TO: Chairman Chris Turner
CC: Rep. Lynn Stucky, Rep. Lorraine Birabil, Rep. Angie Chen Button, Rep. John Frullo, Rep. Donna Howard, Rep. Leo Pacheco, Rep. Matt Schaefer, Rep. John T. Smithee, Rep. Armando Walle, Rep. Terry M. Wilson
RE: Texas House Higher Education Committee Charge 1 (Question 3)

Dear Chair Turner and House Higher Education Committee Members,

Dual credit students are two times more likely than students entering college with no dual credit to graduate in four years, according to The University of Texas System study on dual credit. Dual credit programs allow high school students to take college-level courses to receive simultaneous postsecondary credit and academic course credit. According to the Texas Higher education Coordinating Board, more than 151,000 Texas high school student took dual credit courses in 2017 compared to 42,000 in 2000, an increase of 753 percent. With support of the legislature and state agencies, this number continues to grow.

Dual credit is designed to give students early exposure to college and a jump-start on furthering their education and career. Taking college credit classes in high school can build student confidence and shorten the time to earn a college degree, saving students money. With the release of AIR, UT Systems, and other studies on dual credit we understand more how dual credit programs positively impact not only graduation rates, but high school students enrolling in college, persisting and completing. In addition, students reported their exposure to dual credit enhanced soft skills (time management skills, study skills, and communication skills) needed to be successful in post-secondary and career (D.R. Troutman, The UT Systems Dual Credit Study, 2018).

A National Student Clearinghouse Research Center 2017 report found that only 12% of those dually enrolled high school students didn't go on to enroll in some form of college by the age of 20, with 41% of dually enrolled students going on to a four-year college. Of the other 47% of students who first matriculated in community college between the ages of 18 and 20, 84 percent went to the institution where they were taking the dual enrollment courses.

Yet, many still question whether this opportunity is truly accessible and therefore effective. Does dual enrollment actually lead to more college going for ALL students or just some? And can dual credit help to close the achievement gap between different income and race/ethnicity groups?

State policy and dual credit program limitations make it difficult for students from underserved backgrounds to access the opportunity. Currently there are many barriers that bar students from enrolling in dual credit courses and impede school districts from offering an array of dual credit courses to their students. Current barriers include:

- Students having to meet minimum requirements on a single point-in-time state standardized exam, TSIA or another college entrance exam
- Student achieves a minimum score on English II and/or Algebra I end-of-course exam

In response to testing limitations brought on by COVID-19 restrictions, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has approved for the school year 2020-21 multiple measures to demonstrate college readiness for students entering post-secondary or wishing to enroll in dual credit courses who do not have access to TSIA testing or meet the minimum requirements to enroll. In determining which option is best for individual students, institutions are expected to use additional factors, such as HS GPA or HS course-taking patterns, approaches long used by other states, and be prepared to report to THECB which factors were used in order to make placement decisions.

To increase the opportunity for ALL students to earn college credit we recommend that the state **permanently adopt Multiple Measures for high school students to engage in college credit bearing course work**.

A growing body of research by Center for the Analysis for Post-secondary Readiness, Columbia University and University of Chicago to name a few — shows that multiple measures placement systems can improve placement accuracy and help more students pass entry-level math and English courses, which are referred to as the gatekeeper courses. The Chicago research highlights that grade point averages are a much better predictor of success at college than standardized tests. High school GPAs were found to be five times stronger than college entrance exam scores at predicting graduation rates. (E.M. Allensworth, University of Chicago Consortium on School Research).

In a study by the Center for the Analysis for Post-Secondary Readiness, when using Multiple Measures Placement they saw:

- More students than control group students were referred to college-level gatekeeper courses, by 15 to 17 percentage points.
- Students eligible for college-level placement based on Multiple Measure placement results placed into college-level English were 28% more likely to have completed the gatekeeper English course by the end of their first college semester than their control group counterparts.
- Students who placed into college-level math based on Multiple Measure placement results, were 12% more likely to have completed the gatekeeper math course by the end of their first college semester than their control group counterparts.

By permanently adopting Multiple Measure placement, Texas leaders can take the appropriate steps needed to ensure students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, are exposed to college course rigor and expectations, therefore providing them an opportunity for on-time graduation and higher quality career earning potential.

Sincerely,

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