Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015

April 29, 2010

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Mission of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to help Texas meet the goals of the state's higher education plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015, and thereby provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

Philosophy of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education. The agency will avoid efforts that do not add value or that are duplicated by other entities.

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Accelerated Plan for *Closing the Gaps by 2015*

1. Introduction

Texas launched its ambitious strategic plan for higher education, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, in the year 2000 to create a statewide vision for closing the higher education gaps within Texas and between Texas and other leading states. The plan focuses on bringing Texas to national parity in four critical areas of higher education: participation, success, excellence, and research. This statewide strategic plan is one of the first of its kind, and has been widely embraced by education, business, political, and community stakeholders across Texas.

Closing the Gaps sets specific statewide goals in increasing participation in higher education, increasing success (i.e., certificates, undergraduate degrees, and other identifiable student successes from high quality programs), increasing the number of nationally recognized programs or services at colleges and universities in Texas, and increasing the level of federal science and engineering research and development obligations to Texas. Over the past ten years Texas has reached many significant milestones in *Closing the Gaps*[1] but achieving 2015 goals will require additional efforts and focus by all stakeholders.

Table 1 - *Closing the Gaps* Goal Areas				
CTG Measure	**2000 Actual**	**2009 Actual**	**2010 Target**	**2015 Target**
Statewide Participation[a]	- *(Baseline)*	+368,488	+404,000	+630,000
Statewide Success[b]	116,235	164,175	171,200	210,000
Excellence	*While most institutions report that at least one program has received some type of national recognition, little progress toward reaching the excellence goals tied to national rankings has been made*		*Goal: By 2015, substantially increase the number of nationally recognized programs or services at colleges and universities in Texas.*	
Research [c]	5.5%	5.5%*	6.2%	6.5%

Note: [a]Change in participation since 2000; [b] Actual number of bachelor's and associate's degrees, and certificates; [c] Federal science and engineering research and development obligations; * 2006 data
Source: CTG 2009 progress report, THECB; Texas higher education accountability system

Reaching the goals of *Closing the Gaps* will be a significant accomplishment for Texas. Gains in higher education have the potential to strengthen Texas' economic base, attract innovative businesses and top-flight faculty to the state, generate research funding, improve quality of life, and enhance the overall stature of the state. A study by the Perryman Group found that if Texas achieves these goals by 2015, the state's economy will experience estimated increases of $489 billion in total spending, $194 billion in gross state product, and $122 billion in personal income as well as the creation of over 1 million new jobs by the year 2030.[2]

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[1] Detailed annual progress reports on *Closing the Gaps* are available from the Coordinating Board and its website: http://www.thecb.state.tx.us
[2] The Perryman Group, *"A Tale of Two States - And One Million Jobs!!"* March 2007. Available online at

Achieving the *Closing the Gaps* goals by 2015 is within reach. However, significant gains are needed on several important goal areas where progress is lagging behind targets. In order to reinforce the statewide vision put forth in *Closing the Gaps* and move Texas aggressively toward the 2015 goals, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board) has developed this *Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015*. This plan heightens the agency's focus on four areas where Texas is behind its 2015 targets and highlights strategies that increase the pace of Texas' gains in these critical areas; based on recent years' momentum toward achieving participation goals, the accelerated plan is weighted toward strategies to increase success (i.e., certificate/degree/program completion) for students across Texas.

Table 2 - Accelerated Plan for *Closing the Gaps* Focus Areas					
CTG Measure	Definition	2008 Actual/ Target*	2009 Actual/ Target*	2010 Target	2015 Target
Participation[a]					
- Hispanic	*Enrollment of Hispanic students in post-secondary education*	129,484/ 186,006	162,539 /209,800	236,600	439,000
- African American male students [b]	*Enrollment of African American male students in post-secondary education*	16,288/ 19,105	22,113 /21,678	24,254	31,369
Success[c]					
- Hispanic	*Degrees or certificates earned by Hispanic students*	39,267/ 42,400	44,903 /46,200	50,000	67,000
- African American	*Degrees or certificates earned by African American students*	15,568/ 17,080	18,562 /18,440	19,800	24,300
- STEM [d]	*STEM degrees or certificates earned in Texas*	12,877/ 22,000	13,999 /23,000	24,000	29,000
- Teacher Awards [e]	*Teachers initially certified and teacher effectiveness*	26,168/ 30,280	NA	34,600	44,700

Note: [a]Change in participation since 2000; [b] Estimate; [c] Actual number of bachelor's and associate's degrees and certificates; [d] Includes Physical Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and does not include Biosciences; [e] Includes teachers initially certified through all teacher certification routes; * 2008 and 2009 targets are extrapolation of 2010 goals
Source: CTG 2009 progress report, THECB; Texas higher education accountability system

The Coordinating Board is encouraged by the increase in African American and Hispanic participation and success in 2009 and commends the hard work of all students and stakeholders leading to these improved outcomes. However, historically low participation and success rates warrant sustained focus and efforts from the Coordinating Board and stakeholders to consolidate these gains and move further towards 2015 *Closing the Gaps* goals.

