy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal and Interim Benchmarks</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain undergraduate student loan debt at or below 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These benchmarks ensure student loan debt levels stay in balance with the earning potential of the credential. (60% as of 2012)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets to Reach the Goal</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease the excess semester credit hours (SCHs) that students attempt when completing an associate or a bachelor’s degree.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This target focuses on decreasing the total SCHs to degree to reduce costs and debt. (21 as of 2014)*

| Work to limit debt so that no more than half of all students who earn an undergraduate degree or certificate will have debt. | 50% | 50% | 50% |

*This target focuses on decreasing the overall number of students who have student loan debt. (50.7 as of 2014)*
Strategies

Finance higher education in a manner that provides the most effective balance among appropriations, tuition and fees, and financial aid.

Make higher education more affordable for students.

*For example:*

- Fully fund grants for eligible students.
- Support innovative approaches for more affordable credentials.
- Reduce time to degree through alternate degree pathways to completion.

Build the financial literacy of Texans to promote a better understanding of how and why to pay for higher education.

*For example:*

- Implement personal financial literacy programs to support students going to college.
- Convene a statewide advisory group to determine ways to better advise students and parents on financial aid options and the impact of those options on students’ finances before and during their college careers.
The Challenge for Higher Education in Texas

The purpose of the 60x30TX plan is to set goals for higher education in Texas for the next 15 years. This plan takes bold steps toward helping the state to meet the needs of its workforce, communities, and individuals.

To compete and remain relevant in the future, Texas students must attain quality postsecondary credentials, and they must complete those credentials and exit their programs with skills employers need. If students are to graduate, contribute to the state’s revenue, and become more engaged citizens, they also must exit their programs with no debt or with manageable debt, given their incomes. This plan addresses each of these areas through higher education goals aimed at the continued progress of Texas.

By design, this plan is Texas-bold and Texas-achievable. As President John F. Kennedy once said about going to the moon:

We choose to go to the moon ... and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.

(For more information about how this plan was developed, see Appendix A.)


Economic Modeling Specialist International (EMSI). (Jan. 2015). Demonstrating the collective economic value in Texas added by colleges and universities represented by three statewide higher education associations, Executive summary: Moscow, ID.

Faulkner, L. R. (2015, Mar 25). Presentation to the Committee on Affordability, Accountability, and Planning (CAAP), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: Austin, TX.


Strohl, J. (2014, May 22). International benchmarking for what??. Presentation at the meeting of the Texas Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: Austin, TX.


Appendix A: History of the Texas Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee for the 60x30TX Plan

On Dec. 9, 2013, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) staff distributed a memorandum requesting nominations for advisory committee members to all the chancellors and presidents of Texas institutions of higher education. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) sought (1) former governing board members of Texas institutions of higher education, or (2) former presidents and chancellors of higher education institutions. THECB staff also sent requests to the business community and asked for nominations for business representatives who would be willing and able to contribute meaningfully to the work of the committee. The deadline for all nominations was Jan. 10, 2014.

After THECB staff received nominations, they reviewed them to ensure statewide coverage and even representation of all stakeholders. THECB staff then verified that nominees were willing to serve and recruited members from unrepresented areas. Many of the former presidents and chancellors also had worked in faculty positions during their careers.

On Jan. 6, 2014, the 30-day period from the comment period for the new rules concerning the establishment of the Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee ended with no comments received.

At the quarterly meeting of the THECB on Jan. 23, 2014, the THECB: (1) adopted the rules for the Texas Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee (TxHESPC), and (2) voted to authorize the Board Chair and the Chair of the Board Committee on Affordability, Accountability and Planning to approve the membership of the Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee.

Final membership of the Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee was approved in late February 2014, with formal invitation letters sent to Strategic Planning Committee members on Feb. 21.

With the exception of July and December, members of the 2014-15 TxHESPC met monthly from March 2014 through June 2015. The election of the chair and vice chair and charge to the committee occurred at the first meeting. Every meeting included presentations by one or two guest speakers and THECB staff, followed by substantial committee discussion. Speakers included both regional and national experts on topics related to the goals. These discussions led to the goals, targets, and strategies of this plan.

Characteristics of the 60x30TX Plan

The TxHESPC focused on these characteristics for the next long-range higher education plan for Texas. It needed to:

- Be concise and focused
- Contain two to five goals
- Set measurable targets
- Contain broad strategies
- Respond to statewide needs
- Respond to regional needs
- Stimulate creativity and adaptability

| Members of the 2014-15 Texas Higher Education Strategic Planning Committee |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Woody Hunt, Chair                               | Larry R. Faulkner, Ph.D., Vice Chair |
| James R. Anderson, Ph.D.                        | Martin Basaldua, M.D. |
| James Dickerson                                 | Jerry Bawcom, Ph.D. |
| E. D. “Doug” Hodo, Ph.D.                        | Bernie Francis |
| Jerry Massey                                     | Wright Lassiter, Jr., Ph.D. |
| Jerry Turner                                    | Robert Furgason, Ph.D. |
|                                                  | Donald “Dee” Margo |
|                                                  | Laurie Bricker |
|                                                  | Robert Furgason, Ph.D. |
|                                                  | Donald “Dee” Margo |
|                                                  | Lionel Sosa |

23
**Appendix B: Glossary**

**Adult degree completer:** Any student who has several years of life and/or work experience and previous college coursework who returns to an institution of higher education and completes a postsecondary credential.

**Affordable baccalaureate:** The Texas Affordable Baccalaureate (TAB) program is a lower-cost affordable degree. As of 2015, the TAB program offers one program of study, Organizational Leadership. Tuition for this degree is $750 per term. Students are able to accelerate through as many courses per term as possible, provided they demonstrate mastery of the subjects. A student entering the program with no prior college credit should be able to complete the degree in three years for between $13,000 and $15,000.

**Competency-based education:** Competency-based education is a flexible way for students to get credit for what they know; build on their knowledge and skills by learning more at their own pace; and earn high-quality degrees, certificates, and other credentials that help them in their lives and careers. Students in these programs show what they know and how well they know it through multiple ways of evaluating their learning. This is another choice for learning offered at some institutions through a variety of programs, with full support to help students when needed.

**Co-requisite courses:** Courses required to be taken at the same time.

**Economically disadvantaged:** High school students are identified as economically disadvantaged if they receive free or reduced-price lunch while attending high school. College students are identified as economically disadvantaged if they receive Pell at any time while earning their degree.

**Guided pathways:** A structured plan that clearly delineates the requirements and sequence of a program of study.

**Marketable skills:** Those [skills] valued by employers that can be applied in a variety of work settings, including interpersonal, cognitive, and applied skill areas. These skills can be either primary or complementary to a major and are acquired by students through education, including curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities.

**Meta-major:** A grouping of courses to guide a first-year student toward a major in an area (e.g., science, business, arts and humanities, education) while the student still progresses toward graduation. All degrees in a meta-major share common courses. Undecided students can use a meta-major pathway to make more focused, intentional progress toward a degree, thus eliminating the accumulation of unnecessary courses and credits.

**Postsecondary credential:** A degree or a level I, II, or III certificate.

**Soft skills:** Skills broadly applicable to the workplace, but also broadly applicable to higher education. Included would be skills such as communication, both written and oral, critical thinking, and teamwork.

**Stop-out:** A student who temporarily withdraws from school or delays the pursuit of higher education with the intention of re-enrolling in the future.