TTUS Charge 3 responses

Texas Tech University

Interim Charge 3:

Review progress toward the goals of the 60X30TX plan, including institutional strategies for responding to diverse and rapidly changing workforce needs and demands, including workforce education, industry certification, and degree programs to address healthcare shortages.

Specifically review community colleges' capacity to meet the goals of 60X30TX, including a review of taxing districts and service areas versus geographic areas of need. Review the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative's work-based learning, industry-aligned internships, and industry credential initiatives. Consider whether legislative action may be needed to expand work-based learning and recruitment efforts for adults who have previously completed some college level coursework.

1. **How can the state meet the goals of 60x30TX?**

   N/A

2. **How has the pandemic impacted our state's workforce needs?**

   N/A

3. **Is there legislative action that could help expand work-based learning?**

   N/A

4. **Do current community college district boundaries align with the needs of the communities they serve? If not, how should they be altered and why will those changes improve educational opportunities for Texans?**

   N/A

5. **What is the current capability to handle an influx of Texans seeking re-training or upskilling opportunities through state programs?**

   N/A

6. **What is needed in order to identify and address gaps in existing data collection methods?**

   The limit of only one census date for the long semester enrollments in higher education creates issues with being able to offer variable semester lengths. Students who are working full-time and going to school typically only take one to two classes a 15-week semester. Because there is only one census date for the semester, it is difficult to develop

semesters that are shorter in length. Shorter (e.g., 8-week) semesters would allow students to double the number of hours taken within approximately the same amount of time.

7. **What improvements could be made to alleviate 'summer melt' and to facilitate streamlined student advising?**

    a.   Enrollment Management worked with the TTU campus community to enhance digital, phone, print, and social communication for incoming students and parents. Examples include:
   - i.   Calls to all incoming students before attending virtual orientation to provide additional information and answer any questions,
   - ii.   Mailing students a TTU t-shirt prior to attending their virtual orientation session and encouraged them to wear it during orientation,
   - iii.   Calls to students after they attended a virtual orientation session to answer any questions,
   - iv.   Calls to students who attended orientation but did not register for classes Student affairs and their academic advisor to encourage enrollment.

    b.   Undergraduate Admissions partnered with student affairs and academic colleges to host over 200 virtual events for admitted students. Over 5,000 families attended these virtual events.

    c.   There is student melt for many reasons, but most of these reasons center around a student's ability to pay tuition, difficulty with completing college paperwork such as orientation registration forms, academic placement tests, housing applications, advising questionnaires, and health records, unable to locate funding sources to cover gaps in financial packages, difficulty deciphering financial forms such as supplementary loan and other financial aid-related paperwork. Unfortunately, first-generation and lower-income students are more likely to melt than other cohorts of students. There are many proven strategies to freeze summer melt among all college-bound high school graduates. Following are the strategies TTU has used:

   - i.   Maintain COVID-19 level engagement with incoming students and families. University and college officials have never been more concerned about student melt as during the present COVID crisis. As a result, a culture of constant contact between university staff and students and their families has emerged. This practice should continue after COVID.

   - ii.   Text student reminders over the summer. To complete enrollment steps, high school counselors and academic advisors can partner to support their students after graduation by texting them. Weekly reminders to check their email, complete their financial aid forms, and register for classes can go a long way to keep students on track.

   - iii.   Parents have long been advised to meet weekly with their seniors for 20 minutes to discuss their college plans. Those meetings should continue in the

summer. If doubts arise over what should be done, they can call the college and discover the next steps to take.

iv. Campus visits during the summer. Summer melt sometimes occurs because the student has doubts or concerns about being successful at college, or if they have made the right choice. Visiting campus can alleviate those anxieties.

v. A growing number of low-income students are being asked to verify income eligibility for federal aid by the DOE, and students are not completing the application process as a result. This phenomenon—known as "verification melt"—prevents students from receiving millions of dollars of much-needed aid.

