



Community College Association of Texas Trustees

Texas Commission on Community College Finance Testimony by Armin Cantini, Galveston College Board of Regents, & Dr. Nan McRaven, Austin Community College District Board of Trustees

September 12, 2022

Chairman Hunt and Commissioners,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the draft recommendations. My name is Armin Cantini, and I serve on the Galveston College Board of Regents. I am speaking today on behalf of the Community College Association of Texas Trustees (CCATT), as a member of their Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

Joining me is Dr. Nan McRaven, the Board Chair for the Austin Community College District. As trustees representing a Small College and one of the Very Large Colleges in Texas, we are proud to come before you today united in these remarks.

Thank you for the immense work the Commission has undertaken this past year. We appreciate your leadership and thoughtful deliberations and would like to particularly acknowledge Commissioner Carol Scott for representing the perspective of elected trustees in this process.

Last week, CCATT convened a meeting between board chairs invited from all the colleges to discuss the drafted recommendations. Trustees were encouraged to see these recommendations reflecting the need for greater investment in Texas community colleges, especially with the potential for a reliable, fixed-rate funding formula.

We echo Dr. Brent Wallace's earlier support of draft recommendations for additional funding for TEOG scholarships and seed grants to grow institutional capacity for workforce education. We, too, welcome the challenge of an outcomes-based formula that's sufficiently funded.

On behalf of the elected stewards of our community colleges, we appreciate the clarity that the recommendations will NOT include any sort of recapture of local tax dollars. Likewise, we're encouraged that the opportunity for shared services will be supported by the Higher Education Coordinating Board and hope our interpretation - that this will be without restrictive mandates - is correct. It's important that institutional collaboration can occur in a manner that acknowledges the needs and specific situations of each community college.



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One concern our membership expressed was the draft language about a ‘uniform tuition rate’ for dual credit that may be set by the Coordinating Board. We appreciate the sentiment behind this recommendation and agree that dual credit access and affordability is an important goal. At the same time, trustees are responsible for setting tuition rates at their institutions and do so with careful consideration of the difference between in-district and out-of-district tuition and fees.

Trustees are seeking clarity on how a uniform tuition rate for dual credit would be implemented. While it may sound like a workable solution, we are cautious of how this could impact the jurisdiction of the local board and complicate the already difficult challenge of incentivizing annexation elections, which may result in a small portion of Texans subsidizing large swaths of the state.

As elected officials, trustees are accountable to the voters in their taxing districts. Advocating for these taxpayers, we must point out the inequity of nearly 60 counties who are voluntarily taxed to support community colleges, while all 254 counties in Texas are benefitting from the educational and workforce development services we provide.

Community colleges are the primary catalyst for workforce development in the State of Texas, enrolling 93 percent of all Career and Technical Education students. Thank you for recognizing the importance of expanding workforce training capacity as our state rebounds from the economic challenges of the pandemic. Our colleges are already partnering with local business and industry to develop occupational pathways and respond to real time needs of the regional workforce. The investments in college capacity proposed in the draft recommendations will empower more collaboration and help colleges afford the equipment necessary for technical programs in high-demand fields.

Finally, we appreciate the acknowledgement in the conclusion of your draft recommendations that colleges will need time to adjust to the new funding structure. We look forward to continuing to work with you to craft the best solution for all Texans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today; Dr. McRaven and I would be happy to answer any questions.