



IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

- Message from Commissioner Rosser
- Thank you, Chairman Adams

Page 3

- Higher EDge 2025: A Look Back at Key Programming

Page 4

- 2025 In Review: Accelerating Momentum at the Midpoint of BTST
- Catalyzing the Road Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

Driving Statewide Progress: Innovation, Impact, and the Path Ahead

As 2025 marked the midpoint of **Building a Talent Strong Texas**, we enter 2026 with a clear sense of both how far we've come and the work that lies ahead to meet our 2030 goals.

Last year, with support in key strategic areas through the Texas Higher Education Foundation (THEF), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) advanced initiatives to boost statewide attainment of credentials of value. Highlights include improvements to publicly available college and career advising tools and data tools such as DataBridge and My Texas Future, expanding transparency and access to critical information for institutions and students across the state. We also supported the continued growth of the [PSEO Coalition](#) and the release of a report detailing progress toward [Building a Talent Strong Texas](#) goals — all made possible with philanthropic partnership.

Now, we're building on that momentum, and in this issue, Commissioner Rosser reflects on the importance of building what lasts as he continues to guide the Coordinating Board toward 2030. We'll take a look back at Higher EDge 2025 and the progress made in advancing strategic priorities in service of institutions, students, and families across the state.

With your partnership, together, we'll keep **Building a Talent Strong Texas**.

Message from the Commissioner: Working to Build What Lasts

Dear Colleagues,

Each new year offers a moment to pause and reflect, and that is especially true for me as I look back on my first year as Commissioner. In doing so, one theme that stands out in my mind is our need to focus on building systems strong enough to stand the test of time. What this means is that creating sustainable progress, especially at the scale Texas demands, starts with building on a solid foundation, made up of: clear, data-informed policy; aligned institutional practice; and partnerships that reinforce both.

These reflections come as our state is seeing encouraging signs. Enrollment is rising across all sectors, more Texans are earning degrees and credentials than ever before, and Texas now has the largest labor force in its history. This momentum underscores both the opportunity before us and the responsibility it brings. Expanding the number of Texans who earn credentials of value—and ensuring those credentials lead to real opportunity—will require more than short-term fixes. It calls for thoughtful planning, durable systems, and a sustained focus on addressing root challenges rather than symptoms.

Philanthropy has long been an essential partner in this work, helping spark innovation, align efforts, and bring promising ideas to scale. The Texas Higher Education Foundation exemplifies this role by supporting experimentation, strengthening policy infrastructure, and helping ensure that progress endures.

Looking ahead, I'm optimistic about what we can continue building together: a higher education system grounded in purpose and built on solid foundations—one that serves Texas not just for the next budget or legislative cycle, but as a lasting vehicle of opportunity for generations to come.

Thank you for your partnership, leadership, and continued commitment to building what lasts.

With appreciation,

Wynn



Dr. Wynn Rosser
Texas Commissioner of
Higher Education

Thank You, Chairman Adams!

After 17 years of dedicated service, Mr. Neal Adams stepped down from his position as president and chair of the Texas Higher Education Foundation in January. We are extremely grateful for his leadership over the years and wanted to take a moment to recognize the impact of his service.

A deeply engaged alumnus of Texas A&M University, Chairman Adams experienced firsthand how higher education can expand opportunity across generations. His father and uncle both used the GI Bill after serving in World War II, and he often reflects that he and many others stand on the shoulders of those who benefited from that historic investment in education. He views his service with THEF as a way to pay forward the opportunities he received, ensuring future generations of Texans can experience the transformative power of higher education and, in turn, make a difference for others.

In addition to leading THEF's philanthropic efforts, he strongly values the role Texas businesses play in strengthening higher education across the state. His leadership has helped engage the business community around the importance of education, with lasting benefits for both Texas students and the state's economy.

Mr. Adams will remain a member of the Texas Higher Education Foundation Board, continuing to ensure higher education serves as a pathway to opportunity for generations to come. Thank you for your service, Mr. Adams!



