

# Texas Schools Project (TSP)

## Research Agenda to Inform Pandemic Recovery Efforts of Texas Community Colleges

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**Overview and Opportunities to Participate**

A person is standing in a library aisle, reaching up to a high shelf to retrieve a book. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The text "Welcome and thank you for joining today!!!" is centered in white. A thin white line runs horizontally across the image, with a small downward-pointing chevron on the left side.

**Welcome and thank you for joining today!!!**

# Goals Today

*Introduce TSP and the research engagement team*

*Brief overview of three aligned studies and opportunities for participation*

*Timeline and dissemination plan*

*Feedback on research agenda*

*Questions*

## TSP Research Opportunities

The University of Texas at Dallas



# Texas Schools Project

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Texas Schools Project supports and conducts high-quality academic research to improve academic achievement and teacher effectiveness, increase transitions to and success in postsecondary education, and improve labor market outcomes of students in Texas and the nation.





## *TSP is a point of pride for UT Dallas and has a long history*

Founded by John Kain in 1992

Primary data source for many top academic studies in education research

Houses administrative data from Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission

## *UT Dallas Education Research Center established in 2006*

Formalized the role of TSP as a key point of access to administrative data from Texas for researchers nationally

## *The future of TSP*

Continue to broaden access to Texas administrative data for important research on education policy in Texas

Build a focused program of research that draws on expertise of TSP affiliated faculty and students at UTD



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Continue to broaden access to Texas administrative data for important research on education policy in Texas

Build a focused program of research that draws on expertise of TSP affiliated faculty and students at UTD

*A primary focus on research to directly inform policy and practice in the area of postsecondary education and CTE!*

# Research Engagement Team

*Trey Miller*



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# TSP Recognized Need for Research to Inform Pandemic Recovery Efforts of Texas Colleges

*We consulted the literature and discussed needs with our network of policymakers and practitioners*

We distilled information from these sources to identify priorities and had discussions with multiple funders

*We secured funding to support research on three related and aligned topics all focused on key aspects of pandemic recovery*

We are excited to work with the Texas Success Center to implement a coordinated dissemination and stakeholder engagement campaign to ensure that the research meets your needs, causes minimal burden, and is effectively communicated

# For student parents, graduating in the midst of a pandemic means beating the odds



BY EMILY MARGARETTEN, MATTHEW REAGAN AND ODEN TAYLOR

JUNE 22, 2022



## College Enrollment Drops, Even as the Pandemic's Effects Ebb

A generation of students may be weighing the value of college versus its cost, questioning whether college is still the ticket to the middle class.



## Students Cut College During Pandemic; Their Return Is Uncertain

Wenhua Di and Mytiah Caldwell



Politics World Culture Events Shop

MENTAL HEALTH HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTNATION

## College Students Struggle to Address a Mental Health Crisis

*As the Covid-19 pandemic worsened, expectations and resources on campus remained largely the same.*

By Teresa Xie

## Teens struggle to balance school, family, work amid COVID-19

Educational disruptions forced by the coronavirus pandemic are hurting teenagers who also may need to work and help their families care for young kids

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

August 18, 2020, 3:35 PM

Share

# Pandemic Recovery Study

Funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education  
through a \$400,000 Congressional Earmark

**Motivation:** *The pandemic caused massive disruption to postsecondary education that may hamper recent progress towards improving access and success if not adequately addressed*

Unprecedented decrease in enrollment, particularly for freshmen students, first generation students, and students of color

Swift shift toward online and hybrid modes of instruction

Increased stress and other challenges as students, as faculty and staff dealt with a myriad of life challenges posed by the pandemic

# Pandemic Recovery Study

**Approach:** *To address these challenges, we are conducting a mixed-methods study that will offer timely information on how colleges can best support students most affected by the pandemic*

The **quantitative** component will use student-level administrative data to describe shifts in student enrollment, course modality and student success in Texas community colleges since the start of the pandemic.

For the **qualitative** component, we will conduct focus groups with college administrators and staff to document how the pandemic has affected Texas community colleges, how colleges have sought to address challenges exacerbated by the pandemic (e.g. child care needs, mental health struggles, underdeveloped online instruction), and their efforts to both scale and sustain these new success initiatives.

# Pandemic Recovery Study

## Participation:

- *All colleges will be included in the quantitative component*
- *10 colleges will participate in interviews and focus groups in Spring 2023*

## Activities:

- Colleges selected for the study will be required to complete a **15-minute online survey** that will gather college-specific information on specific initiatives to support student success during the pandemic.
- Administrators and staff at these colleges will also need to participate in **one or two online focus groups** that will collect information on:
  - how the pandemic has affected their institution (e.g. budget shortfalls; hiring freezes),
  - the measures their institution imposed to support student success, and
  - the challenges they continue to face as they emerge from the pandemic.



# Mental Health Study

Funded by a \$150,000 grant from the Trellis Foundation  
Additional Co-PIs: Heidi Kane (UT-Dallas), Lisa Padilla (RAND)

**Motivation:** *The pandemic intensified an ongoing decline in mental health among college students that could derail efforts to advance equity in higher education and promote economic and social mobility if not properly addressed*

Mental health challenges are particularly acute for low-income and under-represented minority college students (Anderson, 2020), who have also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Students facing mental health challenges often struggle to attend class and have lower grades than their peers (Breslau et al., 2008; Collins and Mowbray, 2005).

