GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

Texas College Access Inventory

National College Access Network

Building Connections. Advancing Equity. Promoting Success.

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Executive Summary

The first decade of the 21st century came to a close in the United States with the country still working to come out of a significant economic recession and many states facing difficult decisions for funding education. In this setting, the National College Access Network (NCAN) and Greater Texas Foundation worked together to survey the state of college access and success in Texas at the end of 2010. Texans believe they can and must do more to increase the number of their citizens who pursue education beyond high school and succeed once they are enrolled in a postsecondary program. They also recognize that the time for action is now. Those surveyed and interviewed during the course of this project expressed grave concern about how low-income, first-generation college students will be impacted by the new economic realities in Texas and nationwide.

Also important to the backdrop of college access and success in Texas is the enormous projected increases for the Latino population in the state. This is of concern because given that rising population, Texas needs to 1) create and fill more rapidly jobs that require education beyond high school, and 2) provide more college access services to students from the Latino community. These potential first-generation college students almost always need considerably more help than their peers whose families are more highly educated. The dramatic growth rate of minorities in Texas will profoundly affect the high school and college graduation rates in the future. In FY 2009, the college participation rate for U.S. students from low-income families was 27.4%. The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds in Texas who were enrolled in college was 21.5, placing the state in 41st place in this category. These population changes also have significant ramifications for the state's future workforce.

Many organizations are working to increase the number of Texans who pursue postsecondary education, and there is widespread support for multiple education initiatives to reach the common goal of education excellence and increased participation in higher education. Given the number of players in Texas, it is important that the state has a well coordinated and comprehensive plan of action. The purpose of this analysis is to consider whether there is value in and support for a statewide network that would complement the efforts and create a fuller understanding of the work undertaken by various college access providers within the state and identify gaps or duplication of services and programs. The goal for this work is to demonstrate support for such a network and will increase collaboration, networking, and general communication among stakeholders committed to college access, thus reducing duplication of services and ultimately resulting in the most effective use of scarce resources to increase the college attendance and success of Texans.

Because Texas is so vast, examining the state only as a whole would not show the entire picture. With guidance from Greater Texas Foundation, NCAN divided the state into six regions. For each region, researchers examined education levels; reviewed the ethnic mix of the population; and compared the regions to one another and to the state and nation as a whole. NCAN created the regions by combining the 20 Texas Education Agency (TEA) Education Service Centers (ESC) into six groups: Northeast, East, Central, Panhandle, West Texas, and South Texas. These regions are by no means definitive for the state but rather a working tool for the discussion in this report. The map in Figure 1 shows the regions.

The Greater Texas Foundation contracted with NCAN to conduct this analysis. The report consists of three parts: 1) a review of Texas's population and educational attainment by region and in comparison to the nation as a whole; 2) a statewide and regional survey of college access and success programs; and 3) a stakeholder review and analysis of college access services.

The research review sets the context for both the survey and stakeholder interviews. The information in the review and statistics used in the report were obtained from various sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher

Education as well as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer, and the Texas Education Agency.

Key data points from the comparative research include the following:

- The Texas population is growing at a rate that is much higher than the nation as a whole. The U.S. Census Bureau projected in 2000 that the population of the United States will grow 19.3% by 2020. Texas's growth is projected to increase by 37.3% during that same time period.

- Major differences between the United States and Texas include the proportion of Latinos as compared to the population of other ethnic groups and to the White population. In 2009, 15.8% of the U.S. population was reported to be Hispanic or Latino. In Texas that percentage was 36.9.

- Projected demographic changes across the six designated Texas regions are uneven. For example, the West Texas region is projected to experience a 17.9% drop in the White population, while the same population is expected to increase by 17.9% in the Central region. The Panhandle, West Texas, and Central regions are projected to experience a respective 74.2%, 50.7%, and 49.8% increase in the Latino population. South Texas, where the Latino population was 61% in 2009, expects only a 4.3% increase in this demographic by 2020.

- The high school dropout rate for the United States in 2007–08 was 4.1%, while the dropout rate for Texas was 4.0%, according to the Common Core of Data from the U.S. Department of Education. Dropout rates vary significantly throughout the designated regions.

- As of 2009, Texas had aligned high school standards and graduation requirements with college and workplace expectations.

- According to the 2006–08 American Community Survey, the percentage of Americans 25 years and older who had a high school diploma or higher, including equivalency, was 84.5. In 2009, this percentage had inched up to 85.3. A lower percentage of Texans (79.2) in the same age range had high school diplomas in 2006–08, and 79.9% had this level of education in 2009.

- The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) also has compiled data on the average freshman graduation rate (AFGR; the rate for a cohort of students entering as freshmen and graduating from high school in four years) for public school students and reports the AFGR to be 74.9% for the nation as a whole and 73.1% for Texas in 2008. Graduation rates throughout the designated regions vary significantly.

In the second phase of our work, we surveyed college access and success program activity in various sectors, including community-based organizations, youth-serving organizations, high schools, and postsecondary institutions. NCAN and the Greater Texas Foundation jointly contacted almost 1,600 schools, colleges, universities, college access and success organizations, and indirect service providers to ascertain the location, type, depth, and success of college access services offered in Texas. A link to two different surveys designed by NCAN, one for direct service providers and one for indirect service providers, was emailed to college access and success organizations. Responses from 227 direct service providers from 211 organizations or institutions were received. The response rate of the indirect service providers does not lend itself to a statistically meaningful analysis, and the results have not been included in this summary (see Appendix A). While the overall response rate is at the low end and therefore is not ideal for drawing conclusions about the status of college access and success in Texas, the data gathered do provide a good overview of current college access and success activities in the state. The data in this report came from respondents' answers to 85 survey questions.

Unless otherwise indicated, responses from the designated regions were similar to the responses statewide. The region with the highest response rate was South Texas, followed by Northeast, East, and Central. The Panhandle and West Texas each had lower response rates. Over half of survey responders were high schools or school districts.

Selected survey findings:

- Forty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that organizations across Texas are well aware of each others' activities.

- Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed that their organization could benefit from the coordination of organizational efforts statewide to achieve a better outcome.

- Fifty-four percent of the respondents reported funding or sustainability as their greatest challenge.

- Forty-seven percent were challenged by their capacity to serve all students in need.

- Engaging parents proved to be the third most challenging issue for providers, with 40% claiming this is an extremely difficult endeavor.

- The top three goals of providers in order of response frequency were to 1) improve academic preparation of students for college, 2) increase the percentage of students attending college, and 3) inspire students and foster college aspirations.

- Seventy-two percent of direct service provider organizations partner with institutions of higher education. Forty-eight percent partner with independent school districts, and 37% and 31% respectively partner with community organizations and government agencies. Only 26% partner with members of the business community.

- Sixty percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a regional network would have more impact than a statewide network. The regional responses varied significantly from the overall response rate, ranging from slightly less than half of respondents in central Texas stating they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, to close to three quarters of respondents in South Texas indicating agreement or strong agreement.

- Low-income, first-generation students attending college and minorities who have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary education were most often targeted by respondents.

- Eighty-five percent of providers indicated they serve late high school students, 79% serve early high school students, and 50% serve middle school/junior high students.

- Seventy-three percent of service providers indicated they do not serve adults.

- The most commonly offered service is college admissions advising, which is offered by 81% of respondents. Career exploration and/or career counseling followed closely, with 80% of respondents offering this service.

- Eighty-two percent of high schools responding offer dual enrollment/credit courses. Sixty-three percent offer Advanced Placement courses, and 19% offer International Baccalaureate courses.

- Eighty-eight percent of direct providers offer services to parents. College awareness followed by financial aid assistance were the two types of information most often shared with parents.

The final phase work was the structured interviews. The purpose of the stakeholder analysis is to identify the college access and success policy issues, constraints on college access, and possible strategies for Texas to increase its college-completion rate. NCAN conducted structured interviews with 53 stakeholders from the higher education, philanthropic, business, college access, and policy-making communities. To assist in determining differences in regional perspective, stakeholders were grouped into one of the six designated regions.

Stakeholder interviews resulted in the following observations:

- Most stakeholders expressed concern about the basic academic abilities of entering college freshman. It was noted that these academic deficits place increased financial strain on many students who must pay for courses that do not count toward their degree. Oftentimes students ultimately drop out due to what may seem like a never-ending stream of noncredit remedial coursework.

- Many respondents also reported concern with graduation and retention rates.

- Skyrocketing college enrollment due to the continuing economic downturn, combined with the prospect of decreased funding in the coming years, had many higher education stakeholders worried about their ability to adequately serve larger enrollment cohorts.

- Seventy-seven percent of stakeholders expressed concern about the college-going rate. Those noting concern were disquieted about the college-going rate of Latinos, African-American males, and more generally of those of low socioeconomic status (SES). Overall, being Latino or an African-American male from a low-SES household without a college-going tradition was cited as the greatest combination of demographic risk factors for not attending college. Regional differences in response to this question were evident, especially in the Panhandle.

- Most stakeholders believed that students were not very aware of college access resources in their community or state. Additionally, many suggested that Latino communities in particular had very little awareness. A lack of parental involvement or the need to get parents more involved was the most frequently cited concern. It was suggested that universities, state government, and community organizations have become overly reliant on technology to spread awareness about higher education opportunities.

State and Regional Demographic Scan of Texas

Researchers analyzed the following data to compare Texas and the six designated regions individually to the nation; give a snapshot of what Texas's population is like; and reveal the areas of college access in which Texas is stronger, as strong, or not as strong as the nation as a whole. In order to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness within the state, Texas's large size warrants the breakdown of information and data into six regions (see Figure 1). NCAN and Greater Texas Foundation jointly determined the following regions so researchers could address the variance in statistics across the large state:

1. South Texas, which includes Texas Education Agency (TEA) Education Service Centers (ESCs) 1, 2, 3 and 20 (Edinburg, Corpus Christi, Victoria, and San Antonio);

2. West Texas, which includes TEA ESCs 18 and 19 (Midland and El Paso);

3. The Panhandle, which includes TEA ESCs 9, 14, 16, and 17 (Wichita Falls, Abilene, Amarillo, and Lubbock);

4. Central, which includes TEA ESCs 12, 13, and 15 (Waco, Austin, and San Angelo);

5. East, which includes TEA ESCs 4, 5, and 6 (Houston, Beaumont, and Huntsville); and

6. Northeast, which includes TEA ESCs 7, 8, 10, and 11 (Kilgore, Mount Pleasant, Richardson/Dallas, and Fort Worth).

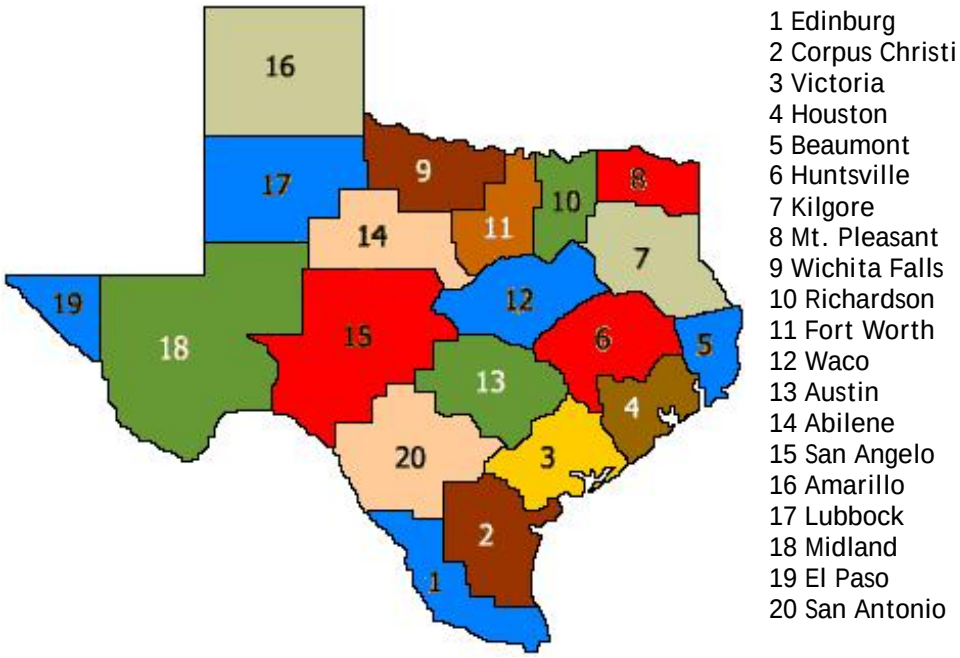

Figure 1. Texas Education Agency Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs).

Demographics

Texas's population is growing at a faster rate than that of the United States as a whole. The U.S. Census Bureau projected that Census 2010 will find that the U.S. population has grown by 9.8% since 2000. This means the population will have increased from 281,421,906 in 2000 to 308,935,581 in 2010. According to the U.S. Census population clock, the United States currently has an estimated population of 310,748,768, which is beyond previous predictions. In 2000, Texas's total population was 20,851,820. The East and Northeast regions are the most populous with more than six million residents, while West Texas and the Panhandle are the least with fewer than 900,000 residents each (see Table 1).

Table 1

2009 Population of the Six Designated Regions in Texas

Region	Population
South Texas	3,345,332
West Texas	883,612
Panhandle	832,764
Central	1,815,484
East	6,243,563
Northeast	6,447,228

Note: Data for every city in each region was not available through the U.S. Census Bureau, therefore the populations are approximations. Compiled using data from the 2009 American Community Survey.

As for population growth rates, the U.S. Census Bureau predicted the population of Texas would increase at a rate of 18.9% between 2000 and 2010, to 24,648,888. As of 2009, the estimated population of Texas was 24,782,302.[1] If estimations are correct, not only will Texas have increased by a much larger rate in 2010, but the state also will have surpassed the predictions made based on Census 2000 data. Looking further down the road, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2020 the population of the United States will grow by 19.3% (based on 2000 Census numbers). The population of Texas, on the other hand, is projected to increase by 37.3% by 2020, which is 18 points more. The 18- to 24-year-old population is projected to grow by 8.1% by 2020 in the United States, but in Texas, the growth is projected to be 20.9%, a difference of 12.8 points (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Interim State Population Projections, 2005). Over the next 10 years, the percentage of Texas's population that is traditional college age will be higher than in the United States as a whole.

Another important demographic to consider is race and ethnicity. The racial and ethnic distribution of the United States and Texas can be seen in Table 2. The United States and Texas are very similar, with only about one point or less difference in the percentage of the population that is White, Black or African-American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. However, Texas has a much higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino residents (of any race) than the nation as a whole, with 36.9% of Texans and 15.8% of U.S. residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino. It should be noted that because the Hispanic or Latino category in the national census is listed as "of any race," individuals are able to identify as a particular race and as Hispanic or Latino.

[1] Because Census 2010 data is not yet available, the closest figures available are those from the 2009 American Community Survey.

Table 2

Racial and Ethnic Population Distribution in Texas

Race/Ethnicity	United States	Texas
White	74.8%	73.8%
Black or African-American	12.4%	11.5%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	.8%	.6%
Asian	4.5%	3.6%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	.1%	.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	15.8%	36.9%

Note: Compiled using data from the 2009 American Community Survey.

Regional data on the racial and ethnic distribution within Texas can be found in Table 3. There are two regions in Texas where the majority population is Latino. Whereas the Latino population is 15.8% in the United States as a whole and 36.9% in Texas, the Latino population is 75% in West Texas and 61% in South Texas. The other designated regions in Texas have a White majority. Central and Northeast Texas have the largest White majority with 56% and 51% respectively. There are no designated regions with a majority African-American, Asian, or Native American population. The designated regions with the highest African-American population are the East with 17% and the Northeast with 14%. All regions have Asian populations of less than 10% and Native American populations of less than 1%.

Table 3

Racial and Ethnic Population Distribution in Texas by Region

Race/Ethnicity	Region					
	South Texas	West Texas	Panhandle	Central	East	Northeast
White	31%	19%	46%	56%	43%	51%
Black or African-American	4%	3%	6%	7%	17%	14%
American Indian and Alaska Native	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Asian	2%	1%	1%	4%	6%	5%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Hispanic or Latino	61%	75%	20%	31%	33%	28%

Note: Compiled using data from the 2009 American Community Survey.

Diversity in the United States and Texas is increasing: The minority population is growing faster than the overall population (see Table 4). The total population of the United States is projected to grow by 53,680,000, or 19%, between 2000 and 2020. However, the African-American population has a projected growth of 9,547,000 (27.5%); the Hispanic (any race) population by 14,134,000 (68.3%); and the Asian population by 7,304,000 (71.3%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). In Texas, the minority population also is

projected to grow at a faster rate than the overall population. Between 2000 and 2020, the population of Texas is projected to grow by 34.3%, while the African-American population is projected to grow by 26.0% and the Latino population by 78.1%.