While nursing awards[3] is an area where Texas also needs to make significant progress, this goal area has already garnered legislative support and built momentum (e.g. Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program). Similarly, the State Legislature has approved and funded a number of initiatives (e.g., Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program, HB 51 on establishing national research universities) to support the creation of additional Tier One universities, which have set Texas on a path towards

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http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/1345.PDF?CFID=198559&CFTOKEN=42486351
[3] While Texas is on track to meet *Closing the Gaps* goals for nursing awards, the Texas Workforce Commission has released demand estimates for nurses that are higher than those used in *Closing the Gaps*. Thus, additional efforts will be required to meet the critical demand for nurses in the state.

excellence in higher education. Although the Coordinating Board will continue efforts in these three areas to ensure that the state makes progress across all areas of *Closing the Gaps*, the emphasis of this accelerated plan is on the four areas above.

The agency staff drafted the accelerated plan, and the Coordinating Board engaged FSG Social Impact Advisors, a nonprofit research and consulting firm, to obtain critical feedback from key stakeholders and refine the plan based on collected research and feedback. To do so, FSG worked closely with the board and staff of the Coordinating Board and gathered external input from over 70 Texas stakeholders and national experts.[4]

2. Strategies to Accelerate Progress Towards *Closing the Gaps*

Achieving the changes in policy and practice necessary to reach the state's goals by 2015 will require bold and coordinated action by multiple stakeholders in Texas. This accelerated plan outlines the strategies that the Coordinating Board will pursue to foster progress towards 2015 goals and highlights areas where key stakeholders such as higher education institutions, the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), P-12 system, the business community, and others can play an active role. The Coordinating Board will provide leadership, support, coordination, and accountability to ensure that the dedicated focus of the agency and its key partners together achieve the critical *Closing the Gaps* goals and provide Texas students with a high quality, aligned education pipeline all the way through workforce entry.

In addition to pursuing strategies that help Texas achieve *Closing the Gaps* goals by 2015, the Coordinating Board will also work on areas that have a longer timeframe to impact but are critical to lay the groundwork for longer term success (e.g., statewide implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards, improving teacher effectiveness).

a) Strategies for the Coordinating Board

i) Participation of Hispanic Students and African American Male Students

Despite significant growth in the past decade, participation among Hispanic students and African American male students is still below *Closing the Gaps* targets. To accelerate progress in this area, the Coordinating Board will intensify efforts to contribute to all high school students having access to a rigorous curriculum that prepares them for college and careers and will promote a college-going campaign.

To achieve participation goals, the Coordinating Board will:

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[4] See Appendix for a list of stakeholders engaged in creating the *Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015*

- **Intensify efforts to provide all high school students with rigorous curriculum**.
  – Continue working with TEA and institutions of higher education in the statewide implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards.
  – Work in partnership with institutions of higher education and TEA to ensure consistent rigor across dual credit courses (e.g., developing common learning objectives for dual credit courses).
  – Ensure that funding mechanisms for dual credit are consistent across all districts and geographies to enable increased course quality and access for students.
  – Fund implementation of effective Bridge Programs and other promising models at institutions with high numbers of under-prepared Hispanic and African American students who met high school graduation standards, have strong academic records, but who have not met TSI standards.
- **Promote a college-going culture through a public information campaign**.
  – Design and implement a statewide college-going campaign that informs, inspires, and encourages all students in Texas to prepare for, pursue, and persist in post-secondary education.
  – In the campaign, include specific messages targeted to Hispanic and African American students and deliver messages that take into account differences in regional needs (e.g., rural communities versus Metroplex).
  – Strengthen P-16 councils by increasing collaboration between regional and state P-16 councils and sharing best practices among regional P-16 councils
  – Partner with P-16 councils and other education collaborations to create regional initiatives to provide students with a seamless education pipeline through workforce entry, focusing on regions with high Hispanic and African American populations.

ii) Success of Hispanic and African American Students.

Focusing on strategies that support increased persistence and completion will be one of the Coordinating Board's highest priorities to move towards 2015 goals. While increasing student preparation and participation as described above will help build a strong pipeline of future graduates, increasing success rates by 2015 requires dedicated strategies, at the state level and at the institutions of higher education, to significantly increase persistence and completion rates for post-secondary students.

