



Texas Success Center



Talent Strong
Texas Pathways

Strategic Pathways for Student Economic Mobility

Board of Trustees Institute 2022 Impact Report



Introduction

Community college boards of trustees play an important role in college success as they create, enact, and monitor policies that establish standards for learning that are in the best interest of the public they serve. As such, boards must respond to changing needs of the communities they serve. The largest disruption to higher education occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, dramatically altering the higher education and workforce landscape. During the intense years of the pandemic, businesses and institutions of higher education made dramatic changes to their modes of operation to respond to unprecedented circumstances. Old models of business and learning were quickly reinvented to serve the needs of the state and its residents.

Community colleges quickly converted to virtual learning while providing resources from their campuses to support the state's immediate pandemic response needs. As the workforce quickly shifted, Texas community colleges leveraged their nimbleness to develop labor-market informed short-term credentials to quickly upskill and reskill Texans for jobs in the new economy. At the same time, Texans found themselves making opportunity cost decisions about working and pursuing an education in a constantly changing environment, resulting in changes in industry job demands and college enrollments.

As Texas emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, community college boards made strategic decisions to support student economic mobility and the state economic recovery. Changes made to the delivery of instruction during the pandemic were studied, replicated, and revised as some students returned to the classroom and others

continued remote learning. Colleges also revised programs to embed new and revised short-term credentials in a pathway to promote lifelong learning and earning opportunities to all Texans.

Texas community colleges were prepared to swiftly redesign the student experience to align with changing economic needs because of their ongoing engagement in Texas Pathways—an integrated, system-wide approach to college design that guides students into and through postsecondary education to help more students earn meaningful credentials, transfer to universities with no loss of credit, and gain employment in careers with value in the labor market. The Texas Pathways strategy is based on four pillars of practice: (1) clarifying paths to student end goals, (2) helping students choose and enter a pathway, (3) helping students stay on their pathway, and (4) ensuring students are learning. Each of these pillars provided guidance to colleges on how to shift practices and policies to align with the changing needs of students and the state resulting from the major disruption of the pandemic.

During the years of the pandemic, the Texas Success Center (TSC) prepared webinars to keep trustees and regents informed of shifting labor market demands, enrollment patterns, and the ways in which their colleges could respond effectively to the needs of all Texans. As face-to-face convenings returned in 2022, the Center committed to helping all Texas community colleges respond swiftly and strategically through supports that included Texas Pathways Institutes, Board of Trustees Institutes, regional meetings, and continued opportunities for knowledge development.



Board of Trustees Institute

As the pandemic normalized, the Center returned to supporting boards of trustees through an annual in-person institute designed to engage board members with valuable resources and tools that align with the Texas Pathways strategy. Ninety attendees participated in the Board of Trustees Institute (BOTI), including leaders from 23 colleges. The objective of the 2022 BOTI was to have trustees commit to actions that would monitor what matters, support a culture of change, and set the strategic direction for pathways leading to equitable upward economic mobility for students, economic growth for the region, and institutional innovation and sustainability. To achieve these objectives, the BOTI provided the opportunity to:

- Convene board and chief executive officer (CEO) delegates from Texas community colleges to share and elevate knowledge of how effective governance contributes to student success and completion leading to transfer and/or career with labor market value for all students;
- Develop institutional capacity to introduce, foster, and sustain a comprehensive student equity, success, and completion agenda;
- Enhance understanding of board/CEO roles and responsibilities in establishing policies; and
- Contribute to a community of board members and CEOs as lifelong learners and advocates for improving student equity, success, and completion.

Numerous professionals presented at the BOTI on leading during uncertainty; the value of diversity, inclusion, and equity; the role of program-level data and employment outcome data in decision making; the next chapter of community colleges; and ways in which leaders can set the stage for colleges to design programs leading to economic mobility for students. Participating board members engaged in team strategy time guided by expert resident faculty to make or reaffirm commitments to action to empower their CEO to set the climate and expectation for institutional excellence guided by a comprehensive student success strategy.