Table 4

2000–20 Projected Population Change in the United States and Texas, by Race and Ethnic Origin

	United States				Texas		
	Population in 2000	Projected Growth, 2020	Projected Growth Rate		Population in 2000	Projected Growth, 2020	Projected Growth Rate
Total Population	281,421,906	53,680,000	19.0%	Total Population	20,851,820	7,153,920	34.3%
White	211,460,626	32,081,000	15.1%	White	11,074,716	748,732	6.7%
Black or African-American	34,658,190	9,547,000	27.5%	Black or African-American	2,421,653	630,764	26.0%
Hispanic (any race)	35,305,818	14,134,000	68.3%	Hispanic	6,669,666	5,213,314	78.1%

Note: Census Interim State Population Projections, 2005; Texas State Data Center, 2009.

In our six regions, very little to no growth is projected for Whites in South Texas, West Texas, and the East. The only region projected to see an increase in the White population of over 10% is Central Texas. The African-American population is projected to grow similarly across the state, with growth rates from 14.1% in Northeast Texas to 25.2% in Central Texas. The exception is South Texas, which is projected to see little growth at all across the board and only a 1.9% population growth rate in African-American residents. The Hispanic and Other (as labeled by the Texas State Data Center) populations have the highest projected growth rates, with respective rates of 74.2% and 73.6% in the Panhandle and 50.7% and 80.7% in West Texas. All other designated regions except South Texas will experience growth rates in the 20% to almost 50% range (see Table 5).

Table 5

Population Growth Rate in Texas by Region and Race or Ethnicity, 2000–20

Region	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
South Texas	0.0%	1.9%	4.3%	6.7%
West Texas	-17.9%	16.5%	50.7%	80.7%
Panhandle	1.3%	23.1%	74.2%	73.6%
Central	17.9%	25.2%	49.8%	45.6%
East	<1.0%	18.0%	49.1%	45.9%
Northeast	4.9%	14.1%	32.9%	20.1%

Note: Compiled using data from Texas State Data Center.

According to Patrick Kelly of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, the increased growth rate of minorities in the United States will affect the high school and college graduation rates of minorities in the future. Unless Latino, African-American, and Native American students' graduation rates are increased to that of White students, the percentage of students graduating from high school and college overall will decrease because of this higher growth rate for minorities. Between 1990 and 2000, the gaps between Latino, African-American, and Native American students and their White counterparts widened. Kelly predicts the percentage of adults between the ages of 25 and 64 with a high school education or higher will decrease by 2.5 points by 2020 from current levels if past trends are accurate predictors of the future (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006).

Educational Pipeline

College Preparation

As of 2009, Texas had aligned high school standards and graduation requirements with college and workplace expectations and instituted a P–20 longitudinal data system. Texas identified "Mak[ing] the Recommended High School Program (college-preparatory courses) the standard curriculum in Texas public high schools and mak[ing] it a minimum requirement for admission to Texas public universities by 2008" as one of its strategies to close the gap in postsecondary participation by its students (*Closing the Gaps: The Texas Higher Education Plan,* 2000). This goal has been accomplished (College Board, *2010 Progress Report*).

The College Board's profile for Texas in the *2010 Progress Report* also examines other key factors in college preparation. For student-to-counselor ratio, the national average is 467 students for each counselor. Texas is ranked 24th nationally, with a student to counselor ratio of 430:1. For public high schools offering Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in the four core subject areas, Texas ranks 24th again with 38.3% of schools offering such courses, slightly above the national average of 34.8%.

According to the College Board, Texas has successfully aligned high school standards with college and workplace expectations, implemented a college and career readiness assessment system, and developed a P–20 longitudinal data system. In each of these categories, fewer than half of all states have completed these initiatives (*2010 Progress Report Texas State Profile*). However, Texas has not committed to adopting the National Common Core Standards and does not plan to due to state officials' concerns about the cost of implementation and the lack of evidence that they have any effect on academic success (Burke, 2010). The only other state that has not agreed to adopt the Common Core Standards is Alaska. The goal of the Common Core Initiative is to align high school standards with college and workplace expectations across the nation and internationally, allowing students to compete on the state, national, and global level.

High School Graduation

According to the 2006–08 American Community Survey, 84.5% of Americans aged 25 years and older are high school graduates or higher, including equivalency. In 2009, this percentage inched up to 85.3. A lower percentage of Texans the same age had a high school diploma or higher during this timeframe: 79.2 in 2006–08 and 79.9 in 2009. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) also has compiled data on the average freshman graduation rate (AFGR) for public school students from 2002–07 and reports the AFGR for the United States was 74.9%, while the AFGR for Texas was 73.1%.[2]

[2] This average rate is lower overall because the rate increased over that time, so the average is lower than the 2009 numbers reported on the American Community Survey.

Graduation rates reported regionally do not include equivalency, so they are informative but cannot be compared to the nationally reported data that does include high school equivalency. That being said, the regional rates are still important because South Texas and West Texas are revealed to have graduation rates below the other four designated regions. The Northeast has the highest average percentage of graduates for the class of 2007 with 82.8; the Panhandle comes in second with 81.8; in third place is East Texas with 80.5; Central Texas is fourth with an average of 79.7; South Texas is fifth with 76.0; and West Texas finishes the list with 73.2. The regional data was provided by the 2007–08 Region Profile Reports by the Texas Education Agency in the Academic Excellence Indicator System and is not calculated in the same manner as the data reported in the Common Core of Data (CCD) by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences and National Center for Education Statistics. Because of these differences, it is important to view the regional data separately from the national data.

Between 2005 and 2008, the AFGR in Texas was higher than in the United States for all races and ethnicities (see Table 6). The biggest difference when comparing Texas to the United States is in the AFGR for American Indian/Alaska Native students. Texas's American Indian/Alaska Native freshmen graduated at rates over 80% over the three school years, whereas the same population graduated at rates just over 60% in the nation as a whole. Asian/Pacific Islander freshmen had the highest graduation rate with 98.6% for the 2007–08 school year, 99.0% for 2006–07, and 95.5% for 2005–06.

Table 6

Public School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity and Average Freshman Graduation Rate

	2007-08 AFGR		2006-07 AFGR		2005-06 AFGR	
Race/Ethnicity	U.S.	Texas	U.S.	Texas	U.S.	Texas
American Indian/Alaska Native	64.2%	80.1%	61.3%	85.4%	61.8%	84.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	91.4%	98.6%	91.4%	99.0%	89.9%	95.5%
Hispanic	63.5%	65.9%	62.3%	63.1%	61.4%	64.0%
Black, non-Hispanic	61.5%	65.7%	60.3%	64.7%	59.1%	66.1%
White, non-Hispanic	81.0%	81.6%	80.3%	81.1%	80.6%	81.1%

Note: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.

Gaps

When it comes to high school graduation, Texas American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander students fair much better in comparison to students of these respective races in the nation as a whole. Texas American Indian/Alaska Native students graduate at or above the rate of White students, just as Asian/Pacific Islander students nationally graduate at a much higher rate than their White counterparts. However, American Indian/Alaska Native students comprise less than 1% and Asian/Pacific Islander students make up less than 5% of Texas's population. The Latino and African-American student populations, on the other hand, have graduation rates for the last three school years available (2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08) of over 15 percentage points below their White classmates but make up 36.9% and 11.5% of Texas's population respectively.

The gap between Latino and African-American students and their White counterparts exists in all regions and TEA ESCs. In some ESCs, there also is a gap between the Latino and African-American students, though which group has the higher achievement varies (see Table 7). West Texas has a high majority Latino population (75%), yet the average high school completion rate is only 69.9% compared to 73.2%

for the White minority (19% of the population). South Texas is another region with a majority Latino population, with 61% of Texans of Latino ethnicity. The average graduation rate in this region is markedly different, with 70.5% for Latino students and 88.1% for White students. In regions where there is a White majority greater than 50% of the population, the gaps are even wider. In Central Texas, with a 56% White majority, the average graduation rate is 89.4% for White students, 74.4% for African-American students, and 70.7% for Latino students. In Northeast Texas, which has a 51% White majority and the second highest population of African-Americans (14%), the average graduation rate is 87.8% for White students, 66.3% for African-American students, and 69.9% for Latino students. East Texas has the highest population of African-American students with 17% of the population. The average graduation rate for the East is 88.4% for White students, 70.3% for African-American students, and 70.2% for Latino students. (See Table 7 for completion rates for individual TEA ESCs.)

Table 7

Completion/Student Status Rate (Grades 9–12), Class of 2007, Graduated

	TEA ESC	Region	African-American	Hispanic	White	Native American	Asian/Pacific Islander
South Texas	1	71.9%	68.5%	71.2%	86.5%	66.7%	94.4%
	2	75.1%	72.1%	69.4%	87.4%	89.5%	96.5%
	3	82.7%	79.0%	72.7%	91.1%	*	98.2%
	20	74.5%	70.5%	68.8%	87.4%	71.9%	91.8%
	Regional Average	76.0%	72.5%	70.5%	88.1%	76.0%**	95.2%
West Texas	18	74.4%	57.5%	69.1%	82.6%	84.0%	96.3%
	19	72.0%	72.0%	70.8%	82.4%	64.3%	81.6%
	Regional Average	73.2%	64.7%	69.9%	82.5%	74.1%	88.9%
Panhandle	9	86.3%	76.7%	78.2%	88.8%	87.5%	92.7%
	14	77.0%	62.5%	62.8%	85.5%	94.1%	89.7%
	16	82.9%	66.0%	75.9%	88.4%	86.7%	83.1%
	17	81.0%	69.7%	73.4%	90.7%	93.8%	97.9%
	Regional Average	81.8%	68.7%	72.5	88.3%	90.5%	90.8%
Central	12	81.4%	73.0%	73.6%	87.5%	80.0%	84.9%
	13	79.5%	68.3%	66.6%	88.4%	83.5%	91.2%
	15	78.2%	57.8%	69.7%	87.7%	64.3%	93.8%
	Regional Average	79.7%	66.3%	69.9%	87.8%	75.9%	89.9%
East	4	76.6%	70.5%	64.8%	88.3%	86.6%	92.1%
	5	81.5%	69.9%	72.9%	88.1%	76.2%	88.3%
	6	83.6%	70.6%	73.1%	88.8%	93.5%	87.5%

	Regional Average	80.5%	70.3%	70.2%	88.4%	85.4%	89.3%
Northeast	7	83.9%	76.5%	71.5%	88.6%	78.7%	94.4%
	8	88.3%	80.0%	78.6%	92.7%	88.2%	87.5%
	10	77.1%	68.8%	64.2%	88.1%	81.8%	91.4%
	11	81.9%	72.4%	68.6%	88.5%	76.7%	91.6%
	Regional Average	82.8%	74.4%	70.7%	89.4%	81.3%	91.2%

Note: Compiled using 2007–08 Region Profile Reports, Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System
* Indicates results are masked due to small numbers to protect student confidentiality.
** Indicates results are influence by the masked results.

Dropouts

The high school dropout rate is about the same for the United States and Texas, with a 4.1% dropout rate in the nation as a whole and 4.0% in Texas. When looking at dropout rates by race and ethnicity (see Table 8), students in each of Texas's identified racial and ethnic categories had lower dropout rates than students of the same race or ethnicity in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007–08). A significant difference can be seen in the American Indian/Alaska Native population in Texas, which has a 3.2% dropout rate compared to a 7.3% dropout rate for American Indian students across the United States. It also should be noted that the overall dropout rate (4.1% for the United States and 4.0% for Texas) is calculated based on the entire population. Looking at the breakdown below, there seemingly should be a large gap between the dropout rates for the United States and Texas. However, because the United States has a higher White population (which has a lower dropout rate nationally) and Texas has higher African-American and Latino populations (which have a higher dropout rate in the state), the overall averages are quite similar.

Table 8

Dropout Rates in the United States and Texas by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	United States	Texas
American Indian/Alaska Native	7.3%	3.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.4%	1.3%
Hispanic	6.0%	5.3%
Black or African-American	6.7%	6.3%
White	2.8%	1.8%

Note: Common Core of Data, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007–08.

Looking at dropout rates by region also is important, but interestingly, inconsistencies can be seen in the different sources for dropout statistics. Higher rates across all categories are seen in the Academic Excellence Indicator System 2007-08 Region Performance data than in statistics from the U.S. Department of Education for the state as a whole. One possible cause could be the definition of dropout that is used.

The TEA data for dropout rates by race and ethnicity is reviewed in Table 9. Because some regions have a variance among their ESCs, the ESC rates researchers used to calculate the regional averages are included. The lowest average rate is 8.4% in the Panhandle, while the highest is 13.6% in West Texas. Looking at race and ethnicity, some regions have significantly higher dropout rates than the nation or the state overall, especially for African-American and Latino students. West Texas has the highest average dropout rate for African-Americans at 18.6%. Midland (TEA ESC 18), which falls within this region, has the highest dropout rate in the state for African-American students at 25.4%. One other TEA ESC has a rate higher than 20% for African-Americans: Lubbock (17). The region with the lowest average dropout rate for African-Americans is South Texas with 13.8%. None of the TEA ESCs have a dropout rate lower than 10% for African-Americans. Central Texas has the highest average dropout rate for Latino students at 16.7%. Midland also has the highest dropout rate for Latino students at 21.3%. The region with the lowest average dropout rate for Latinos is the Panhandle with 12.8%. One TEA ESC has a dropout rate lower than 10%—Kilgore (7), in the Northeast region, at 6.0%. For White students, all regions have an average rate lower than 10% except for Midland (18), which at 11.1% has the highest dropout rate for this population. The region with the highest average dropout rate for Native American students is South Texas at 11.5%. However, this rate is influenced by a masked rate for Native American students in Victoria (3) in order to protect student confidentiality due to the small numbers of these students in that ESC. The next highest is Central at 11.4%. The Panhandle has the lowest averaged dropout rate for Native American students at 3.9%, slightly lower than the nation and the state overall for all students, but 4.4 percentage points lower than the dropout rate for Native Americans in the country as a whole. One ESC within that region, Abilene (14), has a 0.0% dropout rate for Native Americans. The average dropout rate in almost all regions is at or below the rate for the nation and the state overall for Asian/Pacific Islander students. The one exception is in the Northeast with an average of 6.1%, which includes Mt. Pleasant (8) with the highest dropout rate for Asian/Pacific Islander students at 12.5%. Five ESCs have 0.0% dropout rates for Asian/Pacific Islanders: Victoria (3), Midland (18), Abilene (14), Lubbock (17), and San Angelo (15).

Table 9

Four-Year Dropout Rates, Class of 2007, by TEA ESC Averaged by Region

	TEA ESC	Region	African American	Hispanic	White	Native American	Asian/Pacific Islander
South Texas	1	13.5%	14.8%	13.8%	6.9%	16.7%	3.2%
	2	12.8%	12.8%	16.6%	4.9%	5.3%	1.2%
	3	8.5%	12.0%	14.2%	3.4%	*	0.0%
	20	13.6%	15.9%	17.3%	5.1%	12.5%	4.1%
	Regional Average	12.1%	13.8%	15.4%	5.0%	11.5%**	2.1%
West Texas	18	17.0%	25.4%	21.3%	11.1%	8.0%	0.0%
	19	10.3%	11.9%	10.7%	6.7%	14.3%	6.1%
	Regional Average	13.6%	18.6%	16.0%	8.9%	11.1%	3.0%
Panhandle	9	6.4%	13.7%	11.3%	4.6%	6.3%	7.3%
	14	7.6%	15.5%	11.8%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%
	16	7.5%	16.0%	10.5%	5.1%	3.3%	7.0%
	17	12.3%	22.0%	17.6%	5.1%	6.3%	0.0%

	Regional Average	8.4%	16.8%	12.8%	4.9%	3.9%	3.5%
Central	12	10.9%	18.7%	15.3%	6.3%	16.0%	8.4%
	13	10.2%	16.4%	17.2%	5.3%	4.1%	3.5%
	15	11.8%	17.0%	17.7%	6.0%	14.3%	0.0%
	Regional Average	10.9%	17.3%	16.7%	5.8%	11.4%	3.9%
East	4	12.4%	17.4%	19.0%	5.0%	8.4%	3.6%
	5	10.7%	19.3%	15.3%	6.0%	14.3%	4.4%
	6	7.2%	15.7%	11.2%	4.6%	3.2%	4.2%
	Regional Average	10.1%	17.4%	15.1%	5.2%	8.6%	4.0%
Northeast	7	15.4%	15.8%	6.0%	10.6%	4.5%	4.5%
	8	7.1%	14.1%	16.5%	3.1%	2.9%	12.5%
	10	12.2%	18.1%	19.6%	5.3%	10.8%	3.7%
	11	9.3%	16.0%	17.1%	5.3%	12.9%	3.8%
	Regional Average	11.0%	16.0%	14.8%	6.0%	7.7%	6.1%

Note: From the Academic Excellence Indicator System 2007–08 Region Performance Report.
* Indicates results are masked due to small numbers to protect student confidentiality.
** Indicates results are influence by the masked results.