To lead the state toward the success goals of *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, the Coordinating Board will focus on improving the effectiveness of developmental education, advocating for finance policy that supports priority goals, accelerating the implementation of comprehensive student support systems, increasing the relevance of the accountability framework and accessibility of data, accelerating the development of comprehensive transfer agreements and learning outcomes, and continuing to place a strong emphasis on strengthening results at community colleges.

The Coordinating Board will work closely with all higher education institutions to advance these priorities, with additional emphasis placed on community colleges and the increasingly important role they play in contributing to success goals – particularly for Hispanic and African American students. As an example, over 60 percent of Hispanic students chose community colleges as their gateway to post-secondary education in 2009, which represents 35 percent of community college students. Furthermore, the number of Hispanic students at community colleges is expected to more than double by 2030. It is also important to note that community colleges serve a majority of Texas' post-secondary student population, provide a cost effective option for the state and for students, and help a widely diverse student body complete programs.

To achieve success goals, the Coordinating Board will:

- **Improve the effectiveness of developmental education**.
    – Fund large and small replicable demonstration projects to identify and then implement best practices statewide.
    – Use accountability system data to identify and raise awareness about the specific challenges to effective delivery of developmental education.
    – Improve programmatic effectiveness and develop long term plans to re-invent developmental education at a systemic level to ensure that the developmental education system:
        - Is adequately funded.
        - Offers students customized pathways to progress towards credit bearing courses.
        - Accurately diagnoses student needs and places students, when appropriate, in modular courses to address those needs.
        - Identifies students requiring adult basic education and provides appropriate placement and assistance for those students.
        - Uses pedagogic tools that accommodate varied learning styles.
        - Equips students with the content knowledge and study skills necessary to pass gate-keeping courses.
        - Provides highly effective faculty and a consistent pedagogic approach between credit bearing courses and developmental education.
        - Provides support services that address the diverse needs of students.
        - Provides ongoing professional development for faculty.
        - Incorporates ongoing rigorous evaluation to track effectiveness.

- **Provide recommendations to align finance policy instruments with success goals**.
    – Make legislative recommendations that align higher education institution funding formulas with success goals of the state (e.g., funding on course completion and ultimately, outcomes-based funding). Recommendations will:
        - Address the different impacts of funding on student course completion (instead of student enrollment on the 12th class day) at public four-year institutions and funding on momentum points at public community colleges (e.g., funding based on milestones that measure the progression of students).

- Reflect the findings on cost efficiency gains.
  – Prioritize TEXAS Grants based on financial need and high school academic preparation to increase persistence and graduation rates at public universities.
  – Increase incentive funding that provides additional support to institutions working towards state success goals (e.g., production of STEM degrees and teachers).

- **Accelerate the implementation of comprehensive student support systems in institutions with high Hispanic and African American enrollment**.
  – Provide grant funding that stimulates institutional investment in comprehensive support systems (e.g., "early alert" systems, freshmen experience/success programs like AVID, flexible advising systems, learning communities, robust orientation seminars).
  – Build evaluation metrics in grant funding that provide insights about the effectiveness of funded programs.
  – Support cross-institutional teams of faculty and administrators to facilitate shared learning, surface best/promising practices, and address implementation challenges of providing comprehensive student support.

- **Increase the impact of the accountability framework and the accessibility of data**.
  – Redesign the statistics website to increase usability and allow higher levels of interaction and customization.
  – Redesign the graphic layout and language used in institutional resumes to make resumes more accessible and user friendly for institutions, parents, and students.
  – Continue to provide education data by key population subgroups (e.g., Hispanic, African American) to monitor progress and raise awareness about key challenges these students face.
  – Work with TEA to align systems and conduct longitudinal data studies that allow the state to easily follow students through the education pipeline and more comprehensively identify drivers and challenges to student success (e.g., Pathways projects).
  – Increase Coordinating Board members and senior staff's direct use of accountability system data to engage with IHE governing bodies and leadership.
  – Work through P-16 councils to inform and engage parents and students on relevant post-secondary issues.
  – Build the capacity of key stakeholders to use data available through the accountability system (e.g., training for legislators/staff on use of the Coordinating Board's data bases).

- **Accelerate the development of comprehensive transfer agreements and learning outcomes.**
    - Replicate the process of developing a comprehensive mechanical engineering transfer agreement across 16 areas by the end of 2013. This effort will emphasize STEM disciplines with low transfer rates and also include additional fields (e.g., business).
    - Work with institutions of higher education to identify disciplines where defining learning outcomes will strengthen transfer among institutions and improve students' ability to plan their pathway through higher education.