vi. Formalize academic advisor accountability for student success. Advisor participation is mostly voluntary and lacks consistency, which results in less impact on student success. While academic advisors are among the staff members in the best position to "own" student success, it is not clearly defined and reviewed as a primary, essential job function. This lack of advisor ownership in student success results in deficiency of student information for alerts, no performance evaluation for specific student success outcomes, no record of compliance with initiatives and policies, a lack of standardized best practices, and conflicting student advice sometimes with little to no central documentation. The following recommendations are made: (1) Develop new, standardized job descriptions for each academic advisor level in a Pay Plan, (2) Modified job description to capture responsibilities dedicated to direct academic advising, advising administration as part of 100% FTE, (3) Require 100% participation in campus-wide student success initiatives, (4) strategically organizing academic advisor-student contact around student retention and success initiatives, (5) Initiate and maintain annual assessment of academic advising, and (6) An investment in equity pay for advisors might be needed.

vii. Academic advising operations are both centralized and decentralized with varying reporting structures in colleges, departments, and other academic units. Siloed academic advising structures such as these at universities are often organized around major-based academic advising operations, which assume students remain in one major. However, undergraduates, on average, change majors around three times before graduating. And, students who change majors are still likely to see at least three different program advisors on campus. That is, academic advisors with smaller caseloads should be able to assist advisors with much larger caseloads. This lack of coordination affects many student success outcomes such as time to degree and academic outcomes related to degree selection and major changes most. Though major switching among undergraduate students significantly impacts retention and graduate rates, most major advisors do not document assisting students with the selection of a better-fit major. This is particularly concerning given student

major selection is among the primary causes of student attrition. The following recommendations are made: (1) Consider centralizing academic advising around student success efforts for retention purposes or entirely, (2) There should be a uniform advising protocol, (3) (processes and procedures) that are followed by all academic advisors for academic advising and student success, which would be facilitated through greater centralization, (4) Strategically redistribute advising caseloads around advising clusters, not colleges/major silos, (5) Strategically redistribute academic advisors' caseload to be responsive to student risks such as in the "Murky Middle," and (6) An investment in equity pay might be needed.

1. **What changes, if any, are needed to align data collection between the THECB, TWC and TEA in order to collect consistent metrics?**

   It is unclear how the data collection among the three entities would be needed. There are different definitions and data needed for each of them.

2. **Does the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges affect their capacity to meet the goals of 60x30TX?**

   N/A

3. **How has the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges been affected since COVID-19? How does that affect their ability to carry out normal operations?**

   N/A

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Review progress toward the goals of the 60x30TX plan, including institutional strategies for responding to diverse and rapidly changing workforce needs and demands, including workforce education, industry certification, and degree programs to address healthcare shortages.

Specifically review community colleges' capacity to meet the goals of 60x30TX, including a review of taxing districts and service areas versus geographic areas of need. Review the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative's work-based learning, industry-aligned internships, and industry credential initiatives. Consider whether legislative action may be needed to expand work-based learning and recruitment efforts for adults who have previously completed some college level coursework.

1. How can the state meet the goals of 60x30TX?
2. How has the pandemic impacted our state's workforce needs?
3. Is there legislative action that could help expand work-based learning?

4. Do current community college district boundaries align with the needs of the communities they serve? If not, how should they be altered and why will those changes improve educational opportunities for Texans?

5. What is the current capability to handle an influx of Texans seeking re-training or upskilling opportunities through state programs?

   Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) currently offers several accelerated or second-degree options for students who seek to complete a degree in a new discipline or in a compressed period of time. The university also offers a variety of health professions programs in multiple locations across Texas.

   The university's capability to handle increases in student enrollment will be contingent on continued state funding, expansion of program size allowances at specific campuses, and approval of program expansions to new sites or campuses. For example, TTUHSC is currently seeking approval to expand its traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing to our Amarillo campus. This proposed expansion reflects the requests of key nursing administrators and other community leaders to establish this program in the Amarillo community. Doing so will assist them in meeting the nursing needs in the area and across the state of Texas. TTUHSC is fully prepared to meet this demand upon approval by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

6. What is needed in order to identify and address gaps in existing data collection methods?
7. What improvements could be made to alleviate 'summer melt' and to facilitate streamlined student advising?
8. What changes, if any, are needed to align data collection between the THECB, TWC, and TEA in order to collect consistent metrics?
9. Does the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges affect their capacity to meet the goals of 60x30TX?
10. How has the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges been affected since COVID-19? How does that affect their ability to carry out normal operations?