The dropout rate is an issue not only because postsecondary enrollment is prevented or delayed, but also because there is a significant loss of lifetime income for high school dropouts. The Alliance for Education estimates that the United States stood to gain $334,597,900,000 if high school dropouts had graduated with their class in 2008–09. In Texas, that additional lifetime income is estimated to be $34,621,900,000 (August 2009). The only other state in the country that stands to gain more is California.

College Access and Success

The College Board's *2010 Progress Report* provides pertinent information to compare Texas's standing to the nation in terms of college access and success. In recent years, the College Board's Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education has studied the U.S. education pipeline to identify solutions to increase the number of students who graduate from college and are prepared to succeed in the global economy. The commission's goal is to ensure that at least 55% of Americans earn an associate's degree or higher by 2025 in order for the United States to once again become the world leader in postsecondary attainment. According to 2008 data (the most recent year available), the United States ranks 12th in the world with 41.6% of 25- to 34-year-olds having an associate's degree or higher. Texas ranks 38th in the nation with 27.4% of 25- to 34-year olds having an associate's degree or higher.

An indicator of college access and success performance in the nation and in Texas can be seen in *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Education*, a report written biennially by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Each state is measured in six different categories—college preparation, participation, affordability, completion, benefits, and learning—and given a grade of A, B, C, D, F, or I (for incomplete) according to its performance in each. If one were to average the grades of the states to get a national average, the United States would receive a C in college preparation, a

D+ in participation, an F in affordability, a C in completion, a C in benefits, and an I in learning. On the state level, *Measuring Up 2008* gives Texas a B in college preparation, a D- in participation, an F in affordability, a C- in completion, a C+ in benefits, and an I in learning. The only area in which Texas performs better than the nation as a whole is preparation. Some other positive aspects of Texas's performance, according to the *Measuring Up 2008* report card, include an increase in the percentage of students in the state who score well on Advanced Placement (AP) tests, which has tripled over the last 15 years, and the improvement in awarding certificates and degrees, resulting in a 50% completion rate of bachelor's degrees in six years.

College participation data is broken down in Table 10. College participation is generally higher in the United States overall than in Texas, except for the category of 25- to 49-year-olds with no bachelor's degree or higher enrolled in postsecondary education, which is slightly higher for Texas.

Table 10

College Participation Rates, United States vs. Texas

	United States	Texas
Ninth-graders who have a chance for college by 19 (2006)	41.8%	35.4%
High school graduates who go directly to college from high school (2006)	61.6%	55.2%
18- to 24-year olds who enroll in college (2006)	33.9%	29.5%
25- to 49-year olds with no bachelor's degree or higher enrolled in postsecondary education (2007)	4.7%	5.6%

Note: Compiled using information from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Once students enroll in postsecondary education, retention rates play a factor in completion. U.S. and Texas freshman-to-sophomore retention rates by type of institution are outlined in Table 11. The United States as a whole has higher retention rates than Texas at all three types of institutions—public 2-year and 4-year, and private 4-year—from freshman to sophomore year.

Table 11

Freshman-to-Sophomore College Retention Rates by Type of Institution, United States vs. Texas, 2007

	United States	Texas
Full-time freshmen at public 2-year institutions that continue on to their sophomore year	59.0%	57.8%
Full-time freshmen at public 4-year institutions that continue on to their sophomore year	78.0%	72.8%
Full-time freshmen at private four-year institutions that continue on to their sophomore year	79.5%	75.6%

Note: From *The College Completion Agenda: 2010 Progress Report* (College Board).

Completion data for college students is broken down in Table 12. Texas students complete associate's and bachelor's degrees at higher rates than the United States as a whole. One possible explanation for Texas having a lower retention rate but higher graduation rate is that other states have lower retention rates at the subsequent collegiate years not shown here.

Table 12

College Completion Rates, United States vs. Texas, 2008

	United States	Texas
Associate's degree-seeking students who graduate in three years	18.6%	27.5%
Bachelor's degree-seeking students who graduate in six years	49.0%	55.9%

Note: From *The College Completion Agenda: 2010 Progress Report* (College Board).

This information is categorized according to race and ethnicity in Tables 13 and 14. As with high school graduation rates, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders and American Indian or Alaska Native Texans earn associate's degrees at higher rates than the same population across the United States. Unfortunately, African-American, Latino, and White students earn associate's degrees at a lower rate, with the Latino rate having the largest gap at 2.2%. For bachelor's degree completion, only American Indian or Alaska Native Texans graduate at a higher rate than nationwide. African-American, Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, and White Texans all complete bachelor's degrees at a lower rate than their cohorts nationwide. Of particular note is the gap in graduation rates of African-American and Latino Texans: African-American Texans lag behind their peers throughout the country by 4.4% and Latino Texans lag behind their peers by 9.3%.

Table 13

Three-Year Graduation Rates for Associate Degree-Seeking Students, 2007

Race/Ethnicity	United States	Texas
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	64.3%	67.1%
American Indian, or Alaska Native	21.2%	30.5%
African-American	26.4%	26.3%
Hispanic	18.1%	15.9%
White	43.8%	43.5%

Note: From *The College Completion Agenda: 2010 Progress Report* (College Board).

Table 14

Six-Year Graduation Rates of Bachelor's Degree-Seeking Students, 2007

Race/Ethnicity	United States	Texas
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	65.5%	64.2%
American Indian, or Alaska Native	38.6%	41.9%
African-American	40.5%	36.1%
Hispanic	46.8%	37.5%
White	59.4%	56.4%

Note: From *The College Completion Agenda: 2010 Progress Report* (College Board).

Yet another way to think about college completion can be seen in the transition and completion rates from ninth grade to college (NCHEMS, 2006). In the United States, only 19.7% of ninth graders move on to and complete a college education after high school. This rate is even lower for Texas's ninth graders at 13.6%. This is included in Figure 2, which illustrates the educational pipeline for the United States and Texas from ninth grade to high school graduation and through college completion.

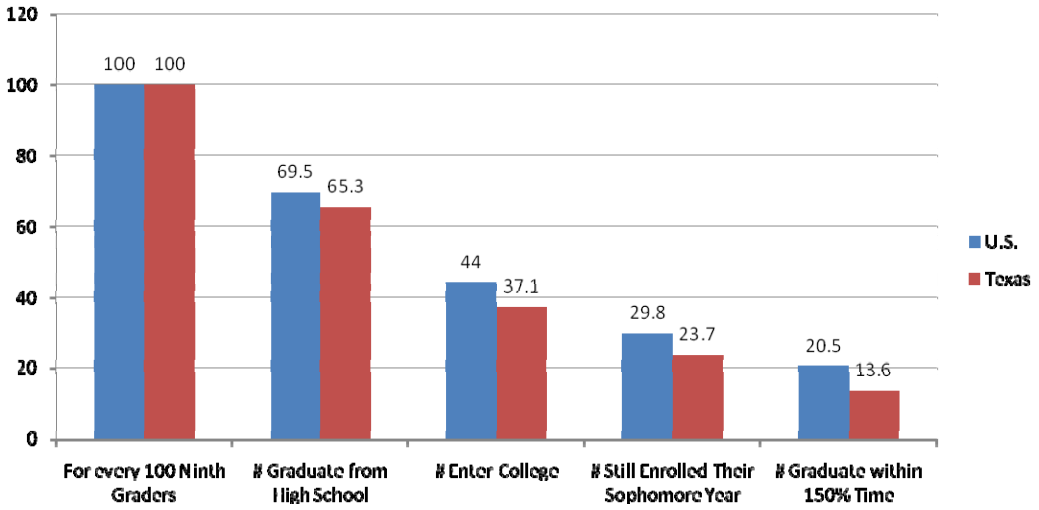

Figure 2. The educational pipeline for the United States and Texas from ninth grade through college completion.

Adult Education

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 62.8% of the U.S. adult population has no college degree at a time when highly skilled workers are needed across the country, putting the United States at risk for falling further behind other countries when it comes to the percentage of the population with a postsecondary education (College Board, 2010). The College Board's Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education points out that adult literacy and basic education programs are in need of better support and coordination and recommends they supplement their programs with paths to postsecondary education. The states and the federal government also need to renew their commitment to and increase funding for adult education (2010).

Data on the percentage of adults enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) and postsecondary education programs across the country and in Texas is found in Table 15. The percentage of adult Texans enrolled in these programs is lower than the percentage in the United States overall. Texas has one of the lowest adult enrollments in ABE programs in the nation, 5.8% below enrollment across the United States. The percentage of Texan adults age 25–39 and 40–64 enrolled in postsecondary education is similar to that of the United States as a whole, with only a 1.1% and .7% difference respectively.

Table 15

Adults Enrolled in ABE and Postsecondary Education Programs, United States vs. Texas in 2005

	United States	Texas
Adults ages 18–64 with less than a high school diploma enrolled in state ABE programs	10.1%	4.3%
Adults ages 25–39 with only a high school diploma enrolled in postsecondary education	19.1%	18.0%
Adults ages 40–64 year olds with only a high school diploma enrolled in postsecondary education	4.7%	4.0%

Note: Compiled using data reported by the College Board in *The College Completion Agenda: 2010 Progress Report*.

Although most people in the United States and Texas have at least a high school diploma, the percentage of the population that does not have a high school diploma is higher than the percentage that holds associate's or graduate and professional degrees (see Figure 3). In Texas, the percentage of adults without a high school diploma also exceeds that of the adults who hold a bachelor's degree and is 5.4% higher than the percentage of all adult Americans without a high school diploma.

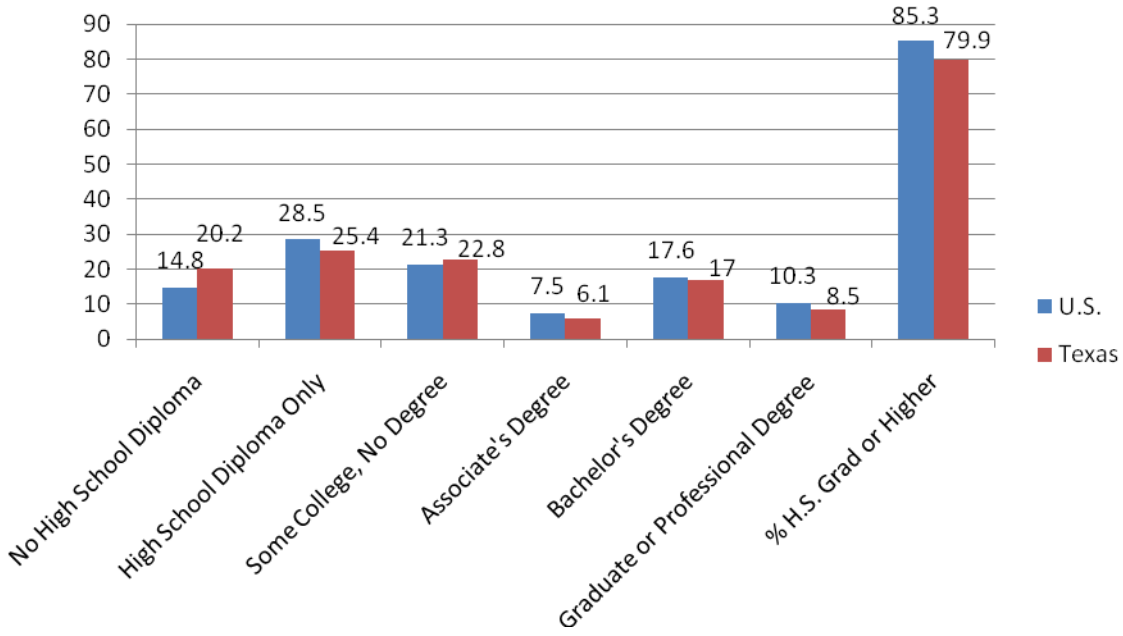

Figure 3. Educational attainment of adults 25 years of age and older, United States vs. Texas (2009 American Community Survey).

Data about the educational attainment of adults in different Texas regions can be found in Table 16. Because this information was taken from the 2009 American Community Survey, data was not found for every TEA ESC and therefore is listed by Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). One MSA has a percentage of adults ages 25 and older who are high school graduates or higher that exceeds the United States: Austin-Round Rock, with 86.6%. The percentage in the United States overall is 85.3, and in Texas it is 79.9. The MSA with the lowest percentage of adults with a high school education or higher is McAllen/Edinburg/ Mission in South Texas with 60.7%. This is almost 26% lower than in Austin-Round Rock. McAllen/ Edinburg/Mission also has the highest percentage of adults who do not have a high school diploma with 39.3%. The MSA with the lowest percentage is Austin-Round Rock with 13.4%, which is lower than both the national and state percentage. The percentage of adults with some college but no degree closely resembles the percentage of adults with only a high school diploma or equivalent, as the percentage of adults with associate's degrees closely matches the percentage of adults with graduate or professional degrees.

Table 16

Educational Attainment of Adults 25 Years of Age and Older, by Metropolitan Statistical Area

	Metropolitan Statistical Area	No H.S. Diploma	H.S. Diploma Only	Some College, No Degree	2-Year Degree	4-Year Degree	Graduate or Prof. Degree	% H.S. Grad or Higher
South Texas	McAllen Edinburg Mission	39.3%	23.0%	17.1%	4.5%	11.7%	4.4%	60.7%
	Corpus Christi	20.8%	28.8%	24.8%	5.8%	12.3%	7.5%	79.2%
	Victoria	19.7%	29.9%	27.7%	6.0%	12.5%	4.2%	80.3%
	San Antonio	18.5%	25.3%	24.6%	6.9%	15.7%	9.1%	81.5%
West Texas	Midland	18.9%	23.1%	28.8%	6.3%	15.9%	7.0%	81.1%
	El Paso	28.2%	23.5%	21.9%	5.9%	13.5%	6.9%	71.7%
Panhandle	Wichita Falls	15.6%	34.7%	25.1%	6.6%	11.9%	6.1%	84.4%
	Abilene	15.8%	30.8%	25.4%	7.2%	14.9%	5.8%	84.1%
	Amarillo	17.4%	25.8%	27.5%	7.2%	5.1%	6.9%	82.5%
	Lubbock	18.1%	25.7%	24.5%	5.1%	17.6%	8.9%	81.9%
Central	Austin-Round Rock	13.4%	20.0%	21.8%	6.1%	25.6%	13.1%	86.6%
	San Angelo	19.4%	29.2%	24.4%	6.8%	14.9%	5.3%	80.6%
East	Houston Sugarland Baytown	19.9%	23.8%	22.6%	5.8%	18.4%	9.5%	80.0%
	Beaumont-Port Arthur	16.9%	35.7%	24.7%	6.3%	11.5%	4.9%	83.1%
North-east	Dallas Forth Worth Arlington	18.1%	23.2%	22.4%	6.2%	20.2%	9.8%	81.9%

Note: From the 2009 American Community Survey.

Higher Education Affordability

Another important factor that contributes to college access and success is the affordability of higher education. The College Board cites data indicating that attending college in Texas is more affordable than in the United States as a whole. Tuition prices in Texas generally are lower and have not changed as much as tuition prices nationwide, families have to spend less of their income to pay for college, and the poorest families use a lower percentage of their income to pay for college. However, Texas is near the national average or behind when it comes to average loan amounts and state spending on student grant aid.

In the United States, the average in-state tuition price for 2-year colleges is $2,982 per year, but Texans pay $1,736 per year, one of the lowest rates in the nation. When it comes to public 4-year institutions, Texas is somewhat more expensive with an average $7,274 per year tuition rate compared to the national rate of $6,874. Private 4-year institution tuition rates are almost equal when comparing the nation to Texas, with the United States at $23,535 per year and Texas at $23,591 per year (College Board, 2010). Previously mentioned in this report is that both Texas and the nation as a whole received an "F" on affordability according to the *Measuring Up 2008* report card. While Texas is near the national average or below for most tuition prices, it still receives low marks overall because the scores are not based on comparison but rather on the ability of those in the lowest income brackets to afford higher education. Even with equal or lower higher education prices, the sticker price of higher education in Texas is still out of reach for those in the lower income levels.