- **Place a strong emphasis on community colleges**, where 60percent of Hispanic students choose as their gateway to post-secondary education.
    - Focus on key community college issues:
        - In addition to developing comprehensive transfer agreements and improving developmental education (as mentioned above), develop common lower division courses, and pursue approval and implementation of momentum funding.
        - Coordinate and partner with existing major efforts focused on community colleges (e.g., Achieving the Dream, The Gates Foundation Post-Secondary Education Program, and Democracy's Colleges Call to Action).
    - Expand communications and heighten the messages about the critical role that community colleges play:
        - Make a concerted effort across the agency (staff and board) to strengthen and communicate messages about the importance of community colleges to the State of Texas, helping stakeholders to understand these institutions' unique and essential role.
        - Highlight community college success stories to raise their profile in public discourse.
    - Expand meaningful dialogue and partnership with community colleges: prioritize senior staff and board time to deepen partnerships with both community college associations (e.g., Texas Association of Community Colleges) and key individual institutions (e.g., conversations between Coordinating Board members and trustees of six largest community colleges).

iii) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Degrees

Increasing the number of STEM awards is a key priority to increase Texas competitiveness. Over half of the 30 occupations projected to be the fastest growing through 2016 require significant math and science preparation. In 2005, the T-STEM statewide initiative, designed to increase the number of students who study and enter STEM careers, was launched with support from the state and federal government as well as three major philanthropic donors. In 2009, Governor Perry announced a $160M initiative to expand this initiative. However, while progress is being made as a result of

the T-STEM initiative and efforts by the Coordinating Board and higher education institutions, achieving overall STEM goals still remains a challenge.

The Coordinating Board will build on its existing efforts and on strong support from the Texas Legislature to strengthen the pipeline of prepared STEM students and enable institutions of higher education to build their capacity to graduate more STEM students. To achieve STEM goals, the Coordinating Board will:

- **Advocate for and fund opportunities for undergraduates to engage in applied learning experiences**.
    – Create opportunities for additional collaboration between industry and institutions of higher education, especially in non-engineering STEM fields, to foster internship opportunities and increase alignment of curriculum with industry needs.
    – Implement the legislative requirement for the Norman Hackerman Advanced Research Program to include undergraduate students in funded projects at general academic institutions as well as undergraduate and/or graduate students at health-related institutions.

- **Fund opportunities for faculty professional development**.
    – Provide incentives and fund professional development opportunities to STEM faculty as part of a statewide effort to develop a student success culture (e.g., support faculty peer groups focused on promoting promising practices in academic support services).

- **Provide financial incentives to students and institutions.**
    – Conduct analysis to evaluate viability of increasing incentives in formula funding for STEM degree/certificate completion.
    – Support institutions of higher education in bundling and targeting financial aid to increase STEM enrollment and completion rates (e.g., consider creating a statewide advisory board of financial officers, administrators, and Coordinating Board staff to identify best/promising practices and potential recommendations for state-administered financial aid programs focused on students pursuing STEM degrees).

iv) Teachers Initially Certified through All Teacher Certification Routes and Teacher Effectiveness

The Coordinating Board recognizes the critical role that teachers play in preparing students to pursue post-secondary education. In partnership with TEA and the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), the Coordinating Board has supported schools of education and their affiliated programs in increasing the number of teachers that are certified every year. To that end, *Closing the Gaps* includes targets for overall teacher certification and for critical fields with teacher shortages such as STEM.

Additionally, the Coordinating Board wants to further emphasize the critical role P-12 teachers play in preparing students for higher education by expanding the focus of this

Closing the Gaps goal to include teacher *effectiveness*. Highly effective teachers have great influence on preparing students for participation and success in post-secondary education. The agency has already begun to actively support higher education institutions in improving the effectiveness of their teacher education programs, and this enhanced focus will bring additional resources and draw increased stakeholder attention to this critical area. The accelerated plan lays out initial near and long term strategies the Coordinating Board and stakeholders in Texas can use to ensure the effectiveness of teachers and teacher training programs. However, further collaboration between the Coordinating Board, TEA, SBEC, higher education institutions, and alternative certification providers is needed to identify additional opportunities to contribute to the common goal of increasing teacher effectiveness.