BOTI Attending Colleges

Alamo Colleges	Kilgore College
Alvin Community College	Laredo College
Amarillo College	Lee College
Austin Community College	McLennan Community College
Brazosport College	Paris Junior College
Clarendon College	San Jacinto College
Coastal Bend College	South Plains College
Del Mar College	Trinity Valley Community College
El Paso Community College	Tyler Junior College
Galveston College	Victoria College
Grayson College	Wharton County Junior College
Houston Community College	



Scope of Analysis

The following report examines board actions aimed at creating a comprehensive student success strategy in a transformed learning and economic environment. A search of board minutes, strategic plans, and BOTI artifacts from the year following the 2022 BOTI (April 2022 – March 2023) were coded and analyzed to describe the impact of the professional learning opportunity on participating colleges.

Findings

Some boards heard about the BOTI experience directly from attendees through agenda items set to share lessons learned with the full board. Additionally, the themes of the 2022 BOTI were evident in board actions throughout the year. The impact of the BOTI is reported in five categories: (1) monitoring what matters, (2) setting the strategic direction for pathways, (3) driving economic growth in the region, (4) driving institutional innovation and sustainability, and (5) demonstrating the value of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Monitoring What Matters

Boards are regularly presented with data to help with strategic decision making. Historically, presidents and college staff regularly presented enrollment numbers, as these figures played directly into state funding appropriations. As guided pathways has taken root at colleges, boards have been presented with broader sets of student success data, monitoring data trends beyond enrollment to best understand the role the college plays in student success, in effect, monitoring what really matters. Different college players own these data discussions, and in some cases, boards have created committees tasked with investigating student success data.

- **Alamo Colleges** remain dedicated to presenting data to the board. In April 2022, the student success committee presented several data points related to student success and made recommendations for goals the upcoming year. Throughout the year, the board heard about progress in the college's Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) and campus student success measures.
- One of the goals of **Alvin Community College's** strategic plan for 2022 – 2025 is to strength student success. The college outlined specific goals related to student success through guided pathways. The college provides regular student success updates to the board to monitor progress on this goal.
- In October 2022, the **Amarillo College** board heard about fall-to-fall retention data and were introduced to the student success and engagement dashboards available to faculty and staff.
- **Austin Community College** regularly provides data-informed updates on student success to the board. In August 2022, the board was presented with data related to the goal to increase course completion and accelerate degree completion. In December 2022, the board heard the institutional effectiveness report for student success to inform ongoing strategic planning.
- **Brazosport College** produces regular data reports for the board. In January 2023, the board reviewed the annual accountability report, which provided student success data disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- The **Del Mar College** strategic plan was updated in August 2022 with an operational plan that included clear goals, key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with the goals, objectives, and institutional strategies. The board heard a student success report at each meeting. At the March 2022 meeting, the board received a review of the BOTI experience and was introduced to the Postsecondary Employment



Outcomes Explorer data dashboard presented at the institute. At the April 2022 meeting, board members learned about the results of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) related to college practices and student behaviors related to student learning and retention.

