

Closing the Gaps Brought Major Increases in Enrollments and Awards, Despite Some Unreached Targets

In 2000, Texas committed itself to a 15-year plan for higher education improvement known as “Closing the Gaps”. The plan identified participation, success, excellence, and research as its goals and established targets to meet them. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) commissioned a study to assess the impacts to the Texas economy if the goals of Closing the Gaps are met. The study found that meeting the Closing the Gaps goals would result in:

- \$489.6 billion* increased annual spending until 2030
- \$194.5 billion increased annual gross state product until 2030
- \$121.9 billion increased annual aggregate personal income until 2030
- 1,023,281 additional permanent jobs by 2030

Closing the Gaps Final Results and Targets

	2000 Actual	2015 Actual	2015 Target
Participation	baseline	+605,114	+630,000
Success	116,235	258,795	210,000
Excellence	Goal: to substantially increase the number of nationally recognized programs or services in Texas by 2015		
Research	5.5%	5.0%***	6.5%

While Texas made significant progress in several key areas—most notably, Participation and Success – many targets were not reached, even within those areas.

Progress in Participation

As of fall 2015, the state met 96 percent of the overall participation target. African-American enrollment fell for the third straight year but still exceeded 170 percent of the target. White enrollment fell for the sixth straight year and reached only 31 percent of the 101,248 targeted increase. Hispanic enrollment increased more than any other group – over 136 percent since 2000 – but the increase still fell short of the 438,704 target by 109,004 students.

Progress in Success

Texas first exceeded the overall success goal of awarding 210,000 undergraduate credentials in a single year in FY 2011, and awards have continued to increase since. The state also met six of nine affiliated targets; the remaining three relate to completion of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) degrees and of teaching credentials. Hispanic students earned 700 more STEM awards in FY 2015 than FY 2014, which was the largest annual percent increase of the three major ethnic groups.

Progress in Excellence

The University of Texas at Austin achieved and maintained a key excellence target – to have a research institution ranked in the top ten in the U.S. – by tying for number one among U.S. public research universities for the second straight year, according to the Center for Measuring University Performance. Many other Texas institutions and programs earned national recognition for excellence since 2000.

Progress in Research

Although research and development expenditures in FY 2015 were \$1.06 billion over the \$3 billion target, Texas achieved no net gain in its share of federal science and engineering R&D obligations. After peaking at 6.1 percent in 2003, Texas’ share has fallen to 5.0 percent, the lowest in over a decade, in FY 2013 and FY 2014. Reaching 6.5 percent of the national total in FY 2014 would have required almost \$450 million in addition to the \$1.36 billion actually received.

*All gains in 2006 dollars; ** A Tale of Two States – And One Million Jobs” by the Perryman Group; ***FY 2014

Sources: Closing the Gaps Goals and Progress: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps by 2015, April 2010 (<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/2005.PDF?CFID=1657207&CFTOKEN=63245910>), THECB. *Closing the Gaps Final Progress Report*, June 2016 (<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/DocFetch.cfm?DocID=8138&Format=PDF>) All Else: The Perryman Group, *A Tale of Two States – And One Million Jobs: An Analysis of the Economic Benefits of Achieving the Future Goals of the “Closing the Gaps” Initiative of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board*, March 2007 (<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/1345.PDF?CFID=1657207&CFTOKEN=63245910>).