To achieve teacher certificate and effectiveness goals, the Coordinating Board will:

- **Use finance policy to provide incentives to recruit and retain effective teachers and school leaders.**
  - Adjust financial need limits for the Educational Aide Exemption program to enable more students to pursue careers in teaching.
  - Analyze the potential impact of creating a merit awards program to provide incentives for STEM professionals/retirees to get a teacher certification.
  - Recognize the increasing importance of community colleges in creating a pipeline of diverse teachers by supporting efforts to create comprehensive transfer agreements and by increasing the percentage of Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG) grants awarded to teacher candidates (e.g., earmarking a percent of TEOG or increasing awareness of financial officers to identify teacher candidates for TEOG awards).
- **Disseminate and promote best/promising practices in teacher education**.
  - Increase support for existing collaborations and demonstration projects to identify challenges and support the implementation of best/promising practices in preparing effective teachers.
  - Provide additional incentive funding to higher education institutions to implement and expand best/promising practices in preparing effective teachers (e.g., early field experience).
  - Convene a task force that includes TEA, SBEC, institutions of higher education, and alternative certification programs to identify additional strategies to improve teacher effectiveness in Texas.

b) Areas of Suggested Focus for Key Stakeholders

Achieving *Closing the Gaps* goals requires the concerted and sustained focus of key stakeholders across the state. The Coordinating Board has identified areas of focus where the contribution of key partners will be critical to accelerate progress towards the 2015 goals of *Closing the Gaps*.

i) Texas State Legislature

- **Participation: Increase Hispanic student and African American male student participation**
  - Increase financial aid for economically disadvantaged students.
- **Success: Increase Hispanic, African American and STEM awards**
  - Align funding formulas with success goals of the state (i.e., funding on course completion and ultimately, outcomes-based funding).
  - Support efforts to prioritize TEXAS Grants for students with financial need and strong academic preparation.
  - Increase incentive and grant funding to support institutions pursuing state success goals (e.g., to support comprehensive student support services, developmental education).

ii) Institutions of Higher Education

- **Participation: Increase Hispanic student and African American male student participation**
  - Structure financial aid packages to provide incentives to increase the participation of Hispanic, African American and non-traditional students, as well as students pursuing a degree in priority areas (e.g., STEM, teaching).

  - Actively engage with local school districts to provide access to rigorous, high quality, dual credit opportunities for qualified high school students.
  - Increase outreach efforts, dissemination of information, and financial aid counseling to high school students, focusing on Hispanic and African American populations.
- **Success: Increase Hispanic, African American and STEM awards**
  - Develop and continually improve comprehensive student support services that provide advising and academic support that meets the needs of the student body, especially Hispanic and African American students.
  - Ensure academic courses and comprehensive student support services are available for both traditional and non-traditional students (e.g., after-hours or online tutoring services for students who hold jobs while pursuing higher education).
  - Engage leadership and staff across the institution (e.g., faculty, administrators, governing bodies) in the systematic use of timely student persistence data and development of policies that retain students and help them succeed, emphasizing the persistence and success of African American and Hispanic students.
  - Engage in collaborative efforts with other institutions of higher education to ensure a seamless transition between colleges and universities (e.g., participation in comprehensive transfer agreements).

- – Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of developmental education in diagnosing, placing, and moving students towards college readiness and credit bearing courses.
- – Provide professional development opportunities for higher education STEM faculty on interactive classroom methods, mentoring, and integration of undergraduate students in their research activities.
- – Increase dialogue with the local business community (e.g., employers, regional economic development groups) to align education offerings with workforce needs.

- **Success: Increase number of teachers initially certified through all teacher certification routes and teacher effectiveness**
  - – Expand partnerships between schools of education and STEM faculty to increase number and quality of STEM teachers and ensure that STEM teachers master key pedagogic techniques (e.g., project-based teaching) in addition to content knowledge.
  - – Support collaborations of faculty across institutions to identify challenges and promote best/promising practices in preparing effective teachers.
  - – Leverage teacher performance data from graduates (as available) to revise and improve teacher education programs.
  - – Strengthen dialogue with local school districts to better measure teacher demand, align classroom management and instructional approaches with latest research and district needs, and provide opportunities for education students to get early classroom experience.

iii) Texas Education Agency and P-12 System[5]

- **Participation: Increase Hispanic student and African American male student participation**
  - – Promote a college-going culture that communicates to students and their families that all Texans will have the opportunity and support to pursue post-secondary education and sets high expectations at early ages, emphasizing outreach to African American and Hispanic families.
  - – Support the provision of information to Hispanic and African American students and their families about higher education through high school counseling services and P-16 councils (e.g., create a comprehensive web portal with college information).
  - – Intensify efforts to provide all high school students with rigorous curriculum through the implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards.
  - – Align dual credit courses with high school curriculum and ensure uniform quality.

