



IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

- Message from Commissioner Rosser

Page 3

- Outcomes from the 89th Texas Legislative Session
- Predictability and Portability: Increased Financial Aid for Texas Students

Page 4

- Overview of the Postsecondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) Coalition
- The PSEO Explorer Tool
- Updated DataBridge Dashboards: Enrollment and Graduation

Momentum and Milestones: The Road to Building a Talent Strong Texas

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Texas Higher Education Foundation newsletter!

In this issue, Commissioner Rosser reflects on key outcomes from the 89th Texas Legislature and outlines priorities to continue our forward momentum as we reach the midpoint milestone of our state's strategic plan for higher education and work to continue advancing the goals of Building a Talent Strong Texas.

We also take a closer look at key legislation passed that will increase predictability and portability for students and families across the state as they navigate pathways to—and through—higher education.

Finally, we spotlight work of the Postsecondary Employment Outcomes Coalition, efforts that focus on strengthening the education-to-employment data pipeline across the country—empowering individuals with the information they need to earn credentials of value.

Save the Date for Higher EDge 2025

Preparations for this year's conference are underway. We aim to build on last year's momentum by continuing to elevate the student voices that ground and inspire our collective work. We hope to see you there!

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HIGHER **EDGE**

From Classroom to Career:

A FUTURE-READY TEXAS.

December 8th-10th, 2025

AT&T Hotel & Conference Center
Austin, Texas

Message from the Commissioner:

Session Reflections and Continuing Our Momentum

Dear Colleagues,

With the final gavel of the 89th Legislative Session coming down last month, I've been thinking a lot about how far we've come—and how much more we can do together in the years ahead. Thanks to the Legislature's significant investments in higher education, Texas students and families will see more support, more opportunity, and have more access to the tools and resources they need to reach their goals.

This session brought some big wins: \$320 million in additional financial aid, \$400 million for research and innovation, and \$15 million to continue modernizing the data systems to equip leaders to make data-informed decisions. These investments lay the groundwork for lasting impact—bringing us a step closer to realizing the goals of Building a Talent Strong Texas, and the cornerstone of those goals is helping 60% of Texans aged 25–64 attain a credential of value by 2030.

On the next page, you'll find more information on key legislative highlights, like Free College Application Week, the expansion of My Texas Future/Direct Admissions, and the next phase of Community College Finance. However, the most important takeaway from these legislative wins is that they represent more than just policy changes—they're practical steps toward ensuring all Texans have the opportunity to earn a credential that leads to a good job and a better life.

Looking ahead, we've got five years to hit our Building a Talent Strong Texas goals. That's not a lot of time. So, my focus—and the agency's focus—over the next five years will be on using every tool, every policy lever we have: from aligning our internal initiatives to supporting legislative priorities, and partnering with institutions and communities—to turn these policies into real progress for students, to expand opportunity and increase the number of Texans earning credentials that offer value in our state's rapidly growing economy.

That's where the Texas Higher Education Foundation and all of you come in. Your support and partnership have been critical in helping us build the momentum that has gotten us to this point—and your partnership is going to be just as important as we push ahead. We're grateful to work alongside you in this effort to ensure higher education opens doors to opportunity, economic mobility, and a brighter future for every Texan.

Thank you for being in this with us. I'm excited about what we've accomplished—and even more excited about what's ahead.

Let's keep going.



Dr. Wynn Rosser
Texas Commissioner of
Higher Education



Thank You, Chairman Farias!

After a decade of dedicated service to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Foundation, Dr. Fred Farias stepped down from his positions on June 21. He has begun an exciting new chapter as Associate Dean for External Affairs and Associate Vice President for Governmental Relations at UT Rio Grande Valley's School of Optometry.

We are deeply grateful for Dr. Farias's leadership and lasting contributions to higher education in Texas, and we congratulate him on this exciting opportunity to continue serving students and his community.

Advancing Building a Talent Strong Texas

The 89th Legislature's Impact on the State's Strategic Plan

Helping to sustain strong momentum, the 89th Texas Legislative Session advanced key legislation to expand long-term access and opportunity in higher education across Texas. New legislation will support students along their higher education pathways in many different ways, from simplifying the college application process and expanding the first-of-its kind, outcomes-based funding model for community colleges, established during the 88th Legislative Session. We wanted to share a few of the highlights:

SB 2231:

Free Application Week



During the second full week of October, Texans will now be able to apply to any public college or university via ApplyTexas without paying an application fee, encouraging more students to take the first step to higher education.