Students in Texas have experienced less of a burden on average than the nation as a whole in published tuition price increases. From the 2008–09 to 2009–10 school years, public 2-year institutions experienced a 7.3% increase in the United States but only a 4.5% increase in Texas. For the same time period, public 4-year institutions increased their published tuition prices by 6.5% in the United States but only by 5.1% in Texas. Private 4-year institutions had a similar increase in Texas as in the rest of the country, with 4.8% and 4.4% increases respectively (College Board, 2010).

The percentage of family income needed to pay for college is another indicator of how affordable college is and affects a student's access to and success in college. This figure is calculated by taking the net price (tuition and room and board less federal, state need- and non-need-based aid, and institutional aid) by income quintile, as a percentage of family income in that quintile. In 2008, the net price at a public 2-year college made up 23.7% of a family's income in the United States but 20.7% of a Texas family's income. For attendance at a public 4-year college or university, the net price made up 27.8% of an American family's income and 26.3% of a Texas family's income. Private 4-year college or university tuition prices made up 75.7% of a family's income in the United States and 66.8% of Texas family's income (NCHEMS, 2008). For the poorest families, the share of income needed to pay for tuition at the lowest-priced colleges was 18.4% for the United States and 13.6% for Texas (NCHEMS, 2008).

Average loan amounts borrowed by Texas students each year are very close to the amounts borrowed on average nationwide, with Americans borrowing an average of $4,723 and Texans borrowing $4,608, even though tuition prices in Texas are generally lower than the national average (NCHEMS, 2007). However, Texas state grant aid targeted to low-income families as a percentage of Federal Pell Grant aid is lower at 32.1% when compared to the average state in the country at 45.9% (NCHEMS, 2008).

Another factor to take into consideration regarding higher education affordability is the student loan default rate in the United States and in Texas, which increases the price of college for students. For the 2008 cohort (the most recent information available), the U.S. student loan default rate is 7.0%, while the Texas student loan default rate is 9.1%. The cohort default rate is the percentage of borrowers who enter repayment in a fiscal year and default by the end of the fiscal year. This data includes 5,860 schools across the United States for the national student loan default rate and 291 Texas schools for the default rate (U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, 2010).

Online Survey Data Results

NCAN conducted a survey of organizations throughout Texas providing college access and success services both directly and indirectly. A link to two different surveys designed by NCAN, one for direct service providers and one for indirect providers, was emailed to 2,575 individuals from 1,667 organizations in November 2010. Sixty-nine emails bounced back, lowering the number of organizations reached to 1,598. For the direct service provider survey, NCAN received responses from 227 individuals representing 211 different organizations. The indirect service provider survey garnered 19 responses. Overall, the response rate for these surveys was 15.4%. The extremely low response rate for the indirect survey means that little can be ascertained from the results. Although the response rate from the direct survey is not high enough to draw statistical conclusions about Texas as a whole, the data gathered from it can provide a snapshot of current college access and success activities in Texas. The following results came from respondents' answers to 85 questions on the direct service provider survey. Responses to the indirect survey can be found in Appendix A.

Types of Organizations

Of the online survey recipients who responded, 27% (61) identified as high schools, 23% (52) identified as school districts, 14% (31) identified as TRIO programs, 10% (22) identified as nonprofit college access/success programs, and 9% (21) identified as higher education other. The other 35 respondents (17%) identified as an elementary school, middle school/junior high schools, higher education admissions offices, higher education financial aid offices, higher education outreach programs, GEAR UP, community organizations directly serving students, and national organizations working in Texas and directly serving students.

Location of Services

As previously mentioned, because of Texas's large size, NCAN broke the state into six regions. Respondents were asked to identify the regions in which they worked. If the organization worked statewide, it was asked to indicate so by checking all regions. The region with the highest response rate from direct service providers was South Texas (TEA Regions 1, 2, 3, 20—Edinburg, Corpus Christi, Victoria, and San Antonio), with 30% (69) indicating they operate in this region. The next highest response rate came from the Northeast (TEA Regions 7, 8, 10, 11—Kilgore, Mount Pleasant, Richardson/Dallas, Fort Worth), with 23% of respondents (52). The East (TEA Regions 4, 5, 6—Houston, Beaumont, Huntsville) and Central (TEA Regions 12, 13, 15—Waco, Austin, San Angelo) regions followed closely with 22% of respondents (49) each. Less than 15% of respondents indicated they operate in the Panhandle (TEA Regions 9, 14, 16, 17—Wichita Falls, Abilene, Amarillo, Lubbock) or West Texas (TEA Regions 18, 19—Midland, El Paso). The majority (63%) of respondents do not work in multiple school districts.

The number of each type of organization responding to the survey for each region is shown in Figure 4.

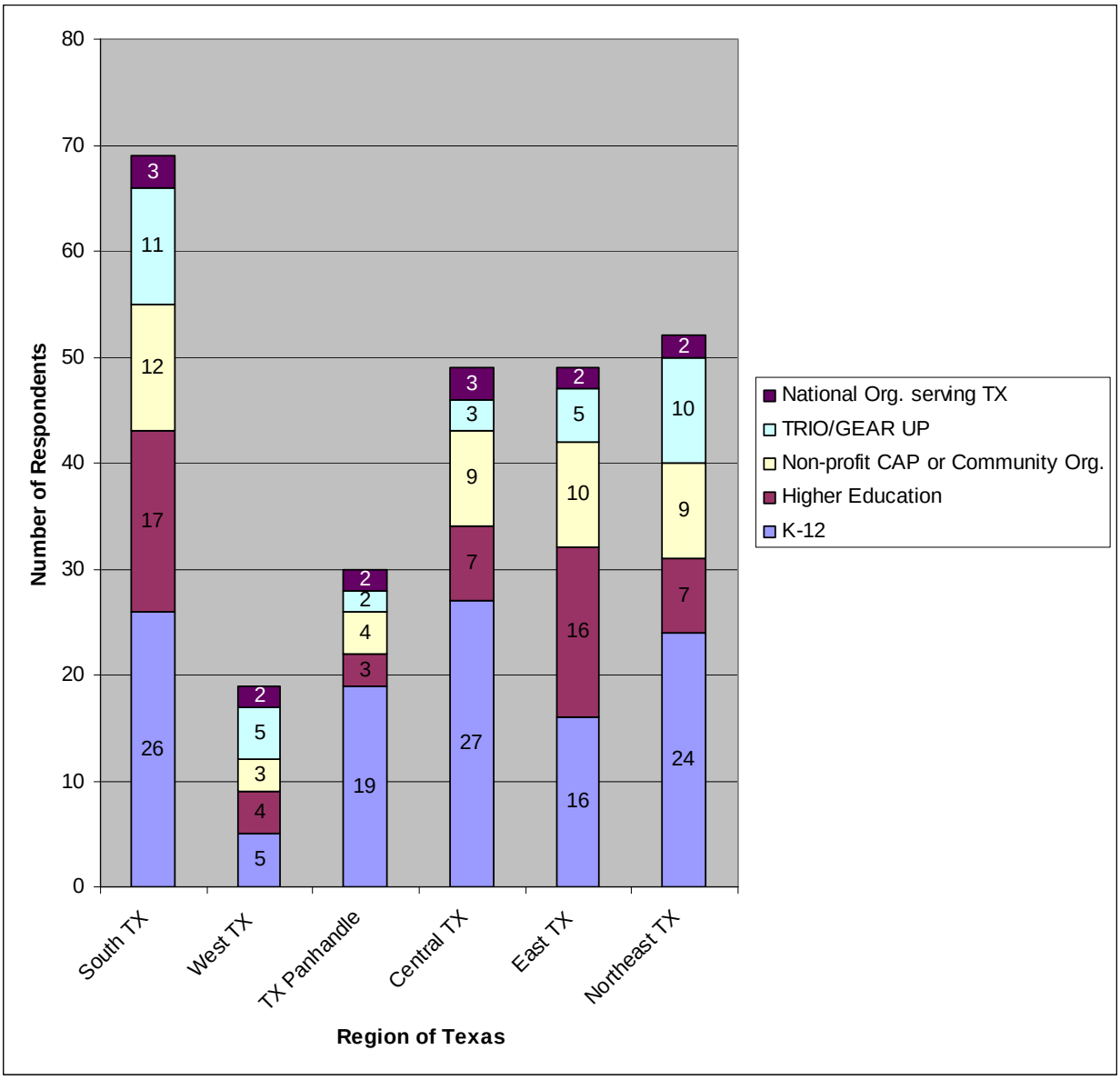

Figure 4: Respondents by region and type of organization.

Organization Mission/Primary Goal

For this section, responses were divided into categories reflecting the topics discussed in the *Texas v. the Nation* section of this report: diversity, college preparation, high school graduation, gaps, dropouts, college access, college success, adult education, and higher education affordability. Many respondents to the direct service provider survey (92, or 40%) either did not answer the question about their organizations' mission or primary goal or simply answered "education," "public school" or "K–12," or provided answers that did not fit into any of the aforementioned categories. The next highest number of respondents (83, or 37%) indicated college access as their organization's mission or primary goal. Another 25% (57) identified college success, which includes retention and degree completion. College preparation followed closely behind at 22% (50). High school graduation was identified as a part of the mission or primary goal of 11% (26) of the organizations responding. Less than 10% of the organizations indicated that higher education affordability (19), diversity (10), adult education (5), gaps (4), or dropouts

(3) were a part of their mission or primary goal. Seven organizations indicated part of their mission or primary goal was to serve Latino students, and one indicated it served African-American as well as Latino students. Four were dedicated to students with disabilities or in special education programs, three to migrant students, and one to veterans. Please note that some respondents were counted in multiple categories as their mission or primary goal covers several different aspects of college access and success.

Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify the three greatest challenges currently facing their organizations. For direct service providers, funding or sustainability, capacity to serve all students in need, and engaging parents were the top three responses, with 54%, 47%, and 40% respectively. (See Table 17 for details on other challenges for direct service providers.) The same challenges can be seen in each region as in the state overall. None of the other possible answers garnered a response from more than 20% of organizations.

Table 17

Challenges Currently Faced by Texas College Access and Success Direct Service Providers

	Respondents (227 total)	Percentage
Funding or sustainability	123	54%
Capacity to serve all students in need	106	47%
Engaging parents	90	40%
Updating or enhancing program curriculum or activities	42	19%
Retaining students in program	39	17%
Transportation of students to events	29	13%
Physical space	29	13%
Promoting program/organization in the community	25	11%
Using technology to improve services	23	10%
Identifying students most in need of services	17	7%
Program evaluation	17	7%
Training of staff	16	7%
Building relationships with higher education	15	7%
Building relationships with school districts	12	5%
Recruitment of staff	11	5%
Building relationships with other programs serving students	11	5%
Other: “space in schools,” “providing great customer service,” “transportation to school,” “motivating students,” “students understanding of responsibilities”	10	4%
Building relationships with community agencies	9	4%
Recruitment of volunteers	7	3%

Goals

The top three goals direct service provider respondents identified were to improve students' academic preparation for college, increase the percentage of students attending college, and inspire students and foster college aspirations, with 56%, 48%, and 37% respectively. Other goals that garnered a 25–35% response rate were to increase high school retention/prevent dropouts, increase rates of college retention and completion, and educate students and parents about resources available for college. (See Table 18 for a complete list of identified goals.)

Table 18

Goals of Texas College Access and Success Direct Service Providers

	Respondents (227 total)	Percentage
Improve academic preparation of students for college	128	56%
Increase percentage of students attending college	109	48%
Inspire students and foster college aspirations	84	37%
Educate students and parents about resources available for college	76	33%
Increase rates of college retention and completion	61	27%
Increase high school retention/prevent dropouts	56	25%
Encourage parental involvement	35	15%
Promote interest/strength in specific fields of study	26	11%
Make college more affordable for students	26	11%
Improve career technical skills	24	11%
Promote student financial literacy	18	8%
Other	6	3%
Encourage students to return to high school or obtain a GED	3	1%

Regionally, direct service providers share similar top goals. In all six designated regions, respondents identified improving academic preparation of students for college as one of the three top goals. Five regions (all but East Texas) identified increasing the percentage of students attending college. Four regions (West Texas, the Panhandle, Central Texas and Northeast Texas) identified inspiring students and fostering college aspirations. In South and Northeast Texas, the third top goal was educating students and parents about resources available for college. In East Texas, the third top goal was to increase rates of college retention and completion.

State Network

The majority of direct service provider organizations (72%) indicated they partner with institutions of higher education to advance their work. Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated they partner with independent school districts, while 37% partner with community organizations, 31% partner with government agencies, and 26% partner with the private or business sector. Sixty-three percent agree or strongly agree that their organization does an excellent job engaging all key stakeholders in advancing their mission. Forty-five percent disagree or strongly disagree that organizations across Texas are well aware of each others' activities and pursuits. Forty percent neither agree nor disagree that there is little

overlap in postsecondary support services across the state. Twenty-eight percent disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, while 23% agree or strongly agree.

Eighty percent agree or strongly agree that their organization could benefit by the coordination of efforts among organizations to achieve a better outcome. Regionally, over 70% of respondents in each region also agree or strongly agree with this statement. South Texas has the highest percentage of agreement, with 60 out of the 69 (87%) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. East Texas had the lowest level of support for statewide coordination, with only 71%. (See Figure 5 for a comparison of the regional responses to this statement.)

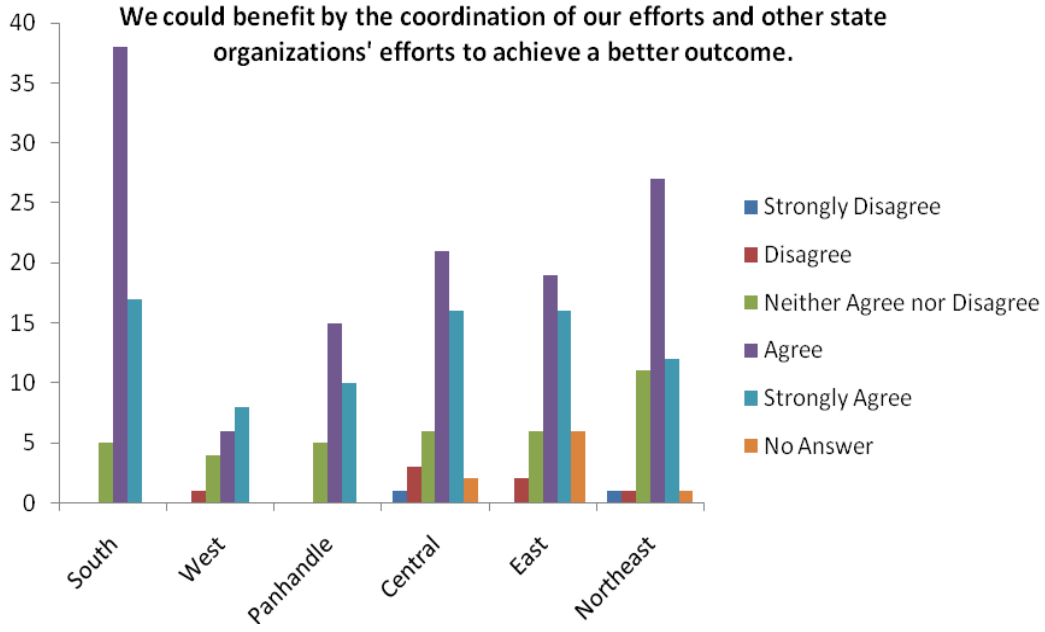

Figure 5. Regional responses to the statement, "We could benefit by the coordination of our efforts and other state organizations' efforts to achieve a better outcome."

Sixty percent agree or strongly agree that a regional set of partners could have more impact than a statewide partnership. Twenty-five percent neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Regionally, responses ranged from a little less than half of respondents (24 out of 49) in Central Texas stating they agree or strongly agree with this statement, to close to three quarters of respondents (46 out of 62) in South Texas indicating agreement or strong agreement. Central Texas also had 40% of respondents (20 out of 49) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. (See Figure 6 for a regional comparison of the response to this statement.)