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[5] Texas Independent School Districts and supporting organizations

- **Success: Increase number of teachers initially certified through all teacher certification routes and teacher effectiveness**
  – Attract transitioning professionals and develop flexible models to bring practitioner STEM professionals into the classroom (e.g., professionals as part-time teachers, fast credentialing for transitioning professionals).
  – Support teacher development and placement based on performance assessments.
  – Work closely with the SBEC to ensure certification requirements better assess future teacher effectiveness (e.g., include mastery of College and Career Readiness Standards in certification requirements).

iv) Texas Business and Economic Development Community

- **Success: Increase Hispanic, African American and STEM awards**
  – Participate in a dialogue with the education community and the Texas Legislature to ensure higher education programs are aligned with the state's workforce needs.
  – Increase collaboration between institutions of higher education and regional employers to provide undergraduates pursuing STEM degrees with opportunities to engage in applied learning (e.g., paid internships that provide academic credit).
  – Participate in local P-16 councils to promote seamless pathways from P-16 through workforce entry.
  – Participate in efforts to measure and communicate workforce needs and the value of higher education to Texas employers.

- **Participation: Increase Hispanic student and African American male student participation**
  – Encourage and support employee lifelong learning and pursuit of post-secondary education,
  – Participate in and contribute to the statewide college-going campaign.

3. Coordinating Board Approaches to Implementing the *Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015*

In order to effectively implement the strategic priorities highlighted above, the Coordinating Board will provide legislative recommendations, strengthen its partnerships with key stakeholders, and use data strategically to encourage changes in practice and behavior. *Closing the Gaps* highlights the opportunity that Texas must bring its higher education outcomes to national parity, to significantly improve the accessibility and quality of education for its populace, and to enrich the future of both individuals and the state. These approaches will help make *Closing the Gaps* a priority for all Texans and will lead the state towards achieving 2015 goals.

a) Providing Legislative Recommendations

By providing recommendations to the Texas Legislature, the Coordinating Board can accelerate systemic change across the state. The Coordinating Board is finalizing its legislative agenda for 2011 and developing a plan for engaging key stakeholders in the process. Recommendations for the 2011 legislative session will primarily focus on finance policy:

- Aligning funding formulas with success goals of the state.
- Continuing efforts to prioritize TEXAS Grants based on financial need and high school academic preparation to increase persistence and graduation rates at public universities.
- Continuing and enhancing financial incentives for institutions and students to increase STEM awards and the number of teachers.

b) Strengthening Partnerships with Key Stakeholders

The change that the Coordinating Board envisions for Texas relies on the concerted action and impact of multiple stakeholders pursuing the vision outlined in *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. Thus, strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders including institutions of higher education, TEA, and the business community will be a key priority for the Coordinating Board in the coming years.

The Coordinating Board will strengthen partnerships with institutions of higher education through several approaches including:

- Broadening the role that the full staff and board of the Coordinating Board play in outreach to and engagement with institutions of higher education, especially with community colleges.
- Providing customized and actionable data that allows all parties to collectively focus on priorities, gauge progress, and identify challenges.
- Engaging institutions in collaboratively developing legislative recommendations and presenting a united voice for higher education to the Legislature.
- Engaging institutions in pursuing strategies that increase alignment among institutions and support *Closing the Gaps* goals (e.g., transfer agreements).

The Coordinating Board will heighten collaboration with TEA in priority areas:
- Ensuring that college and career readiness standards are aligned with college requirements and widely implemented across the state.
- Expanding access to and increasing rigor of dual credit courses.
- Exploring best/promising practices in Adult Basic Education and potentially co-developing relevant recommendations for the state by 2013.

The Coordinating Board will heighten collaboration with the Legislature in priority areas:
- Redesigning the agency's website

- Offering trainings to improve access to the Coordinating Board's data
- Improving internal processes to provide faster responses to legislative requests
- Increasing proactive outreach to legislators to identify additional areas where it can provide them with targeted information in higher education issues.

The Coordinating Board will heighten collaboration with the workforce in priority areas:
- Supporting dialogue between institutions of higher education and the business community to foster alignment between post-secondary education and workforce needs as defined by state and regional economic development groups

c) Using Data Strategically to Instigate Change

The Coordinating Board houses a wealth of data that it can use to report on state and institutional progress, proactively educate stakeholders, highlight successes, and draw attention to institutional or statewide challenges. Continuing to strategically leverage data will be at the core of the Coordinating Board's effort to mobilize stakeholders and steer action towards the goals of *Closing the Gaps*. More specifically, the Coordinating Board will work to ensure that data helps focus key stakeholders' attention on the priorities of *Closing the Gaps*, draws attention from the media to inform the general public on state priorities and progress, and provides legislators and institutions of higher education with timely and actionable information.

In order to emphasize the strategic use of data, the Coordinating Board will focus on making data more accessible, ensuring data are fully understood and used for decision making, and using data to instigate changes in policy, practice or behavior.