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso

1. *How can the state meet the goals of 60x30TX?*

   - TTUHSC El Paso prepares students for careers in healthcare and in biomedical sciences. The workforce demand in these fields continue to increase, and the US-Mexico border region faces critical shortages of nurses, physicians, dentists and scientists. As such, our institution's programs will continue to play an important role in meeting these demands.

- Ongoing support and state-appropriated resources will ensure TTUHSC El Paso's capacity to develop health-related educational programs and grow student enrollment as planned, in order to meet regional workforce needs.

2. *How has the pandemic impacted our state's workforce needs?*

- In the workforce area of healthcare, we are experiencing amplified demands for trained healthcare professionals, including nurses, physicians and dentists, as well as biomedical researchers.
- The pandemic is further exposing challenges due to critical healthcare shortages in underserved regions and among underrepresented populations, such as the communities in the US-Mexico border region.
- These workforce needs demands are directly translating into challenges and opportunities for Health-Related Institutions (HRIs), such as TTUHSC El Paso, to expand capacity, increase program offerings, and grow student enrollment.

3. *Is there legislative action that could help expand work-based learning?*

- Students are facing new and unexpected financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Legislative actions to help students manage the cost of educational programs, including work-based learning, will be critical.
- Expansion of loan forgiveness for health care professionals (nursing, medical and dental) as well as health care researchers, financial aid, dual-credit, and credit-for-experience programs will help alleviate financial burdens.
- Additional support for graduate medical education would increase the medical workforce by transitioning medical students into residencies in Texas, which substantially increases the likelihood they will remain in Texas to practice.

4. *Do current community college district boundaries align with the needs of the communities they serve? If not, how should they be altered and why will those changes improve educational opportunities for Texans?*

- Not applicable

5. *What is the current capability to handle an influx of Texans seeking re-training or upskilling opportunities through state programs?*

- TTUHSC El Paso is a growing Health Sciences Center, and continually works to expand degree program offerings in order to meet increasing workforce demands in the area of healthcare. The institution currently offers bachelor and master's-level degree programs in Nursing (BSN, MSN), a master's degree (MS) in Biomedical Sciences, a doctoral degree (MD) in Medicine, and is scheduled to seat its first cohort of Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) students in Fall 2021.

- The institution also offers a graduate-level Certificate in Biomedical Sciences, and will offer a new Certificate program in Community Health, starting in Fall 2021.
- In addition, the TTUHSC El Paso Paul L Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) Graduate Medical Education (GME) program offers nine residency programs.
- Enrollment in all TTUHSC El Paso degree programs and the offering of residencies through the PLFSOM GME program are projected to increase over the next five years, and the institution is establishing the needed infrastructure and capacity to support this planned progression.

6. *What is needed in order to identify and address gaps in existing data collection methods?*

   - We recommend surveying Texas institutions, in order to better assess current gaps in data collection methods, and to provide opportunities for institutional research professionals to comment on existing processes.

7. *What improvements could be made to alleviate 'summer melt' and to facilitate streamlined student advising?*

   - TTUHSC El Paso only offers undergraduate upper division and graduate-level degree programs; therefore, "summer melt" does not affect enrollment at our institution.

8. *What changes, if any, are needed to align data collection between the THECB, TWC and TEA in order to collect consistent metrics?*

   - Improved association and linkage of databases, as well as accessibility of data via a central website, would aid in alignment. Currently, data is only accessible through each respective organization.
   - In addition, mechanisms to track students from entry into Texas education programs through their entry into the Texas workforce, would aid institutions of higher education in determining long-term student success and program outcomes.

9. *Does the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges affect their capacity to meet the goals of 60x30TX?*

   - Not applicable.

10. *How has the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges been affected since COVID-19? How does that affect their ability to carry out normal operations?*

    - Not applicable.