Colleges can play a frontline role in supporting student mental health as a means to improve student success, but services vary considerably across colleges.

# Mental Health Study

**Approach:** *To address these challenges, we are conducting a qualitative study that will identify promising practices to support student mental health and offer evidence-based enhancements that Texas community colleges use to improve their existing strategies*

With support from TSP researchers, **RAND** is leading an IES-funded study to identify promising or effective approaches to addressing student mental health being implemented at community colleges nationally.

With support from the RAND team, **TSP** will examine how a representative sample of Texas community colleges are meeting student demand for mental health support, particularly among low-income students and students of color, and the extent to which they align with promising approaches identified in the RAND study.

# Mental Health Study

## Participation:

- *A representative sample of 10 colleges will be chosen to participate in interviews and focus groups in Spring 2023.*

## Activities:

- Colleges selected for the study will be required to complete a **15-minute online survey** that will gather college-specific information on:
  - programs that support student mental health,
  - efforts to collect student mental health data, and
  - faculty and staff trainings to increase awareness around student mental health issues and identify students in mental distress.
- Administrators and staff at these colleges will also need to participate in an **online focus group** that will collect information on:
  - how colleges approach addressing student mental health challenges
  - how they integrate efforts to student mental health with efforts to support student success, and
  - the constraints they encounter that prevent them from meeting their students' mental health needs.

# Part-Time Students Study

Funded by a \$300,000 grant from the Greater Texas Foundation  
Additional Co-PI: Melissa Martinez (Texas State University)

**Motivation:** *Prior to the pandemic, two-thirds of Texas community college students enrolled part-time – a statistic that has likely increased during the pandemic and is higher for low-income and under-represented minority students.*

Nationally, a third of students who attend part-time earned a degree within six years, compared with 80 percent of full-time students (Shapiro, et. al., 2017).

Familial responsibilities and child-care needs, limited access to on-campus resources, and failure to gain early credit momentum are some of the reasons researchers cite to explain these differences (Bombardieri, 2017; Jenkins & Bailey, 2017; Le, Pisacreta, Ward, Margolis, & Booth, 2020).

The most prominent policy response is to encourage students to enroll full-time, a solution that may not be possible for all college students.

# Part-Time Students Study

**Approach:** *To address these challenges, we are conducting a mixed-methods study to better understand part-time enrollment behavior and factors that promote or hinder success of part-time students.*

The **quantitative component** will use student-level administrative data to quantify both the dynamics and determinants of part-time enrollment behavior, and identify factors that relate to success among part-time students.

For the **qualitative component**, we will conduct focus groups with college administrators and students to investigate the factors that motivate students to enroll part time, the barriers they face, and the supports they need to complete college.



# Pandemic Recovery Study

## Participation:

- *All colleges will be included in the quantitative component*
- *10 colleges will participate in interviews and focus groups in Fall 2022. Four of these colleges will also be chosen to participate in student focus groups in Spring 2023.*

## Activities:

- Administrators and staff at participating colleges will need to participate in an **online focus group** in Fall 2022 that will collect information on
  - how administrators and staff actively encourage students to enroll full-time;
  - reasons why they think students enroll part-time and have lower rates of success;
  - resources, services, and programs that are available to part-time students, and (d) how they would envision changing current policy and practice to better serve this student population.
- These colleges would also need to commit to **supporting recruitment for student focus groups** in Spring 2023 if they are among the four colleges selected to participate.

# Goals Today

*Introduce TSP and the research team*

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# Timeline

	2022		2023				2024	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Kickoff Webinar	X							
Mental Health Data Collection	Admin	Admin						
Part-Time Student Data Collection	Admin	Admin	Student	Student				
Pandemic Recovery Data Collection			Admin	Admin				
Mental Health Dissemination					Final			
Part Time Student Dissemination						Final		
Pandemic Recovery Dissemination				Interim				Final

# We are excited to partner with TSC to implement a coordinated dissemination plan

*Reports will be written for an audience of policymakers and practitioners.*

Each report will include a 2-3 page research brief emphasizing key findings and policy implications.

*Findings will be disseminated through webinars and in-person learning sessions at TSC Pathways Institutes.*

Briefings will be recorded and made available for wider dissemination.

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**We hope you are interested in participating in  
one or more components of this research  
agenda!**

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**To signal your interest, please fill out this form by 8/31/2022:**

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/tspresearch>**

**We will also send the form by email to all participants and include a link on the TSC website.**



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## Questions for you

*Based on discussions with college leaders and funders, we have chosen to focus on the three related issues we discussed today (pandemic recovery, student mental health, and part-time enrollment).*

- Are these issues important at your college, and why?
- What other issues are you grappling with as your college emerges from the pandemic?

# Questions for you

*Based on discussions with college leaders and funders, we have chosen to focus on the three related issues we discussed today (pandemic recovery, student mental health, and part-time enrollment).*

- Are these issues important at your college, and why?
- What other issues are you grappling with as your college emerges from the pandemic?

*We recognize that college leaders and administrators are facing many challenges and have limited time and resources.*

- What are some ways that we can help support your participation in these studies?
- What are some other products, (i.e. webinars, infographic, etc.), that would be useful for you and your teams?

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# Questions?

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**Please raise your hand to speak or place questions in the chat box.**

# *Thank you*

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