- Making data accessible: Providing and publicizing accessible and tailored dissemination tools for key higher education data (e.g., through website, institutional resumes).
- Ensuring data are understood and used for decision making: Organizing and supporting activities that build the capacity of stakeholders (e.g., legislators, institutions of higher education) to interpret and use data for their decision making.
- Using data to instigate changes in policy, practice or behavior: Leveraging objective data in individual conversations or public forums to highlight successes and point out gaps that drive change on statewide priorities.

4. Beyond 2015

Achieving *Closing the Gaps* will be essential for Texas to meet the needs of its growing workforce, build strong and vibrant communities, and catalyze a dynamic, innovative, and globally competitive economy. While it will be challenging to do so, reaching national parity is achievable if stakeholders across the state take strong, coordinated action over the next five years.

Texas, however, must strive for even greater gains in student success and higher education excellence *beyond* 2015 that elevate Texas' higher education system to a

position of national and global leadership. Thus, while the Coordinating Board's efforts and energy in the near term are focused on implementing the *Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015* and monitoring state and institutional progress towards 2015 goals, the agency and its partners will also begin to lay the foundation necessary to reach levels of performance that match and exceed those of the highest performing states and nations. In the coming years, the agency will work with a broad base of stakeholders across the state to develop and implement a post-*Closing the Gaps* vision for Texas that aspires to national and global leadership.

5. Appendix

a) Overview of the Coordinating Board Strategic Planning Process

In November 2009, the Coordinating board initiated a strategic planning process to accelerate progress towards *Closing the Gaps by 2015* and create a cohesive vision that begins to lay the groundwork for the long term leadership of Texas Higher Education. More specifically, the goals for the strategic planning process were to:

- Assess progress in *Closing the Gaps* and develop strategies to focus the state's efforts on areas in which the state is furthest behind.
- Develop strategies to support an outcomes-based student centered culture at Texas public colleges and universities.
- Begin the development of a post-*Closing the Gaps* vision and strategic plan for Texas higher education.

The Coordinating Board's staff and board guided the strategic planning process and retained FSG Social Impact Advisors to facilitate the process with grant support from the Gates Foundation, the Greater Texas Foundation, Houston Endowment, Inc., and the Meadows Foundation. FSG Social Impact Advisors is an international nonprofit consulting and research firm dedicated to accelerating progress on social issues by providing strategic consulting and evaluation services to philanthropic funders, nonprofits, government agencies, and other social outcomes focused organizations.

The Coordinating Board wishes to thank the grant funders, the Texas High School Project and Communities Foundation of Texas for serving as the fiscal agent for the grant, and the following local and national stakeholders who generously offered their time and expertise to enrich this strategic planning process. Interviewees included:

Table 3 – List of Stakeholders Engaged in the Strategic Planning Process	
Interviewee	**Organization**
Dr. Larry Abraham	Professor, University of Texas – Uteach
Rosita Apodaca	Fellow, Institute for Learning
Bruce Austin	Trustee, Houston Community College
Barbara Knaggs	Associate Commissioner, Texas Education Agency
Mark Baxter	Policy Analyst, Texas High School Project
Dr. Estela Bensimon	Co-direct, Center for Urban Education
Lenny Benton	Student Regent, Midwestern State University
Hunter Bollman	Student Regent, Texas A&M System

Pamela Midgett	Counselor, Midwestern State University
Kyle Miller	Student Regent, Texas Tech University System
Kerry Moll	Program Director, New Teacher Project
Nancy Neal	Student Regent, Texas Tech University System
Marisha Negovetich	Staff, Governor's Office
Dr. Robert Nelsen	President, University of Texas Pan American
John Opperman	Special Advisor for Budget Policy, Lieutenant Governor's Office
Jennifer Ozan	Student Regent, University of North Texas System – Health Science Center
William Powers	President, University of Texas at Austin
Reo Pruiett	Program Officer, Texas High School Project
Lizzette Reynolds	Deputy Commissioner, Texas Education Agency
Dr. Richard Rhodes	President, El Paso Community College District
Wynn Rosser	Executive Director, Greater Texas Foundation
Deborah Santiago	Vice President of Policy and Research, Excelencia in Education
Dr. John Schacter	Founder, The Teaching Doctors
Drew Scheberle	Vice President of Education and Workforce Development, Austin Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Felicia Scott	President, Texas Association of Black Personnel in Higher Education
Suzie Strzelec	Staff, Senator Florence Shapiro
Larry Temple	Executive Director, Texas Workforce Commission
Hunter Thompson	Staff, House Committee on Appropriations, Education Subcommittee
Diane Troyer	Senior Program Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Dr. Joel Vargas	Program Director, Jobs for the Future
Dr. Warren Von Eschenbach	Staff, Senator Judith Zaffirini
Porter Wilson	Staff, Senator Robert Duncan
David Young	Staff, Governor's Office
Elizabeth Young	Policy Analyst, Texas Public Policy Foundation
Roberto Zarate	Trustee, Alamo Colleges