SB 2314:

My Texas Future



This legislation will expand awareness and utilization of My Texas Future and Direct Admissions, two tools designed to help make college and career pathways more accessible, navigable, and student-focused.

SB 1786:

Community College Finance

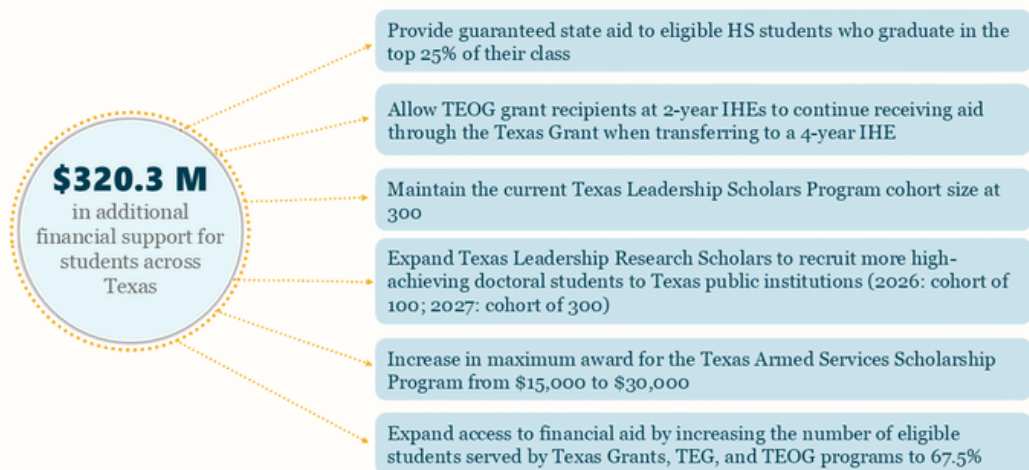


Refinements to the outcomes-based funding model now include rewards for community colleges when students transfer to private Texas universities, statutory definitions of credentials of value, and a new wage threshold to define those credentials.

Student Financial Aid:

Increased Portability and Predictability

A highlight of the 89th Legislative session was the 22% increase in financial aid for Texas students. The \$320 million allocated in additional financial aid demonstrates a strong commitment to the future of our state's talent pipeline, enhancing predictability, portability, and accessibility by lowering financial barriers to credential attainment. Specifically, these funds will:



This investment will change the trajectory of lives across Texas—opening doors to greater opportunity and economic mobility. It also continues our momentum toward achieving our Building a Talent Strong Texas goal: ensuring that 60% of Texans aged 25 to 64 hold a degree, certificate, or other credential of value, by 2030.

Postsecondary Employment Outcomes Coalition: Expanding Access to Education-to-Workforce Data



In this issue, we highlight the work of the Postsecondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) Coalition, a collaborative network of 37+ states and member institutions working to collect, analyze, and share data that highlights the value of higher education.

Founded in 2016 by Dr. David Troutman, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs, the coalition links postsecondary data with wage records to explore potential career trajectories and earnings in specific fields of study, with the ultimate goal of clarifying the impact of postsecondary education on long-term employment opportunities.

The Texas Higher Education Foundation works with philanthropic partners who have supported the expansion of this network and its impact. We'd like to share an overview of this work, which offers valuable insights, not only to students and families but also to institutional leaders and policymakers working to align higher education with evolving workforce needs. The PSEO Coalition's efforts also support the Coordinating Board's broader goal of increasing awareness of the many different college and career pathways that lead to credentials of value and the economic mobility students seek through the pursuit of higher education.

PSEO by the numbers



37+



Participating
States

1,000+



Institutions
Represented

96%



of U.S. Employment
Represented

Explorer Tool

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the PSEO Explorer tool offers publicly accessible, interactive resources that improve understanding of postsecondary outcomes. This tool visualizes aggregated data on expected postsecondary program outcomes—including career paths and associated median wages—offering students, families, and institutions vital insights into degree utilization and earning potential.

Annual Summit

This spring, the PSEO Coalition convened its third annual summit in Denver, Colorado. Over 130 postsecondary, workforce, and data leaders from more than 40 states gathered to discuss advancing the integration of education-to-employment data systems, facilitating thoughtful conversation about strengthening the work's momentum and the positive impact for students across the country.

Updated Dashboards on DataBridge!

We're excited to share that DataBridge now features the updated data on Texas enrollment and graduation trends.

Explore updated datasets, insights, and enhanced visualizations to gain a deeper understanding of the state's evolving higher education landscape.

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Access to action.

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