Neal Adams
Texas Higher
Education Foundation

From Classroom to Career: A FUTURE-READY TEXAS.

THECB
HIGHER
EDGE
2025



More than 500 attendees and 60 panelists, including leaders across higher education, policy, philanthropy, and the workforce, gathered in December for Higher EDge 2025!

The theme of this year's conference, **From Classroom to Career: Building a Future Ready Texas** explored ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes and offered insight into policy and practice frameworks that prepare today's students for tomorrow's Texas.

Highlights from the conference, and links to the full panel discussions, are included below:

What's at Stake:
Understanding Today's Challenges for Today's Students

Listen to a thoughtful, engaging conversation with Texas students about their transition from higher education to the workforce, including how higher education prepared them for the realities of today's economy.



Building a Future-Ready Texas:
Moving From Ideas to Impact

Texas has led the way in higher education policy and practice. In this panel, you can learn more about how these innovations are being applied across the state.



EDge Talks:
Strengthening the Talent Pipeline Through Strategic Collaboration

As the semiconductor industry becomes a key player in Texas, collaboration between employers and higher ed is more important than ever. In this session, hear how institutions are aligning curriculum with workforce needs and companies are investing in talent pipelines.



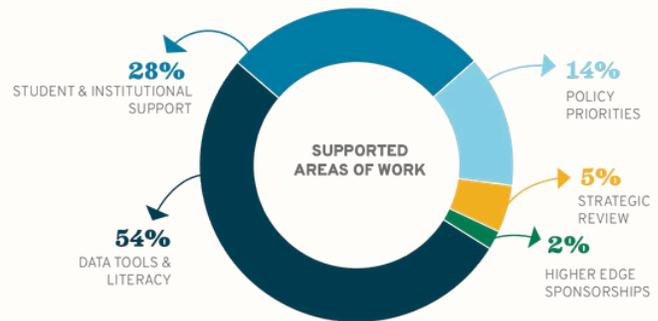
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Accelerating Momentum: 2025 in Review + What's Ahead in 2026

Funding Breakdown by THECB Strategic Priority

In 2025, the Texas Higher Education Foundation stewarded a significant portfolio of philanthropic grants, supporting a variety of THECB strategic initiatives. The graphic (right) shows the many different ways private investments continued to amplify public funding across agency work.



Statewide Regional Convenings



With support from philanthropic funding, the Coordinating Board has completed four of six stops across Texas, for colleges, universities and other stakeholders to get on-the-ground training on Coordinating Board data tools and college and career advising resources. As part of these visits, Commissioner Rosser has also met with college and university presidents and visited campuses to learn about some of the great work happening in higher education across the state.

Building a Talent Strong Texas: Plan Update

A lot has changed since **Building a Talent Strong Texas**, the state's strategic plan for higher education, was adopted. To reflect both the progress made by colleges and universities with support from the Coordinating Board in advancing the plan's goals and the Texas economy's expansive growth, an updated report was released in December 2025 to capture milestones and outline the path forward.



Looking Ahead to 2026

As we look to 2026, our momentum continues to build. Through the Texas Higher Education Foundation, philanthropy is accelerating the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's priorities to expand opportunity and advance credential attainment for Texas students statewide.

In 2026, philanthropic funding will continue to support the advancement of key policy priorities—including support for the Performance-Based Funding and General Education Committees—by accelerating timelines and enabling landscape analysis, facilitation, and policy and financial modeling.

We look forward to updating you on the status of this and all the other good work underway as the year progresses!



PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Support the Committee's work to develop performance-based funding recommendations for public, four-year Texas institutions aimed at increasing student success and aligning education to workforce outcomes.



GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Support the Committee's work to evaluate how general education courses are selected and consider strategies to streamline the 42-hour core, currently comprised of over 14,000 course options, to create more streamlined and navigable pathways to credentials of value.