b) Long Term Strategies for Texas

Over the next five years, the efforts of the Coordinating Board will focus on accelerating progress towards *Closing the Gaps* goals and achieving national parity. The agency has also begun to look beyond 2015 goals and will begin pursuit of selected strategies now to lay the groundwork for achieving national and global leadership by 2030. These strategies have a longer timeline to realizing their impact and will be regularly monitored by the Coordinating Board. Key long term strategies include:

- **Participation: Increase Hispanic student and African American male student participation**
  - Develop an affordability framework for financing post-secondary education that coordinates state appropriations, tuition policy, and student aid policy to

ensure the affordability of higher education for the state as well as for students and their families.

– Continually review and strengthen College and Career Readiness Standards.
– Expand the statewide college-going campaign.

- **Success: Increase Hispanic, African American and STEM awards**
    – Support efforts that increase alignment of faculty and administrators with success and excellence goals.
    – Support widespread articulation of learning outcomes (e.g., supporting cross-institutional faculty teams to develop common learning outcomes, developing policy recommendations requiring explicit and public articulation of learning outcomes per course and qualification frameworks across occupations and credentials at higher education institutions).
    – Conduct further research and analysis on the impact of linking the TEXAS Grant program with early promise programs.
    – Develop a strategy to attract and retain adult learners in post-secondary education.
    – Work with TEA to ensure P-12 students have access to engaging and rigorous academic STEM preparation and exposure to STEM college and career role models and experiences.

- **Success: Increase number of teachers initially certified through all teacher certification routes and teacher effectiveness**
    – Work closely with TEA to provide professional development opportunities on content knowledge and instructional approaches to current P-12 STEM teachers, especially in middle and high school.
    – Partner with TEA to establish and fund a Teacher Career Awareness Program for high school students with an emphasis on STEM fields.
    – Increase funding for teacher preparation programs to implement best practices such as early field experience or online training.
    – Support institutions in using performance data of P-12 teachers to increase the rigor of education programs and certification requirements.
    – Work closely with the SBEC and TEA to incorporate knowledge of College and Career Readiness Standards into teacher certification requirements and to use teacher performance data to tighten accreditation requirements.
    – Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of loan forgiveness programs as an incentive to attract and retain teachers.
    – Commission a study to understand and communicate best practices in increased collaboration between colleges of education and colleges of arts and sciences as a strategy for improving the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs.

c) 2009 *Closing the Gaps* Progress Report (Executive Summary) [6]

When *Closing the Gaps by 2015: The Texas Higher Education Plan* was adopted in October 2000, the executive summary of the plan cautioned that there was a looming crisis in higher education in Texas:

> "At present, the proportion of Texans enrolled in higher education is declining. Too few higher education programs are noted for excellence and too few higher education research efforts have reached their full potential. Texas must take bold steps for the future success of its people."

The progress report presents objective measures of the results of those "bold steps," for the midway point for achieving the *Closing the Gaps* goals. There is reason to be hopeful: the proportion of Texans enrolled in higher education increased from 5.0 percent in fall 2000 to 5.4 percent in fall 2008. African American participation increased from 4.6 percent to 5.6 percent during that period and was higher than the participation rate of the White population, Hispanics, and the state as a whole. Hispanic enrollment climbed by 54.5 percent from 2000 to 2008.

Despite these successes, Texas must take even bolder steps for higher education. Hispanic participation grew from 3.7 percent of the population in fall 2000 to just 4.0 percent in fall 2008. To reach the 2015 target of 5.7 percent, Hispanic enrollment will need to grow by 310,000 students (84.3 percent), a daunting task given that the majority of these students will come from economically disadvantaged families and typically have high dropout rates in high school. Undergraduate degrees and awards in technology were barely higher in 2008 than in 2000 and need to increase by 125 percent to meet the 2015 target. Federal obligations for R&D in science and engineering were virtually unchanged between FY 2005 and FY 2006, leaving Texas institutions' share of national obligations unchanged at 5.5 percent, considerably below the 2010 and 2015 targets of 6.2 and 6.5 percent.

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[6] The full report can be downloaded at
http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/1852.PDF?CFID=4306374&CFTOKEN=56364117

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Website: **http://www.thecb.state.tx.us**

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