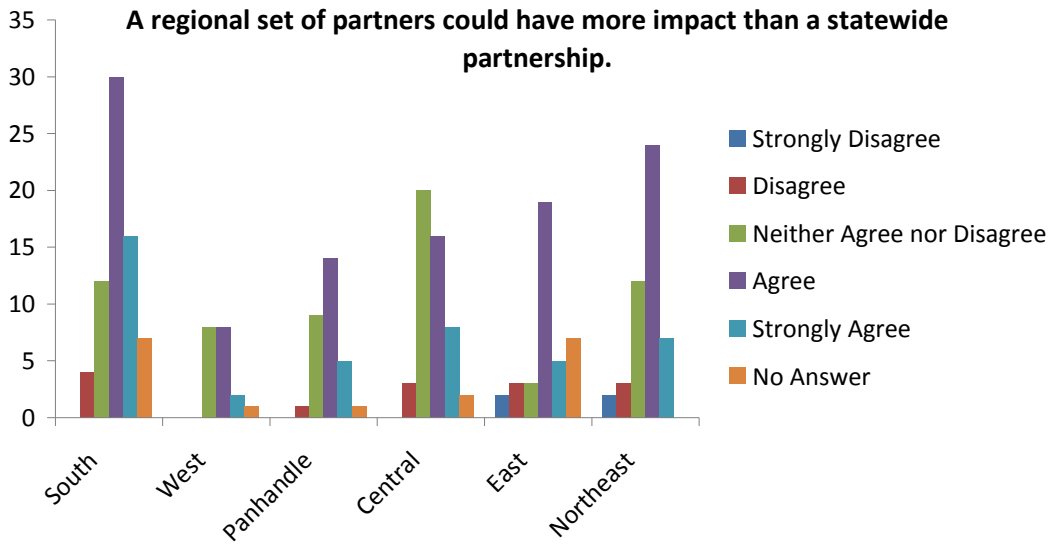

Figure 6. Regional responses to the statement, "A regional set of partners could have more impact than a statewide partnership."

Promotion of Services

In the promotion of their services, 78% of direct service providers use brochures and other printed materials to promote their work, 77% use schools, 61% use print publications such as newspapers and magazines, 45% use Internet advertising, 40% use social media such as YouTube and Facebook, 21% use television, and 20% use radio. Ninety-four percent indicated they target the message about their mission to students, 88% target parents, 64% target guidance counselors, 65% target teachers, 53% target administrators, 52% target the community (not working in the education field), 38% target higher education, and 35% target college access program staff (outside of K–12/higher education).

Direct service providers also were asked to identify their target populations for college access and success services. Eighty-nine percent of respondents target low-income students and students who are the first-generation to attend college. Seventy-eight percent target minorities who have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary education, and 67% target low- to mid-academic high school performers. Fifty-two percent target students with disabilities, 51% target English-language learners, 38% target undocumented students, 28% target foster children or those aging out of the system, 17% target walk-ins, and 14% target veterans. Ten percent of respondents chose other and listed all students, Latino students, migrant and seasonal farm workers, at-risk youth, athletes, or adults as their target populations.

Direct service providers' target populations in the six designated Texas regions closely reflect the responses of all direct service providers across the state (see Table 19). Low-income, first-generation students to attend college and minorities who have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary education were the three target populations respondents indicated most often. Likewise, foster children or those aging out of the system, veterans, and walk-ins are least likely to be targeted for these services.

Table 19

Direct Service Provider Target Populations for College Access and Success Services

	South	West	Panhandle	Central	East	Northeast
Low-income	**96%**	**89%**	**90%**	**88%**	**82%**	**87%**
Low- to mid-academic high school performers	70%	47%	77%	76%	57%	63%
Minorities who have been historically underrepresented in postsecondary education	**83%**	**89%**	**77%**	**78%**	**78%**	**85%**
English language learners	52%	42%	40%	49%	51%	50%
First generation to attend college	**93%**	**89%**	**93%**	**92%**	**82%**	**83%**
Students with disabilities	49%	47%	43%	49%	49%	52%
Undocumented students	45%	21%	27%	41%	41%	38%
Foster children or those aging out of the system	29%	16%	23%	41%	31%	23%
Veterans	17%	21%	10%	12%	31%	12%
Walk-ins	19%	5%	3%	10%	33%	15%
Other	10%	21%	10%	10%	10%	8%

Note: Bold percentages are the highest three in each column.

Student Participation

Eighty-five percent of direct service providers indicated they serve late high school students (grades 11 and 12); 79% serve early high school students (grades 9 and 10); 50% serve middle school/junior high students (grades 5–9); 32% serve postsecondary students (any students in any education program beyond a high school diploma); 30% serve elementary school students (grades K–6); 15% serve adult learners; and 15% serve out-of-school youth.

When asked how many students direct service providers serve one-on-one in each category, many did not answer the question for some types of students, perhaps indicating they do not serve these populations. Sixty-nine percent indicated they do not serve adult learners, 63% do not serve out-of-school youth, 60% do not serve elementary school students, 57% do not serve postsecondary students, 48% do not serve middle school/junior high students, and 44% do not serve parents/guardians on a one-on-one basis. Of the responders who serve students in groups, most serve fewer than 100 students in that setting. The responders serve this group size in the following categories: early and late high school students (33%), out-of-school youth (30%), middle school/junior high school students (28%), parents/guardians (26%), and postsecondary students (22%). Those serving high school students were the most diverse in their answers. Twenty percent of those serving early high school students and 18% of those serving late high school students indicated serving 101–250 students. Eleven percent of those serving late high school students and 8% of those serving early high school students indicated serving 251–500 students. Seven percent of those serving early and those serving late high school students indicated serving 501–999

students. Seventeen percent of those serving late high school students and 11% of those serving early high school students indicated serving 1,000 or more students on a one-on-one basis. No other category had more than 10% of organizations indicating they serve more than 100 students.

When asked how many types of students each organization serves in a group setting, many direct service providers did not answer the question for some types of students, also perhaps indicating they do not serve these populations. This question focused on events where organizations are working with more than one student or facilitating an event, rather than a student meeting with a counselor individually. Seventy-three percent indicated they do not serve adult learners or out of school youth, 64% do not serve postsecondary students, 59% do not serve elementary school students, 48% do not serve parents/ guardians, and 45% do not serve middle school/junior high school students in a group setting. Of the responders who serve students in group, most also serve fewer than 100 students in that setting. The responders serve this group size in the following categories: early and late high school students (32%), middle school/junior high students (22%), parents/guardians (22%), out of school youth (20%), elementary school students (17%), adult learners (17%), and postsecondary students (15%). Those serving high school students again were the most diverse in their answers. Fifteen percent of those serving early high school students and 13% of those serving late high school students indicated serving 101–250 students in group settings. Eleven percent of those serving late high school students and 12% of those serving early high school students indicated serving 251–500 students. Seven percent of both those serving early and late high school students indicated serving 501–999 students. Seven percent of those serving late high school students and 6% of those serving early high school students indicated serving 1,000–2,500 students. Twelve percent of those serving late high school students and 8% of those serving early high school students indicated serving 2,501 or more students in a group setting. Only one other category had more than 10% of organizations indicating they serve any amount over 100 students: 11% of those serving middle school/junior high school students indicated serving 101–250 students in group settings. In all other categories, less than 10% of organizations indicated serving any amount of students over 100.

More than half (58%) of the respondents to the direct service provider survey revealed that all students are eligible to participate in their organization's services. Thirty-nine percent require students to fall within the target population and select participants based on certain criteria (e.g., income, race, academic performance). Thirty-seven percent require students to apply. Twenty-four percent require a contract with the parent or student. Twenty-two percent require students to participate for a certain amount of time. Sixteen percent indicated their admissions requirements were competitive. Four percent had other requirements: students in detention, male students only, participants must be committed to the mission of the organization, referrals of highest need students from other organizations, migrant and seasonal farm workers, veterans, or students in specific grade at a specific school.

For those who indicated that students are required to fall within the target population and are selected based on certain criteria, respondents were asked to identify which elements or demographic requirements students must meet in order to participate. Thirty percent require students to be low-income. Twenty-eight percent require students to be first-generation college students. Twenty-four percent require students to attend specific schools. Fifteen percent require students to be in college or attend a postsecondary institution. Four percent require students to be adults or walk-ins. Seven percent checked other and listed the following requirements: students from specific school districts, students on contracted campuses with at-risk designations, students with disabilities, students who perform well academically, students with good work ethic and good grades, students with the ability to do college work, juniors and seniors in high school, students who perform well on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), students with a specific grade point average, and migrant and seasonal farm workers.

Direct service providers also were asked to provide information on the amount of time students spent interacting with their staff or services. Most respondents (89%) provided an average number of hours. The average for all respondents was 279.5 hours, with answers ranging from 0–2,000. Ninety-three

percent of respondents also provided a minimum number of hours a student spends interacting with their staff or services each year. The average for all respondents was 202.8, with answers ranging from 0–1,800. Some of those who did not provide a number provided a range such as 300–500, or stated that their program was new and data was not yet available, that this information was unknown, or that the average number varied or depended on many factors. This was true for both questions regarding average number of hours and minimum number of hours spent with students.

Respondents to the direct service provider survey also gave information about the typical length of participation per student. Four years received the most responses, with 31%. Thirteen percent said the typical length of participation was two years. All other lengths of time garnered a response rate of less than 10% each. About 12% indicated that the typical length of participation was more than 10 years.

Services Provided

Of the 227 programs responding to the direct service provider survey, 205 programs shared information on the services offered by their organizations. The most commonly offered service is college admissions advising, offered by 81% of respondents. Career exploration and/or career counseling followed closely with 80% of respondents. The least-provided service was loan provision programs, which are provided by only 11% of respondents (24). (See Table 20 for a complete grouping of services.)

Table 20

Services Provided by Texas Direct Service Providers

Service Offered	Percent Offering
College admissions advising	81%
Career exploration and/or career counseling	80%
Financial aid advising (FAFSA completion, scholarship searches)	79%
Test preparation (ACT, SAT, High school exit exams)	68%
Academic enhancement/tutoring/study skills	67%
Scholarships and last dollar grants	67%
College fairs/campus visits	67%
Encouraging rigorous curriculum and accelerated learning opportunities	55%
Mentoring/shadowing/internships	43%
College transition/retention support	40%
Early awareness (grades 5–8)	38%
Fee payments for tests, housing, admissions application	38%
College success programs, with students through postsecondary education	30%
Administering external scholarship programs	24%
Loan provisions (low interest, interest free, forgiveness programs, etc.)	11%
Other: Child care resource and referral and financial aid, parent education, website, workshops, STEM	8%

When it comes to services provided, the direct service providers in the six designated regions again closely mirrored the state as a whole. Career exploration and/or career counseling, college admissions advising, and financial aid advising (FAFSA completion, scholarship searches) are the three most offered services by the direct service providers responding to the survey. In West Texas, college fairs/campus visits took a slight lead over college admissions advising, which was the most indicated in the state overall. Other services offered are included in Table 21.

Table 21

Services Provided by Direct Service Providers by Region

	South	West	Panhandle	Central	East	Northeast
Academic enhancement/tutoring/study skills	68%	58%	60%	59%	51%	62%
Early awareness (grades 5–8)	42%	32%	40%	43%	33%	35%
Career exploration and/or career counseling	81%	79%	80%	78%	65%	75%
Test prep (ACT, SAT, high school exit exams)	70%	63%	73%	59%	51%	58%
College admissions advising	78%	74%	83%	80%	67%	75%
Financial aid advising (FAFSA completion, scholarship searches)	86%	89%	73%	90%	65%	77%
Scholarships and last dollar grants	71%	74%	73%	65%	55%	67%
Fee payments for tests, housing, admissions apps	45%	32%	23%	35%	27%	33%
Mentoring/shadowing/internships	52%	53%	33%	43%	45%	40%
Loan provisions (i.e., low interest, interest free, forgiveness programs)	10%	5%	3%	10%	20%	6%
College transition/retention support	45%	58%	27%	41%	49%	40%
College success programs, through postsecondary graduation	39%	37%	13%	29%	39%	25%
Encouraging rigorous curriculum and accelerated learning opportunities	54%	42%	57%	53%	47%	62%
Administering external scholarship programs	23%	11%	13%	16%	24%	31%
College fairs/campus visits	67%	84%	63%	78%	61%	71%
Other	13%	5%	0%	8%	8%	6%

Those direct service providers who serve high school students also were asked to provide information regarding AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment/credit classes offered in the high schools where students are served. Eighty-two percent of high schools offer dual enrollment/credit courses. Sixty-three percent offer AP courses, and 19% offer IB courses.

In general, services are provided primarily on school sites, with 81% of respondents indicating so. Services also are provided on college campuses by 52% of respondents. Less commonly, these services

are offered at a community center/agency (15%), library (11%), Internet only (8%), and students' homes (4%). Eight percent of respondents indicated services are provided in other locations such as call centers, a convention center, mall, restaurants, businesses or corporate offices, or through distance learning via email, text, or television.

The time of day or year during which services were offered was indicated by respondents as well. Eighty-seven percent offer these services during school hours. Sixty percent indicated services are offered after school or during episodic events (e.g, financial aid nights, college fairs, college visits, College Goal Sunday). Another 53% are offered during the summer, and 42% are offered on weekends.

Parent Involvement

Two hundred and twenty-one direct service providers (97%) offered information about parent involvement. Twenty-two programs (10%) do not have parent involvement. One hundred and ninety-nine programs (88%) do have parent involvement, with 13 (6%) making it mandatory and the other 186 (82%) optional.

Two hundred and twelve programs provided information on the parent services offered by direct service providers. College awareness information is the most provided parent service, with 77% of respondents indicating so. The second most provided is financial aid counseling/application assistance at 74%. Less frequently provided services to parents are campus visits and tours (36%) and instructional programs (25%). Seven percent of programs provide "other services" to parents, which include parenting classes, child care referrals, testing information, home visits, and financial literacy.

Program Evaluation

In order to address the issue of effectiveness and the impact of the work done by college access providers in Texas, survey respondents were asked to indicate whether an evaluation had ever been conducted of their organization. A little more than half of the direct service providers (54%) responded their organization had been evaluated for effectiveness and impact, while 43% indicated they had not. The most recent year of evaluation was 2010 for 30% of organizations and 2009 for 22% of organizations. Four percent of organizations had been evaluated in 2008 or earlier. Thirty percent of all respondents indicated their organizations' most recent evaluation was internal, and 27% had undergone an external evaluation.

Fifty-five percent of organizational evaluations focused on college enrollment; 46% on high school graduation; 43% on high school performance (i.e., GPA); 36% on duration of student participation in the program; 33% on financial aid received by students, college retention, and college-prep curriculum; 26% on parental involvement; 25% on college education; 17% on mentoring support; and 9% on peer group support. Six percent of respondents identified other areas of focus, such as internship, total program performance, student learning outcomes, information/resources provided, TAKS scores, school promotion, and first-year experience.

Measuring Student Success

Direct service provider survey respondents were asked about the data collected and analyzed on the students each organization serves. Thirty-eight percent of respondents analyze student data on a monthly basis, 24% do so annually, 17% semi-annually, and 14% quarterly. Seventy percent of respondents indicated they have sufficient data to demonstrate the success of their work with students, while 24% indicated they do not. Fifty-nine percent consistently use a tracking database.

Survey respondents also were asked about methods used for measuring student outcomes. Fifty-three percent indicated that their organization does not use the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to verify

the postsecondary enrollment status of their graduates. Those who do not use the NSC verify postsecondary enrollment/completion using information from students (42%), information from postsecondary institutions (22%), and information from high schools (9%). Other methods identified by 10% of respondents include Lifetrack services, the National Student Loan Database System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Region 9 Education Service Center, parents, and social networks such as Facebook.

Respondents were asked questions related to participant numbers and outcomes. Data can be seen in Tables 22–25. Most organizations indicated they serve fewer than 100 twelfth graders, and the percentage serving fewer than 100 grew by 4 points from 2006–07 to 2009–10. More than half of these organizations reported that 76–100% of the twelfth graders who participated in their activities graduated from high school. This percentage grew by 7 points over the same timeframe.

Table 22

Number of Twelfth Grade Students Served by Direct Service Providers in Texas

	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07
Fewer than 100	44%	42%	40%	40%
101–250	14%	15%	14%	15%
251–500	10%	10%	10%	10%
501–999	4%	3%	4%	4%
1000 and above	13%	14%	12%	11%
No Answer	15%	16%	21%	21%

More than half of the direct service providers did not provide an answer regarding the percentage of adult learners served who already held a high school diploma or GED. About a third of respondents indicated 0–25% of the students they serve are in this demographic. This percentage grew slightly from 2006–07 to 2009–10. However, those who indicated 76–100% of their participants were adult learners with a high school diploma or GED remained steady at 7%.

