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## Building Momentum After a Historic Year for Texas Higher Education

As we turn the page to a new year, it's a great time to reflect on the progress toward expanding higher education across Texas.

Thanks to our ongoing partnerships, 2024 was a significant year for the Texas Higher Education Foundation (THEF) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)—with many opportunities to advance new initiatives while enhancing and promoting existing tools designed to support students, institutions, and communities statewide. These partnerships have helped bring tangible benefits to students and families while furthering efforts to increase access and attainment in higher education. Together, we've built a solid foundation for continued momentum in the year ahead.

In this issue of our newsletter, we'll hear from our new Commissioner, Dr. Wynn Rosser, who will share some thoughts on the importance of innovating at scale to meet the needs of all Texans. We'll also share a few of the highlights from Higher EDge 2024, an event that closed out the year on a high note. You'll also find resources to revisit some of the key Higher EDge programming. Finally, we'll spotlight a few of the THECB strategic initiatives THEF supported in 2024 in our continued effort to accelerate progress beyond the traditional pace of change in higher education.

Looking ahead, 2025 promises to be a year filled with ample opportunities to deepen collaboration and continue amplifying our collective impact.

We look forward to another year of work together, driven by our shared commitment to **Building a Talent Strong Texas!**

# Message from the Commissioner: Innovation at Scale

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Wynn Rosser as the new Commissioner of Higher Education! With an extensive background in higher education and philanthropic leadership, Dr. Rosser brings a wealth of knowledge and commitment to advancing Texas higher education. In the message below, he shares a few words about his vision for the future of our shared work.



**Dr. Wynn Rosser**  
Texas Commissioner of  
Higher Education

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As we begin this new year, I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself, share a few reflections from Higher EDge, and talk about the exciting opportunities I see on the horizon.

The recent Higher EDge conference brought together an extraordinary array of voices—students, educators, and experts from across the state and beyond. For me, a key takeaway from the conference was the urgent need to create solutions that match the scope and scale of Texas itself. With a student population larger than many states' entire populations, we have a Texas-sized job on our hands.

The highlight of the conference for me was hearing from a group of truly articulate and thoughtful students. If you have not watched [our student panel from the conference](#), I encourage you to do so. Hearing these students share their journeys through higher education reinforced an encouraging reality—Texas doesn't have an aspiration problem—our students have big dreams for their future.

Now, the challenge for us is to continue creating higher education systems and structures that are equipped to ensure every student can meet their big aspirations with the big opportunities available across our state.

To do this, to meet the needs of all Texans, our work can't just be about isolated successes; one-offs won't work. Instead, we have to ensure that innovative programs can grow into statewide solutions designed to meet the needs of every student across the state.

As I take on this new role, I'm excited about the Agency's progress on this front. We've built strong platforms and tools, such as My Texas Future, and we have momentum. Now, we have to scale up those innovations to be as far-reaching as our large state demands.

In the near term, I am focused on the Agency's legislative priorities as well as any opportunities that may arise to continue advancing our strategic plan and higher education in Texas. Over the longer term, I want to continue building partnerships that will help us collaboratively move outcomes on a scale that matches the size of Texas in several key areas:

### **Scaling Access and Affordability:**

Ensuring that more Texans can access and afford higher education regardless of background.

### **Building Scaled Support Systems:**

Developing broad-reaching support structures that help students succeed at every stage of their educational journey.

### **Strengthening Workforce Alignment at Scale:**

Expanding programs that prepare students for Texas's dynamic and growing economy, ensuring they are ready for current and future jobs.

Now, more than ever, we must collaborate to scale what works. Your partnership is crucial to ensuring our efforts drive impact and are far-reaching. Together, let's build on the momentum we've created and continue working toward a future where every student in Texas can access the resources and opportunities needed to succeed, complete a postsecondary credential of value, and live a life of endless opportunity.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership in this journey to Build a Talent Strong Texas. It's going to be fun.



