

## Texas College Readiness

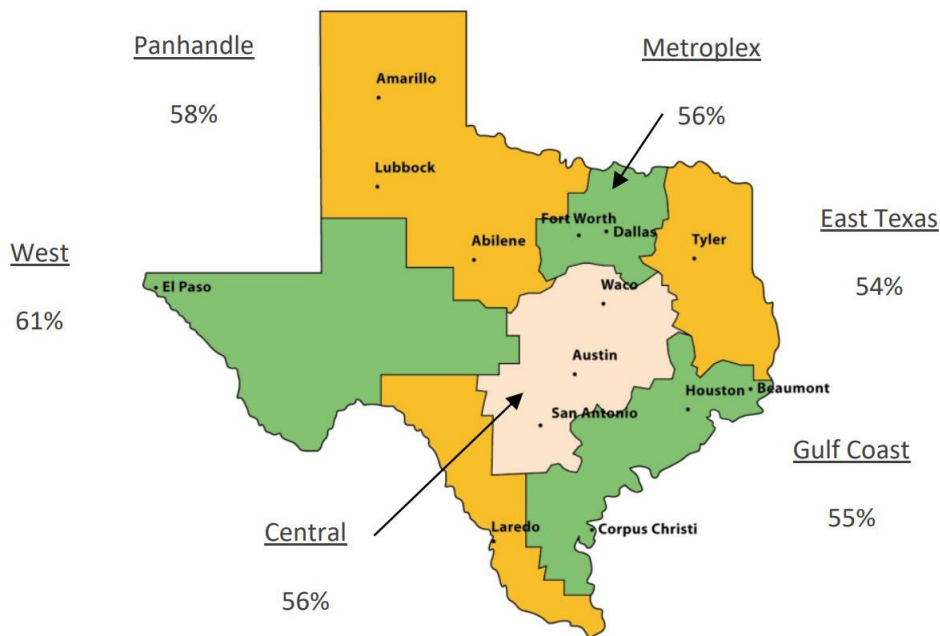
### Rio Grande Valley Has Highest FAFSA Completion Rates in Texas, East Texas the Lowest

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the standardized financial aid application used by nearly all colleges and universities to award most types of financial aid. By completing the FAFSA, students and their families have access to more financial options and can make more informed decisions about attending college.

Texas became the second state in the nation to require high school seniors to submit a FAFSA application before graduating, with the requirement going into effect in the 2021-2022 school year. Louisiana started requiring this step in 2018 and has since ranked first among states in FAFSA completion. Illinois, Alabama, California, Colorado, and New Hampshire have also passed laws requiring FAFSA completion for high school graduation, and Maryland requires local education agencies to assist students in FAFSA completion. Other states are considering similar requirements.

The statewide FAFSA completion rate was 57 percent in fall 2021 and varied from 54 percent in the East Texas region to 62 percent in the Rio Grande Valley region. Many Texas communities promote FAFSA completion to encourage college enrollment, which, in turn, strengthens the skills in their local labor markets. The Rio Grande Valley region, a close-knit community, has been successful in their efforts. Many of the high schools have college admissions specialists on campus, and FAFSA completion work is championed by district leadership.

Fall 2021 FAFSA Completion Rate by Region\*



\* Fall 2021 represents the class of 2020-2021 high school seniors completing the FAFSA as of September 24, 2021.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid, FAFSA Completion by High School (<http://studentaid.ed.gov/about/data-center/student/applicationvolume/fafsa-completion-high-school>). Number of high school seniors from Texas Education Agency (special request); FAFSA Requirement for High School Seniors: Inside Higher Ed, Making the FAFSA Mandatory (July 10, 2019) (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/07/10/texas-becomes-second-state-require-fafsa-completion>); Rio Grande Valley FAFSA efforts: learned via communication with the Austin Chamber of Commerce.