Table 23

Percentage of Twelfth Grade Students Served Who Graduated From High School

	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07
0–25%	9%	8%	8%	8%
26–50%	3%	4%	4%	4%
51–75%	5%	6%	5%	7%
76–100%	58%	54%	54%	51%
No answer	25%	28%	29%	30%

Direct service providers were also asked about the percentage of their participants who graduated from high school in 2010 went on to pursue postsecondary education at a 2-year college, 4-year college or university, or career-technical/vocational institution. About a third of the respondents did not answer this question. Over half indicated that 0–25% of these graduates went on to career-technical/vocational institutions, did not continue at any postsecondary institution, or had pursued other post-graduation plans. Only 6% of respondents indicated that 76–100% of these graduates went on to a 2-year college, 11% indicated they went on to a 4-year college/university, and 1% indicated they went on to career-technical/vocational institution. Two percent indicated this percentage of their participants went on to other endeavors post-graduation.

Table 24

Percentage of Adult Learners Served Already Holding a High School Diploma or GED

	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07
0–25%	37%	37%	36%	34%
26–50%	1%	1%	1%	3%
51–75%	2%	1%	1%	1%
76–100%	7%	7%	7%	7%
No Answer	53%	53%	55%	55%

Table 25

Percentage of 2009–10 Graduates Pursuing Post-Graduation Plans

	2-Year College	4-Year College/ University	Career-Tech/ Vocational Institution	No Postsecondary Institution	Other
0–25%	30%	26%	56%	56%	52%
26–50%	23%	22%	11%	8%	2%
51–75%	8%	12%	0%	2%	2%
76–100%	6%	11%	1%	0%	2%
No Answer	33%	29%	32%	34%	42%

Budget and Funding

A number of questions were asked about the financial status, operating budget, and funding sources for the college access programs in Texas. Eighty-nine percent of direct service provider respondents indicated their organizations are tax exempt. Forty-five percent of these organizations selected 501(c)3 as the tax code under which they are exempt. Thirty-five percent indicated they are tax exempt under another code but were not given the opportunity to specify. Thirteen of the 19 indirect service provider respondents indicated their organizations were tax exempt under 501(c)3. Six indicated they were exempt under some other tax code but were not given the opportunity to specify.

Direct service providers only were asked to provide information on their total operating budget. This budget is defined as the total budget for stand-alone college access programs or the program budget only for college/university programs. Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated their organizations operate on

a budget of under $500,000 per year. Thirteen percent have an operating budget of $1,000,000–9,999,999. Seven percent operate on a budget of $501,000–999,999, and 4% have an operating budget of $10,000,000 or more per year.

The majority of direct service provider programs also gave information about use of a fiscal agent. Seventy-five percent do not use a fiscal agent, and 15% do. Twenty of the organizations use a state or local college or university as their fiscal agent. Eight use a school or school district. Others use state and federal government agencies and programs such as the Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP, a P–16 Council, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Texas's college access programs that serve students directly receive their funding from an array of sources. Respondents were asked to check all options that applied. Forty percent receive funding from a K–12 school district. Thirty-two percent receive funding from a state-level initiative (e.g., statewide network, tech prep, or GO Center). Twenty-three percent receive funding from the federal government through the TRIO program. Eighteen percent receive funding from private sources (e.g., individuals, foundations, corporations, or civic groups). Fifteen percent receive funding from a higher education institution. A complete list is provided in Table 26.

Table 26

Texas Direct Service Provider Funding Sources

Funding Sources	Percent Receiving Funding
K–12 school district	40%
State-level initiative (e.g., statewide network, Tech Prep, GO Center)	32%
TRIO (federal government)	23%
Private (individuals/ foundations/corporations/civic groups)	18%
Higher Education Institution	15%
Other	11%
GEAR UP (federal government)	8%
Student Loan Agency	1%
Guaranty Agency	1%

Regionally, there is not much difference in funding sources when compared to the state as a whole (see Table 27). State-level initiatives fund most organizations in South Texas and the Northeast. K–12 school districts fund most organizations in the Panhandle, Central Texas, and East Texas. The federal government's TRIO program was the most common funder in West Texas. Other funders mentioned were other federal government initiatives such as migrant education, HEP/CAMP (High School Equivalency Program/College Assistance Migrant Program), the College Access Challenge Grant, and AmeriCorps, as well as local governments.

Table 27

Texas Direct Service Provider Funding Sources by Region

	South	West	Panhandle	Central	East	Northeast
State-level initiative (e.g., statewide network, GO Center)	30%	26%	23%	33%	24%	38%
Higher education institution	20%	16%	10%	12%	20%	15%
K–12 school district	26%	21%	53%	45%	33%	38%
Private (Individuals/ foundations/civic groups)	17%	0%	7%	20%	22%	15%
Student loan agency	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Guaranty agency	4%	16%	10%	6%	6%	6%
TRIO	36%	42%	10%	6%	20%	29%
GEAR UP	13%	16%	0%	2%	8%	8%
Other	16%	16%	7%	18%	20%	12%

Staffing Patterns

The majority of programs shared the types of employees and volunteers their programs utilize. Eighty-eight percent of the direct service providers indicated their organizations have paid full-time staff members. Another 54% have paid part-time staff members. Work-study or other students are employed at 39% of programs. Volunteers are used at 53% of programs and 5% have AmeriCorps/VISTA members. Both direct and indirect service providers supplied the range of numbers employed for each category.

While 88% of direct service providers employ full-time staff members, the number of paid full-time staff runs the gamut. Twenty-five percent employ 2–5 paid full-time staff, 15% employ 21–50, 12% only have one, and 11% have more than 100. Fewer organizations have paid part-time staff, with 33% indicating they employ none. Similarly, no organizations report employing work study/other students (47%), volunteers (40%), and AmeriCorps/VISTA members (78%). (See Table 28 for a complete list.)

Table 28

Range of Staff Members in Different Staffing Categories for Direct Service Providers

	Paid Full-Time Staff	Paid Part-Time Staff	Work Study/ Other Students	Volunteers	AmeriCorps/ VISTA
0	5%	33%	47%	40%	78%
1	12%	8%	5%	3%	0%
2–5	25%	19%	15%	16%	3%
6–10	7%	9%	7%	8%	0%
11–20	7%	6%	4%	4%	0%
21–50	15%	6%	4%	5%	1%
51–100	10%	3%	1%	4%	1%
More than 100	11%	4%	4%	6%	0%
No answer	7%	13%	14%	13%	16%

Texas Stakeholder Interview Summary

Introduction

NCAN was contracted by Greater Texas Foundation to conduct a statewide analysis of the Texas college landscape. As a part of this work, NCAN conducted structured interviews with 53 stakeholders from the higher education, philanthropic, business, college access, and local government policy-making communities. To assist in determining differences in regional perspective, stakeholders were grouped into one of six regions: South (n=12), West (n=10), Panhandle (n=8), Central (n=9), East (n=9), and Northeast (n=5). Regions were comprised of rural, suburban, and urban environments.

Interviews were conducted between September 29, 2010 and December 30, 2010. Stakeholders were scheduled by telephone and then interviewed by phone, in person, and in writing. Stakeholders received an advance copy of the interview questions and were given the opportunity to address questions with the interviewer beforehand. The interview consisted of eight questions meant to address major areas pertinent to the college access landscape in Texas. These questions were open-ended and allowed stakeholders the opportunity to provide contextual information to complement data gathered through the college access inventory survey. The average time for each interview was about 27 minutes.

This section of the report will address the major topics covered in each interview question beginning with a brief discussion of a few key overall themes:

College Readiness or Preparedness

Stakeholders expressed concern about the basic academic abilities of entering college freshman. Students were generally described as arriving at college without the necessary skills to succeed in basic courses. The concerns centered on reading, writing, and mathematics. This lack of fundamental academic ability was posited with forcing colleges to expend unnecessary time and resources to bring students up to a basic level of academic functioning so they can begin taking credit-bearing courses.

Funding

Many stakeholders suggested that expected budget cuts in the near future are likely to have widespread negative consequences on addressing college access in Texas. These concerns were reinforced by the fact that college enrollment has increased dramatically at many Texas universities since the economic downturn, yet funding is expected to decrease dramatically to account for state budget shortfalls. Additionally, Texas continues to experience population growth—particularly in the low-SES Latino community—that stakeholders suggest will require an increase in expenditures at *all* levels of education to adequately address. This confluence of factors has produced concern that Texas will not be able to meet its college access goals and may lose ground if cuts are as dramatic as some expect.

Face-to-Face Contact

Stakeholders frequently expressed apprehension that many students do not have adequate access to counselors and other mentors to educate and guide them through the college process at all levels. Student-to-counselor ratios at the high school and college level were listed as areas of concern.

Cultural Issues

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 37% of Texans identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Stakeholders frequently expressed that a variety of issues affecting the Latino population have yet to be addressed and continue to limit the effectiveness of initiatives in Texas to improve overall college access. Language skills, immigration status, cultural issues that may impede access to services, and the lack of a college-going culture in many Latino families were tied to many other concerns raised by stakeholders.

* *

The responses that follow are not assigned to any specific individual to protect the anonymity of the participants. The summary is divided according to the questions asked of each respondent.

What are the top issues related to K–12 education in Texas?

Stakeholders across all regions expressed concern with curriculum alignment (or "vertical alignment"), which many suggested is a contributing factor to the lack of college readiness displayed by many incoming freshman. This lack of alignment was described as a failure on the part of K–12 officials and higher education institutions to maintain an adequate communication network among educators, policy makers, and administrative officials. This communication was deemed "essential" by many stakeholders, who expressed concern that high schools do not seem to know what is needed to prepare students for college. Furthermore, their responses suggest that several factors related to nonalignment have created an expanding "academic gap" between K–12 and higher education in Texas. Stakeholders identified a range of different causes as contributing to the lack of curriculum alignment, but several suggestions were rendered more prominently than others (see Figure 7).

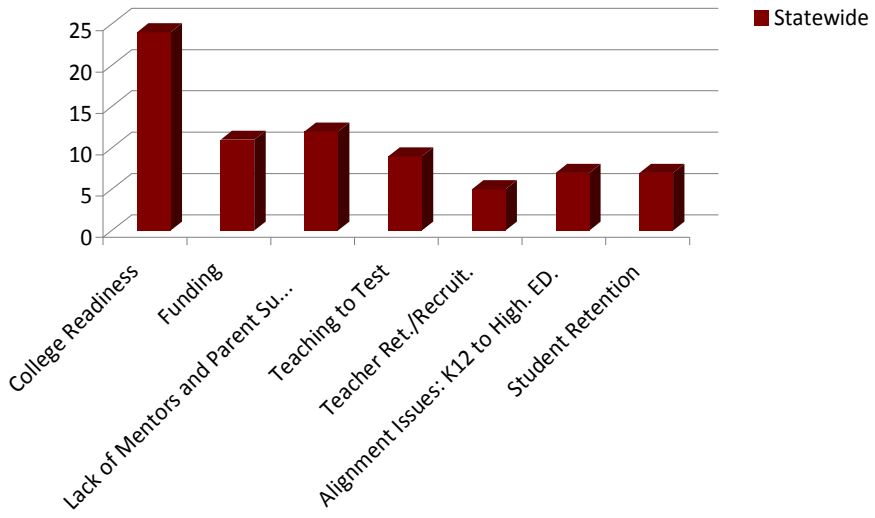

Figure 7. Top K–12 issues statewide identified by stakeholders.

Many stakeholders were concerned that K–12 has become too focused on test taking as a measure of college preparedness. This approach results in what many describe as instructors teaching "to the test" rather than academic skills that might be more useful in completing required entry-level college courses, suggesting it stifles instructor creativity and places unnecessary stress on teachers and administrators to produce results that are perceived as ineffectual measures of academic progress.

In turn, many stakeholders suggested this focus has made it difficult to attract and retain "the best and the brightest" K-12 teachers due the perceived lack of freedom to tailor lesson plans and an aversion to the rigidity of the test preparation process. One stakeholder in higher education described meeting with a group of high-achieving college-bound students. During the meeting, students were asked how many planned to pursue teaching as their chosen profession. No students raised their hands. The stakeholder went on to explain that teaching needs to be seen as "highly valued and revered" to attract more highly qualified instructors (i.e., it's not about the money). Another stakeholder commented the "assessment mentality is not well thought out, not well researched." In short, there appears to be a lack of confidence in the efficacy of the current end of the course assessment paradigm across regions and stakeholder communities in Texas.

Underlying these issues at the K–12 level was a persistent concern that projected budget shortfalls are likely to result in substantially lower levels of funding. Stakeholders in all designated regions consistently voiced these concerns. However, those representing higher education in rural and/or lower SES communities in the Panhandle, Western, Eastern, and Central regions (see Figure 8) with lower tax bases expressed greater alarm that a reduction in funding would disproportionately affect already at-risk communities and lessen the state's ability to reach its "closing the gaps" goals.

A few stakeholders pointed out that in these four regions, low-SES communities were already struggling to adequately fund education. They reasoned that a combination of state budget shortfalls and decreasing economic prosperity leading to a declining tax base would exacerbate preexisting problems of overall K–12 institutional quality and leave college-eligible students unprepared to meet basic higher education standards in the coming years.

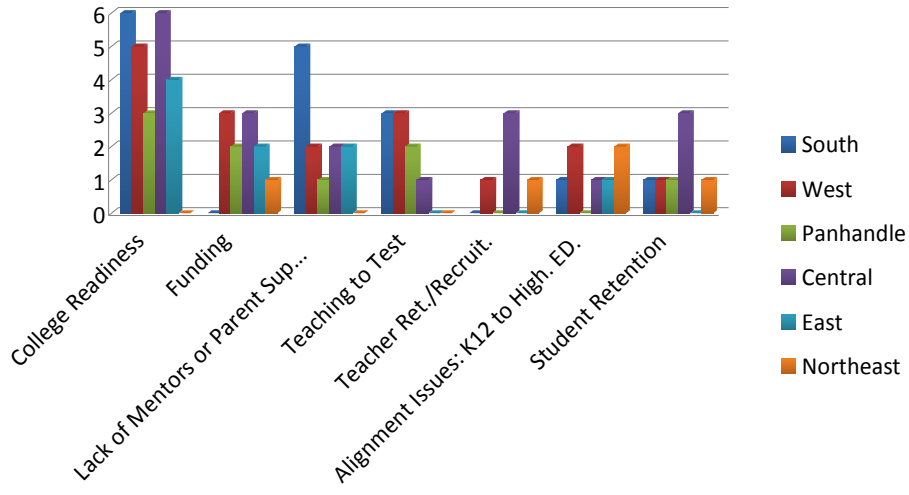

Figure 8. Top regional K–12 issues identified by stakeholders.

What are the top issues related to postsecondary education in Texas?

Statewide, many stakeholders offered ideas in this area that may be seen as a continuation of their K–12 concerns (see Figure 9). For example, college readiness was a primary concern across regions where stakeholders noted a "huge gap" between the exit level skills of many graduating high school seniors and the academic abilities required by colleges to complete freshman-level math and English coursework. This gap was noted by stakeholders as not only affecting "average" high school students entering college but also those who received "good" grades and were presumed to be college-ready. In addition to deficiencies in basic core academic areas, several stakeholders noted increasingly poor student performance in utilizing "soft skills" such as weekly scheduling, study planning, and note-taking.

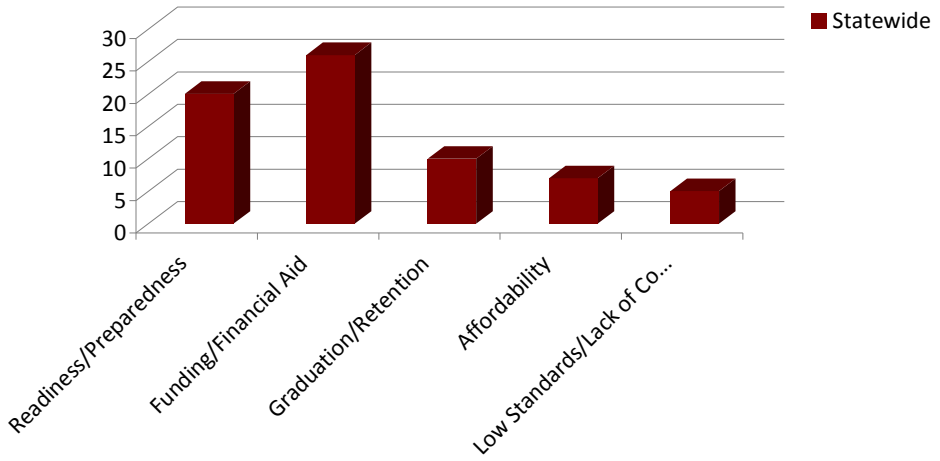

Figure 9. Top higher education issues statewide identified by stakeholders.