# TODAY'S STUDENT. TOMORROW'S TEXAS.

THECB  
HIGHEREDGE



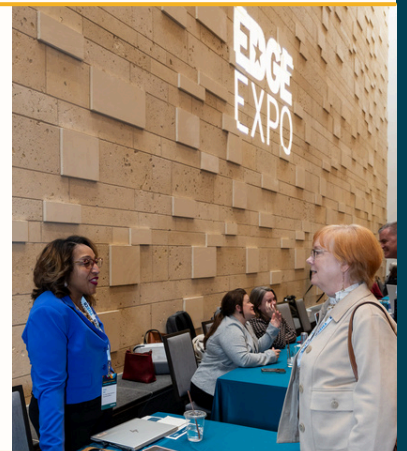
Higher EDge 2024 was the biggest and best yet! Leaders in higher education, business, policy, and philanthropy gathered to discuss ways to prepare today's students for the future. Through engaging conversations, like the panel featuring students who voiced a career-focused mindset, and collaborative sessions, we explored factors driving change and shaping our state.

We wanted to share a few highlights and encourage you to save the date for Higher EDge 2025 from Dec. 8th-10th!

Listen to the thoughtful and engaging Q&A as Interim Commissioner Sarah Keyton sat down with incoming Commissioner, Dr. Wynn Rosser, to discuss his vision for the future of Texas higher education.



Visit some of the resources from the EDGE Expo, which showcased programs and initiatives such as My Texas Future, Course Sharing and more. These tools are designed to support families and educators, empower institutions, and increase student success statewide.



Check out Stephen Moret's keynote address, applauding Texas for leading the way in higher education innovation with work such as community college finance and My Texas Future, which will continue serving as models for higher education nationwide.



Watch our panel exploring ways to support student transitions from higher education to the workforce and how educational institutions and employers can collaborate to ensure Texas graduates are prepared for thriving careers.



**A Big Thank You to the 2024 Higher EDge Sponsors!**



# Looking Back to 2024 & Ahead to 2025

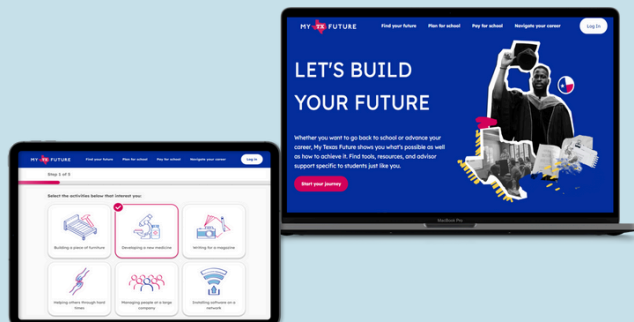
2024 was another noteworthy year for the partnership between the Texas Higher Education Foundation and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Here's a look back at some of the work THEF supported to further key agency priorities. Thanks to our partners, THEF was able to provide essential support for each of these initiatives, illustrating the role private funds play in amplifying the impact of public investments. We'll also look ahead at what lies ahead for this work in 2025 and beyond!

## My Texas Future

Philanthropic funding catalyzed public dollars to support the design and marketing for [the My Texas Future \(MTF\) tool](#). The initial rollout focused on engaging a population essential to our state's workforce talent pipeline, adult learners. The latest iteration connects K-12 learners and families to higher education.

In 2025, philanthropic funding will support work to further streamline admissions through tools housed within MTF.



## Direct Admissions

In October 2024, THECB launched Phase One of Direct Admissions, a functionality within MTF, entirely through philanthropic support. The functionality enables students to enter self-reported data to quickly and easily find out where they qualify for admission at universities across Texas. Some of the highlights of the Phase One rollout include:



**31 of 34 four-year public institutions in Texas participated in the launch**



**Over 8,000 students have opted in to Direct Admissions in My Texas Future**



**Informing 18,000+ K-12 educators through TX OnCourse**

Planning is underway for Direct Admissions Phase Two, which will focus on utilizing key administrative data, such as class rank and grade point average, to further streamline admissions. Additionally, we aim to connect students with financial aid options. To learn more, check out the Higher EDge panel, [Breaking Barriers through Admissions Redesign](#).

## Texans' Perceptions of Higher Education

To ensure My Texas Future meets users' needs, THEF supported market research with 800 Texas parents and students to learn more about their perceptions of higher education's values, benefits, and the anxieties, challenges, and motivations associated with these pursuits. Among the insights we learned, we were particularly encouraged by:

**The overwhelming majority, 80% of students and parents, agree that higher education is crucial for career success.**

This finding echoes what we heard from our Higher EDge student panel and underscores the importance of a continued commitment to strengthening connections between higher education and the workforce.

### How important is higher education in determining future career success?