One stakeholder at a moderately sized 4-year institution stated that "47% of entering freshman do not have the needed math, English, and writing skills" that would allow them to take freshman-level courses in these areas. As a result, a high number of students must take one or more semesters of developmental coursework in order to begin taking "credit-bearing" college classes. This lack of college readiness was described as a multifaceted problem. Lack of academic preparedness places increased financial strain on many students, who must pay for courses that do not count toward their degree. Many students ultimately drop out due to what might seem like a never-ending stream of remedial coursework, yet upon leaving, these students might be left with thousands of dollars in debt and nothing to show for it. One stakeholder suggested there may be little incentive for the most heavily affected colleges to address this problem because developmental courses have become financially lucrative to the point of near dependency at some institutions. Stakeholders identified community colleges and small universities in rural areas with largely Latino populations as those most heavily burdened by developmental coursework.

Many stakeholders also were concerned about graduation and retention rates. Some expressed cautious enthusiasm that certain institutions had exceeded enrollment goals but were quick to point out that the increasing numbers have not necessarily translated into higher graduation rates. One stakeholder posited that "rates are measured with a flawed or biased form of statistics" where nontraditional students who might take several additional semesters to graduate are not counted in the current graduation rate formula.

Several stakeholders described a need to reconsider the metrics used to chart graduation and retention rates. For example, a stakeholder at a small, rural community college said nearly 75 out of every 100 students transfer or drop out after their first semester or transfer following the third semester. This high transfer rate hurts all institutions involved because transfer students are not counted in any graduation rate. This stakeholder further explained that the current Fall-Fall funding paradigm combined with the aforementioned student movement created financial instability at their institution.

Again, funding was a primary concern to stakeholders across regional and community boundaries. What one stakeholder described as "skyrocketing enrollment since the economic downturn" combined with the prospect of decreased funding in the coming years clearly had many higher education stakeholders worried about their ability to adequately serve larger enrollment cohorts.

Finally, stakeholders noted a disconnect between the concerns of state government officials and those of the education community in what was described by several stakeholders as a "communications issue." One stakeholder made the point that the legislature does not seem to understand that "the speed of graduation and quality of education do not always match up."

On a regional level (see Figure 10), college preparedness or readiness was a concern in all designated regions but disproportionately high in the South. The most common explanation for this concern centered on first-generation, low-SES Latino students, who represent a more sizeable portion of the population in South Texas compared to other regions. Again, many stakeholders felt these students were lacking in the basic reading, writing, math, and English language skills needed to prepare them for college. These students also were frequently referred to as coming from homes in which many parents had not graduated from high school let alone college, contributing to a lack of emphasis on college education in the home.

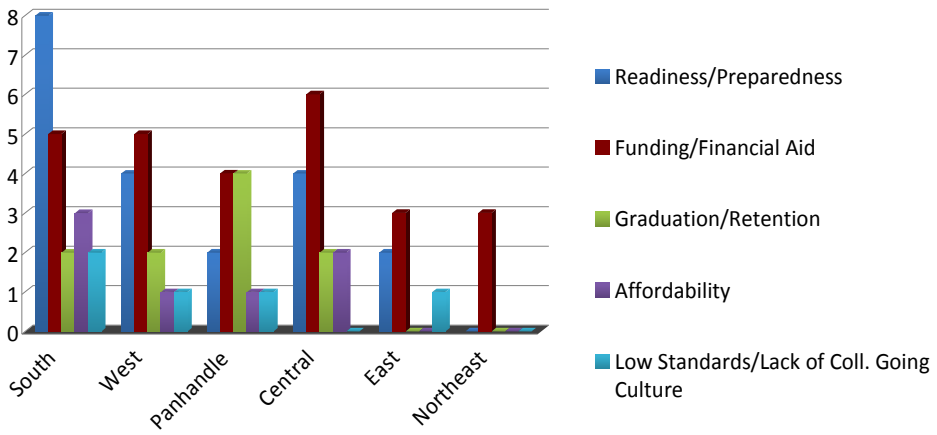

Figure 10. Top regional higher education issues identified by stakeholders.

Graduation and retention rates were the most pressing concern in the Panhandle, the only region where this was the case. Several Panhandle stakeholders emphasized that the necessity or perception of needing a college education in the region may be different because some prospective college students ultimately choose professions or training suited to a more rural environment that do not necessarily require a degree. In this regard, students may enter college and fail to see the utility of obtaining a 4- or 2-year degree

versus attending a technical program, apprenticing to learn a trade, or working in a field that does not require a college education.

When thinking about the Texas college-going rate, would you say it is of concern, on target, or excellent?

Statewide

Of 53 stakeholders interviewed, 41 endorsed "of concern," 11 endorsed "on target," and one had no opinion about the college-going rate in Texas (see Figure 11). Statewide, no stakeholders endorsed the college-going rate as excellent, although a few noted that higher SES families with a college-going tradition had excellent college-going rates.

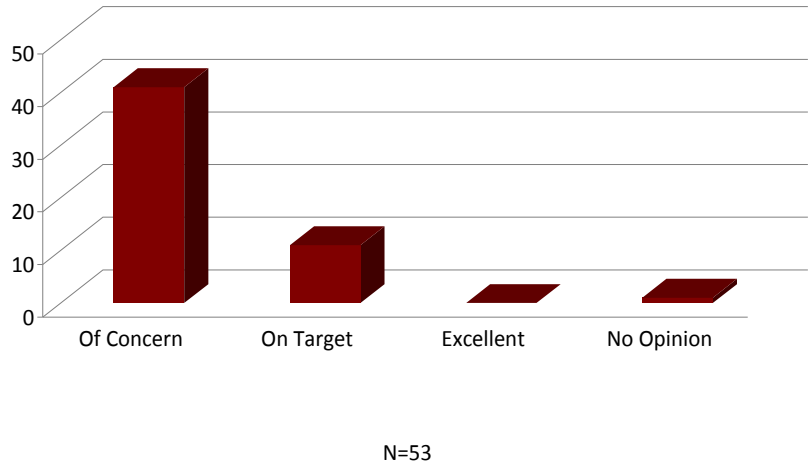

Figure 11. Stakeholder opinion of the statewide Texas college-going rate.

Stakeholders endorsing "of concern" specifically mentioned the college-going rate of Latinos, African-American males, and more generally those of lower SES status. Those coming from a home without a college-going tradition also were cited. Overall, being Latino or an African-American male from a low-SES household without a college-going tradition was cited as the greatest combination of risk factors for not going to college.

A few stakeholders commented that the college-going rate was in near "crisis mode." These stakeholders referred to an inability to effectively target the growing Latino population and also to address concerns of military personnel returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Others expressed concern not just with the college-going rate but with retention and graduation rates, that is, what is the point of increasing college going if graduation rates continue to stagnate or decrease?

Those who endorsed "on target" were primarily educators in more isolated settings. One explanation is that the population in these isolated areas is less transient and easier for college recruiters to target. In this regard, it may be easier for recruiters from established local colleges to build more effective personal relationships with students and parents, leading to higher rates of college going.

A smaller group endorsing "on target" were those not directly employed by higher education institutions (e.g., the philanthropic sector and policy makers). This sample of stakeholders represented a small

subgroup within those endorsing “on target,” making it difficult to determine whether or not regional differences exist. However, these stakeholders suggested that current college-going goals may not be realistic in the short term from an institutional resources perspective and a college preparedness perspective. In short, they suggested the appropriate finances are not available to support a large influx of new students, especially considering that many of these students will require additional tutoring and developmental resources to meet basic academic standards at the college level.

By Region

Across designated regions, the breakdown followed a similar pattern with stakeholders endorsing “of concern” at least twice as frequently as “on target” (see Figure 12). The one exception was the Panhandle, where stakeholders endorsed “of concern” on five occasions and “on target” on three occasions, making it the only region with a relatively even distribution. Given the small sample size (n=8), it is difficult to say why. A few stakeholders discussed how the Panhandle may place a different cultural emphasis on college than other regions, and that more potential college students in the region aspire to gain technical skills that do not necessarily require a college education and that are suited to a more rural environment. This difference in career focus may affect the overall perception of college going among stakeholders in the region.

However, if this were the case, it would be expected that West Texas stakeholders would express similar opinions on college-going rates. But those in West Texas overwhelmingly endorsed “of concern” by an eight-to-one margin. One explanation for the difference might be found in the larger Latino population in West Texas compared to the Panhandle. In this regard, stakeholders in West Texas might be endorsing “of concern” with a particular emphasis on first-generation, low-SES Latino students, whereas Panhandle stakeholders might be more influenced by regional economic and environmental differences.

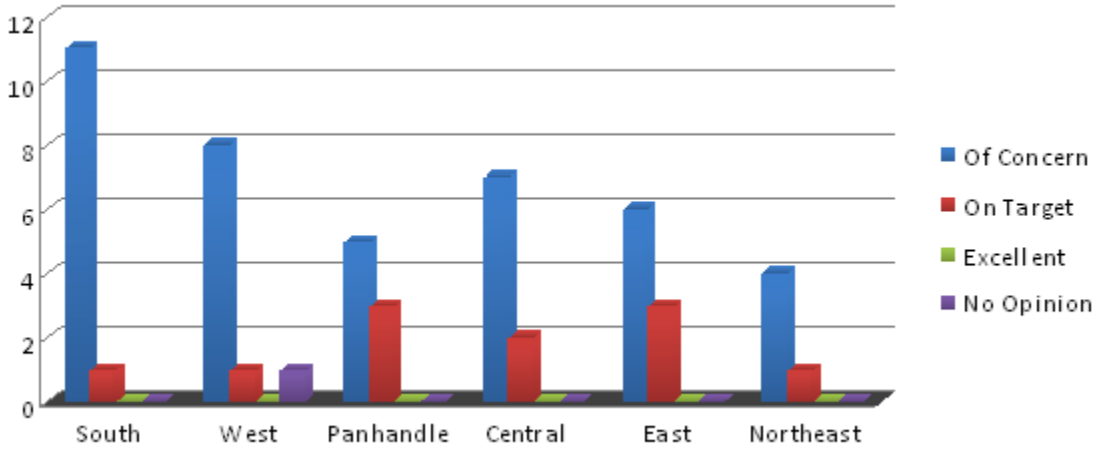

Figure 12. Stakeholder opinion of the regional Texas college-going rate.

Thinking about the students you work with or the students in your community, how aware are students and their families of the college access resources in their community or state?

The most common response from stakeholders was “not very aware.” Additionally, many suggested that Latino communities in particular had very little awareness. A lack of parental involvement or a need to get parents more involved was the most frequently cited concern. This concern often was directed toward first-generation college students from Latino families with a lower SES background. Overall, most

stakeholders thought universities and various organizations were working hard to get information in the hand of parents and students, but "more could be done."

Beyond this general sentiment, some thought parents needed to be more proactive in attending college nights, "GO centers," and other college-related events. Others expressed frustration that parents were not taking advantage of the available resources. Most agreed that outreach efforts into local community organizations (e.g., churches, synagogues) could be utilized more often. Some stakeholders criticized the amount of information that was posted on the web when many of the most at-risk students do not come from families with reliable web access. In this regard, it was argued that universities, state government, and community organizations have become overly reliant on technology to spread resource awareness.

To improve awareness, it was suggested that role models from the local community who have "been in the shoes" of prospective students be enlisted to engage in outreach efforts. Many stakeholders thought this strategy would be more effective than university-directed efforts or the use of popular figures.

What are the problems that schools and community organizations face when trying to help students obtain postsecondary education?

Many stakeholders identified a pattern or culture of low expectations that carries over from K–12 into college. They posited that students from some school districts go to college with the expectation that they will fail or are not as good as other students. When a challenge arises that tests the students' resolve, many give up or do not seek assistance to help them overcome the challenge. This was especially noted to be the case among first-generation college students who do not have a knowledgeable family support network to alleviate or address common problems that arise at college.

The low expectations issue taps into concerns voiced by stakeholders regarding the test-taking culture that permeates K–12. Many stakeholders felt that students had developed the wrong set of skills to be successful in college. Those in philanthropic and college access organizations noted a pattern of faulty expectations on the part of students as to what college would be like, with many expecting the academic environment to mimic high school. When these expectations are not met, in the best of cases, these students access the institution's resources at a higher rate, which may stretch staff and counseling services. In other cases, students give up and do not seek help, resulting in poor grades and increased drop outs.

One suggestion to address this issue was to increase on-campus college visits for high school students. This would not only familiarize students with the environment, but might also break down the perception that college is only for certain students. Similarly, extending freshman outreach programs to bring students into the college community may also prove beneficial. Stakeholders suggested this would help students form study groups and generate collective support via peer networking during the critical transition period.

Another suggestion was to introduce students and parents to college recruiters informally at local destinations frequented by a city's residents. For example, one small-town college in the Panhandle region sent casually dressed recruiters to Wal-Mart to hand out literature and answer questions. A dean of students from a rural college in West Texas frequently met with prospective students in jeans and a polo shirts versus a more formal suit and tie to reduce anxiety.

Finances, or what one stakeholder termed "skyrocketing costs," was commonly referenced. Stakeholders reasoned the escalating cost of books, tuition, and transportation have all placed increased strain on students and their families, who in turn look to community organizations for assistance to cover financial gaps. One possible solution to help students financially was to prioritize students who lack transportation for work-study positions; these students might find it temporally difficult to work off campus, attend classes, and address family concerns (e.g., students who take the bus across town to campus and then take

the bus to work somewhere else in the city). Overall, many worried that budgetary issues will result in students not having access to needed aid.

What are Texas's strengths and/or weaknesses when it comes to helping students enroll in postsecondary education?

Listed below are the strengths and weaknesses identified by multiple stakeholders regarding the postsecondary enrollment process.

Strengths

- The "can do" spirit of Texans: When Texans set their mind to solving a problem together, there is optimism that challenges can be met.
- Large increases in youth population mean great opportunities, particularly in South and West Texas, but can also go the other way.
- The cost of an education in Texas is still a value when compared nationwide. However, rising costs may soon change this.
- Dual enrollment programs have effectively reduced the cost of college and time to graduate for some. Streamlining and improvements could be made
- The Texas Common Application ("Apply Texas") has streamlined the application process, although more can still be done to simplify.
- Financial assistance opportunities are excellent for those in need. The Texas Grant was frequently cited. Many community and philanthropic organizations are available to assist students in need.
- Texas has a diverse array of institutions: public, private, community, technical, and for-profit.
- Generation TX: The more public relations, the better.

Weaknesses

- Financial aid opportunities could be better organized to increase awareness among those most in need. The money is there, but students need to know about it.
- Students are targeted too late in high school. Many miss deadlines to apply by the time they seek assistance. Greater outreach is needed.
- Many parents simply don't understand the process. Parents need to be involved and made aware of resources earlier.
- The ratio of counselors to students at the high school level is inadequate. Those students in greatest need of counseling services are often unaware of where to go. Counselors are overwhelmed with their current workload.
- "Average" students fall through the cracks. Many are not eligible or are not targeted to receive assistance from community, university, or philanthropic organizations.
- The entire admissions and financial aid process is too complicated for students coming from families without a college-going tradition (e.g., students who have little or no help at home).

- Improvement is needed to allow students to transfer course credit more easily between institutions. Can this be extended to those with work and military experience?

- "Goodness of fit" should be top priority. Emphasis on sports and extracurricular activities may lead students to wrong school.

- There is too much bureaucracy in higher education; the system needs to be "de-bloated."

- Generation TX has not proven effective—where is the evidence? The money could be better spent elsewhere. [3]

What are Texas's strengths and/or weaknesses when it comes to helping students earn a postsecondary degree?

Listed below are the strengths and weaknesses identified by multiple stakeholders when asked about earning a college degree in Texas.

Strengths

- Overall affordability of college is still lower than national average. ("If that family can afford to buy that new car, they can afford to send their child to college.")

- Financial aid in Texas is strong. (Texas grant and philanthropic network given as examples.)

- Overall quality of academic and technical programs is very high.

- Larger universities are doing good job of integrating freshman into college culture.

- Awareness of retention and success problems is high. The state is making strides toward addressing the problem.

- Providing resources to at-risk students who have encountered financial or life issues.

- Outreach efforts in the community have improved communication with rural and Latino population, although more is needed.

- There is a proud, caring culture in Texas which can be used to our advantage to address problems. Able to bring many partners together.

Weaknesses

- Actual cost of college is misconstrued to be higher than it actually is. Many do not enroll due to cost confusion.

- Financial aid distribution is confusing or complicated to some.

- Lack of support services targeting students at risk for dropping out, particularly those experiencing life stressors (e.g., transportation, family pressures to work, childcare needs.)

- Data Alignment: better metrics are needed to track student success.

[3] The Generation TX program was launched in October 2010; statistics on success rates are not yet available.

- Older and nontraditional students have fewer alternatives to receive assistance than "straight to college" students.

- Counselor-to-student ratio is inadequate to address needs.

- Remedial courses wasting student and state resources.

- Breaking down myth of college as "only for certain kids." Some outreach efforts have been successful but improvement needed to break down stigma to parents and students.

- Lack of college readiness/ preparedness of incoming college freshman. Many students lack confidence coming out of high school.

What kinds of technical assistance would be beneficial to organizations within Texas who are seeking to help students enter college and earn a degree? (e.g., policy updates and advocacy, technology, strategic planning, fundraising, program evaluation, budgeting/business/operations, public relations/media, and marketing.)

Stakeholders identified several technical assistance (TA) areas that would benefit organizations and schools in Texas. They also offered several general guidelines on using TA more effectively. First, TA should be targeted toward parents where applicable. Stakeholders were quick to point out that while getting students into college was the goal, educating parents was oftentimes the greatest hurdle to reaching this objective. Second, it is important to remember that many students and their families still do not have reliable access to technology such as Internet service, cell phones, and cable television. Business partnerships should be developed so that technology (e.g., wi-fi hotspots) can branch out in rural areas and give greater access to underserved communities. Third, the demographic shift in Texas demands an increase in Spanish-language outreach when using any form of TA. Although most students are capable English speakers, many of their parents are not.

Despite the focus of the question, many of the comments suggested that increased face-to-face contact with students was the most needed form of assistance throughout the state. This was articulated as more counselors at all levels of education and more outreach efforts into local community organizations. One stakeholder stated it was not necessary to "reinvent the wheel," a sentiment shared by others who thought the necessary systems were in place to implement new or modified forms of outreach. Others offered suggestions that blended face-to-face contact with technology, including using Skype to facilitate counseling services and modeling the Math Lab program at one West Texas university where students can advance at their own pace but call on tutors for assistance when necessary.

There was a split among stakeholders about whether increasing public relations, media, and marketing campaigns (e.g., Generation TX) would be effective and worth the cost. The split did not fall disproportionately within a particular regional or stakeholder group. Some thought the market was already oversaturated with information, while others believed targeted efforts to the Latino community using Spanish-language programming could be effective. There was also a split about whether using various forms of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) was effective as an outreach tool. While most recognized that students were receptive to using social media, some doubted that students would be receptive to receiving academically related information on a medium typically reserved for casual communication.

Several thought that not enough was being done to market community and technical colleges in Texas. One stakeholder expressed disagreement with the idea that "every child needs to go to a four year college," believing it is a disservice to students who might be better suited to learning a trade or accruing minimal debt earning an associate's degree.

A few stakeholders suggested developing better outcome data or mapping software to chart socio-demographic changes. Others advocated on behalf of presenting outcome data to prospective college students who were unsure if attending college was worth the cost. They reasoned that visually showing students and parents the financial benefits of earning a degree versus the cost of education would alleviate misconceptions regarding the overall expense of college.

One final issue raised was that some Latino parents might be afraid to submit financial information required for FAFSA completion due to immigration status issues. There were no proscribed solutions to address this issue. It is notable because several stakeholders thought this fear limited financial aid opportunities for prospective students and ultimately influenced their decision not to enroll in college.

Recommendations

Texas is in an excellent position to create and sustain a college access and success network that would have a major impact on the lives of its citizens and the future economy of the state. There is broad support for educational reform in the quest for academic excellence and increased access and postsecondary completion rates. Even though the state is on the brink of one of the most difficult financial times in its history, there is substantial funding available through the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program as well as very generous support being provided to the education community by both Texas-based and national foundations.

Based on the findings from this report, we recommend the following next steps, many of which can and should be pursued under the umbrella of either a Texas college access or success network or under the auspices of college access networks operating in each of the six designated regions.

Define and communicate the value added of state or regional networks in relation to existing statewide or local education initiatives. We know all successful networks have a clearly defined mission and vision, and they establish measurable objectives. We also know in Texas, given the number and variety of existing education programs, there is a risk that the education and philanthropic communities may encounter initiative fatigue. A statewide or group of regional college access networks should clearly define their role in relation to and support of these other initiatives if they are to maximize member participation and encourage network sustainability. Ninety percent of our survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed their organization could benefit by the coordination of effort to achieve a better outcome.

Many of the respondents noted their preference for the creation of regional networks rather than a single statewide network. This is likely due to the sheer size of the state. We recommend that consideration be given to the concept of regional networks that would include one network for each of the six designated regions.

Whether the network is a statewide organization or smaller regional networks, the organization should do the following:

1. formalize partnerships with organizations doing similar work in the area of postsecondary access and success for low-SES, minority, and potential first-generation college students;

2. promote evidence-based solutions and promising practices to district and state officials;

3. research funding streams, including state and national foundations, to provide support for members' activities;

4. offer competitive grants to members for demonstration projects, proven programming, evaluations and/or general operations, and

5. develop a daily listserv to update professionals on recent access and success literature including policy issues at the national, state, and local levels.

Those who would create the network(s) should recruit a board of directors that is diverse and representative of the various sectors committed to college access and success; secure tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service; and develop a multi-year strategic plan as well as specifics on programmatic services that will be offered to the access and success community. These services should include professional development and technical assistance—for example, fundraising and sustainability, advocacy, and student tracking. The network should also support social marketing campaigns and communications strategies designed to build a stronger college-going culture throughout the state.

Develop programs that specifically target a more diverse range of students. Based on the response of those surveyed, we know that most access and success services are being offered to traditional-age students (high school juniors and seniors) during the school day at school-based sites. There remains a dearth of services for several critical sectors of the population: foster children, postsecondary students, adults, undocumented students, and out-of-school youth. Immediate improvements to the state's college-going and postsecondary completion rates may be realized if additional efforts are made to assist these groups. The Texas College Access and Success Network should make the development of programmatic services that target these underserved populations a top priority. Further, stakeholders frequently expressed their sense that a variety of issues affecting the Latino population have yet to be addressed and continue to limit the effectiveness of college access and success in Texas. Language issues, cultural issues that may impede access to services, immigration status issues, and the lack of a college-going culture in many Latino families were thematically tied to many other concerns raised by stakeholders and should also be addressed by the state network without delay.

Increase the number and percentage of students who are successful in their pursuit of higher education. Increasing access to college for students is only part of the solution. It is also critical that a much higher percentage of students who enroll in postsecondary education complete their programs. Unfortunately, this is not a problem isolated to Texas. There is increased attention being given to postsecondary student success at all levels of government.

Stakeholders noted a "huge gap" between the exit-level skills of many graduating high school seniors and the required academic ability to complete freshman-level math and English coursework in college. To address this widespread and critical problem, the state network should focus on promoting increased awareness of and support for Texas College and Career Readiness Standards. Individuals should be encouraged to continue to expand and engage vertical teams of K–12 education and higher education faculty to forge consensus of instructional standards and provide guidance for policy makers. Texas should maintain a strong and active communication network among educators, policy makers, and administrative officials to ensure all take responsibility for reducing the egregious "academic gap" between K–12 and higher education in Texas. The network should provide a regular forum for representatives of higher education to meet and share researched and proven best practices vis-à-vis successful campus-based retention programs.

Students—especially first-generation, low SES, and minority students—need extended, in-depth counseling on admissions, financial aid, and other college access- and success-related issues. Since the state population is exploding, attention must be paid to finding ways of ramping up the one-on-one counseling provided to Texas students. We recommend Texas make use of AmeriCorps members, work-study students, and others who can provide low-cost, high quality, one-to-one interface with students as they prepare for higher education. Guidance counselors simply do not have the time to do this work. In 2008, the Texas student to guidance counselor ratio was 435:1. The American School Counselor Association recommends a 250:1 ratio of students to school counselors. Counselors are often the first to be cut from the staff once the budget ax falls. Since Texas is unlikely to see adequate public sector support for this work, concerned parties need to seek private funding and expand their collaboration with organizations such as the National College Advising Corps. Recruiting, training, and deployment of AmeriCorps and Advising Corps members could be managed by the statewide or regional network staff.

Find the best, most realistic options for low-SES students to ensure affordability and success. Continued unemployment and the cost of 4-year colleges have spurred record enrollment at community colleges, but they are failing to graduate students in high numbers and on time. Community colleges enroll large numbers of low-income students and students of color. If state financial aid programs fall victim to the ax in the upcoming state budget, the number of students who will try to enroll in community colleges may expand exponentially. For these reasons, it is imperative that a statewide network advocate for stronger support for Texas community colleges. At the same time, the network should also hold colleges accountable for their outputs and promote enrollment in institutions where the graduation rate is

at acceptable levels. Achieving the Dream is an initiative where certain community colleges use student achievement data to guide new ways to increase graduations and transfers to 4-year colleges. Support for Achieving the Dream should be continued and expanded. Texas communities should insist that community colleges develop a more results-oriented approach—student completion within a reasonable timeframe.

Dual Enrollment is another option that should be promoted heavily by the network and its members.

Consider the role of advocacy. The survey respondents and stakeholders raised many issues that were of great concern to them with respect to increasing the level of education in Texas. As the Texas College Access Network takes form, it should begin to raise those concerns with policy makers. The network should function as a nonpartisan representative of all Texas students, particularly those who will be the first in their families to enroll in postsecondary education. Various ways of communicating policy recommendations could include Legislative Policy Days, training practitioners on "how to advocate," the development of attractive and "to the point materials" for policy makers, and the use of both accurate data and personal interaction with real students to convey the network's message.

Appendix A: Indirect Organizations

Types of Organizations

Of the 19 respondents to the indirect service provider survey, eight identified as a state/government agency, six as a foundation, four as a community organization, and one as a national organization working in Texas and not directly serving students. None of the respondents identified as business or commerce.

Location of Services

For indirect service providers, the region with the highest response rate was the East, with 13 of the 19 respondents indicating they work in this region. This was followed by South Texas with 10 out of 19, the Northeast with 8, Central with 7, the Panhandle with 6, and West Texas with 5 out of the 19 respondents indicating they served these regions. Over half (10) indicated they work in multiple school districts, and 3 indicated this was not applicable.

Organization Mission/Primary Goal

Sixteen of the 19 respondents to the indirect service provider survey entered their organizations' mission or primary goal. Only 6 of those 16 had a mission or primary goal related to college access and success. Three of the respondents indicated their mission or primary goal related to college access. Two indicated college preparation, high school graduation, and/or college success. Only one addressed diversity, by focusing on assisting Latino students, and one other focuses on higher education affordability through scholarships and financial aid. None mentioned addressing gaps, dropouts, or adult education directly. Half of the 16 organizations indicated they serve or support education in their community or the state. A few others mentioned serving children and/or improving socioeconomic conditions.

When indirect service providers were asked what percentage of their organization's work focused on college access and success, 7 indicated 1–25%, 6 indicated 76–100%, 4 indicated 51–75%, and 2 indicated 0%. More than half of the respondents (11) indicated they are involved in outreach efforts to students as a college access and success activity. Slightly less than half indicated they are involved in outreach efforts to schools (9), scholarships (9), outreach efforts to parents/families (8), and training of practitioners/professionals (8). Five or fewer respondents indicated they are involved in policy (5), advocacy (5), financial literacy (4), event sponsorship (4), and loans: lenders, guarantor, servicer (1). Three indicated there were other college access and success activities they are involved in: college persistence, "[c]ollection and analysis of data about students' engagement in effective educational practice; focus group research with current and prospective community college students," and the promotion of college savings accounts.

Challenges

The indirect service providers identified recruitment of staff (100%), training of staff (100%), and recruitment of volunteers (100%) as their three greatest challenges. All indirect service provider survey respondents also indicated that physical space is not a challenge. Challenges for indirect service providers are presented in full in Table 29.

Table 29

Challenges Currently Faced by Texas College Access and Success Indirect Service Providers

	Respondents (19 total)	Percentage
Recruitment of staff	19	100%
Recruitment of volunteers	19	100%
Training of staff	19	100%
Funding or sustainability	7	37%
Building relationships with school districts	6	32%
Promoting program/organization in the community	6	32%
Building relationships with higher education	4	21%
Program evaluation	4	21%
Updating or enhancing information	3	16%
Building relationships with college access/success programs	3	16%
Using technology to improve services	3	16%
Other: "none as listed," "testing" "have middle school aged students"	3	16%
Building relationships with other programs serving students	2	11%
Building relationships with community agencies	1	5%
Identifying role in college access/success work	1	5%
Engaging organization's audiences	1	5%
Physical space	0	3%

Goals

The top three program goals identified by indirect service providers were to increase high school retention/prevent dropouts, improve academic preparation of students for college, and increase rates of college retention and completion, with 42% of programs (8) indicating these as one of their top three goals. Other top goals were to inspire students and foster college aspirations (5), increase percentage of students going to college (4), make college more affordable for students (4), educate students and parents about resources available for college (2), improve career technical skills (2), promote student financial literacy (2), encourage students to return to school or obtain a GED (1), and promote interest/strength in specific fields of study (1). None indicated one of their top goals is to encourage parental involvement. Three indicated they had other top program goals, and one provided the answer, "Assist colleges in using data to target and monitor improvements in student learning, persistence and attainment." (See Table 30 for a complete list.)

Table 30

Goals of Texas College Access and Success Indirect Service Providers

	Respondents (19 total)	Percentage
Increase high school retention/prevent dropouts	8	42%
Improve academic preparation of students for college	8	42%
Increase rates of college retention and completion	8	42%
Inspire students and foster college aspirations	5	26%
Increase percentage of students attending college	4	21%
Make college more affordable for students	4	21%
Other	3	16%
Educate students and parents about available resources	2	11%
Improve career technical skills	2	11%
Promote student financial literacy	2	11%
Encourage students to return to high school or obtain a GED	1	5%
Promote interest/strength in specific fields of study	1	5%
Encourage parental involvement	0	0%

Promotion of Services

For indirect service providers, the populations most targeted by the respondents are also low-income (16 out of 19) and minorities who have been historically underrepresented in higher education (14 out of 19). Other target populations are listed in Table 31.

Table 31

Indirect Service Provider Target Populations

Target Populations	No. of Organizations
Low income	16
Minorities who have been historically underrepresented in higher education	14
First generation to attend college	12
Low- to mid-academic performers	9
English language learners	9
Students with disabilities	7
Undocumented students	6
Foster children or those aging out of the system	4
Other: All students or all of the above	3
Veterans	2
Walk-ins	1

Students Served

Because the indirect service providers do not work with students directly, questions regarding student population were not asked. Instead, they were asked questions regarding the academic levels supported by their work and the number of students reached annually by their program.

The academic levels most supported by the work of the indirect service providers who participated in the survey are middle/junior high school students (15), elementary school students (12), and late high school students (grades 11 and 12) (11). Fewer than half indicated their work supports early high school students, postsecondary students (students in any education program beyond a high school diploma), out-of-school youth, or adult learners. The number of students reached annually range from 100 on the low end to 4.7 million on the high end, with the median being 1,250 students.

Program Evaluation

A majority of the indirect service providers who responded (12) indicated they had not been evaluated, while five had been evaluated. Two did not answer the question. Six indicated the most recent evaluation had been conducted in 2010 and one other respondent indicated their most recent evaluation had been conducted in 2007. Four indicated the evaluation was external, while two indicated it was internal.

Indirect service provider organizations were also asked to identify the focus of any actual or planned evaluations. Six indicated high school graduation. Four each indicated high school performance and college enrollment. Three each indicated parental involvement and improvement in college entrance exam scores. Two each indicated duration of student participation in the program, college-prep curriculum, financial aid received by students, and achievement of policy goals. Only one organization indicated college retention and college graduation were a focus of their evaluation, while none of the respondents indicated peer group support, mentoring support, or the number of students reached through outreach efforts were evaluated or planned for evaluation.

Staffing Patterns

Fifteen of the indirect service providers indicated they employ paid full-time staff. This ranged anywhere from one (at four organizations) to more than 100 (at three). Very few employ paid part-time staff, work-study/other students, volunteers, or AmeriCorps/VISTA members. (See Table 32 for a complete list.)

Table 32

Range of Staff Members in Different Staffing Categories for Indirect Service Providers

	Paid Full-Time Staff	Paid Part-Time Staff	Work Study/ Other Students	Volunteers	AmeriCorps/ VISTA
0	3	8	12	11	13
1	4	2	2	0	0
2–5	5	2	1	1	0
6–10	1	1	0	2	0
11–20	0	0	5	0	0
21–50	2	1	0	1	1
51–100	0	0	0	1	0
More than 100	3	0	0	0	0
No answer	1	3	2	3	5

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