- The **Galveston College** board hears student success stories at each meeting. In June 2022, the board received a “Monitoring What Matters” report to share how the college was performing using guided pathways metrics. Data included: percent of enrolled students that earn no credit; percent of enrolled students earning A, B, or C; fall to spring retention; completion of math, reading, and writing in the first year for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students; average number of credits earned by FTIC students in the first year; graduation rates for three, four, and six years; number of degrees and certificates awarded; and number of degrees and certificates awarded to target student populations.
- The Academic and Student Affairs Committee on the **Houston Community College** board presents regular updates on student success, including disaggregated data on admissions, enrollment, course success rates, licensure exam rates, job placement rates, and dual credit enrollment and completion.
- **Kilgore College** is committed to using data for board decisions. In June 2022, the board had a day-long retreat which included a student success data review. The board regularly heard on student success data at meetings through a standing item for data spotlights.
- The **Laredo College** board’s Student Success Committee regularly convenes to share data on enrollment, retention, student success, and equity.
- In April 2022, the board at **San Jacinto College** examined their student outcomes KPI dashboard through a holistic lens focused on equity. The board continued to hear about student success data through an equity lens throughout the year, with topics such as high school-to-college-going rates and transfer rates.
- The **Trinity Valley Community College** strategic plan has four main goals: (1) maximize student success, (2) develop employee excellence, (3) provide community enrichment and service, and (4) ensure institutional improvement. In each category, the college has committed to collecting and analyzing KPIs and developing strategies for actions.
- As part of the strategic plan, **Victoria College** set goals for several KPIs, including enrollment, retention, gateway course success, Texas core course success, completion, licensure, continuing education and workforce contact hours, and student engagement. This data is provided in the strategic plan update report produced annually.

Setting the Strategic Direction for Pathways

Between 2016 and 2020, all Texas community colleges committed to redesigning the student experience through Texas Pathways. Colleges were organized into cadres based on their readiness to implement and scale practices to reach all students. The work of reimagining and reorganizing a college in each cadre requires support from boards, CEOs, administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Boards demonstrate awareness of the work going on at their college and guided pathways principles through strategic plans, committee assignments, board retreats and workshops, and in regular business items.

- **Alamo Colleges** presents on its pathways work regularly. In April 2022, the board heard a report on smart growth for student success that provided an overview of several components of guided pathways,



including how the college was serving the whole student. In August 2022, the board heard about how advising Touch Points as part of AlamoADVISE affected student persistence.

- **Alvin Community College** remains dedicated to guided pathways as outlined in their strategic plan and evidenced in hiring decisions and board acknowledgements. In February 2022, the board acknowledged several faculty and staff members who were integral in the adoption of the Navigate software program used by student services to better serve students to keep them on their pathway. In April 2022, the board approved the college to hire full-time Pathways Advisors to join the advising staff tasked with working with students through case-management to develop student academic pathway success plans. They also approved the hiring of Pathways Success Coaches to provide direct services for enrollment, registration, financial aid, retention, recruitment, and general services through the guided pathways model for new and prospective students.
- The **Amarillo College** strategic plan includes several strategic actions aligned with guided pathways: creating comprehensive transfer/completion pathways, aligning degrees and certificates with labor market demand, and infusing and scaling high impact teaching and learning practices.
- **Austin Community College** remains actively engaged in guided pathways. In June 2022, the board head plans for strategic student onboarding to prepare students to complete programs aligned with their end goals. In August 2022, the board heard about the college was leveraging social media to inform students about transfer pathways. In February 2023, the chancellor shared an update on changes to advising to include faculty advisors with program-specific expertise to support students to meet their goals of entering the workforce or transferring.
- In May 2022 and December 2022, the board at **Brazosport College** heard an update on the college's work to scale guided pathways, including an update on the "ACE It" advising program.
- The mission of **Coastal Bend College** states that it is a student-centered community college committed to delivering superb educational and life-enriching opportunities to its students and the communities it serves. The strategic plan includes an objective to fully implement a pathways framework that supports a student from matriculation to graduation, transfer, or workforce entry. In June 2022, the Coastal Bend board of trustees approved the action to continue in Texas Pathways and to support the college to move from cadre 3 to cadre 2, making an explicit commitment to continue to fund attendees at the future BOTI and Texas Pathways Institutes.
- The **Galveston College** board unanimously passed the 2023-2027 strategic plan at the August 2022 meeting, building off the work of the college to implement guided pathways over the prior five years. Some of the objectives included: (1) track and measure KPIs to identify areas of improvement to improve student success; (2) expand transfer partnerships to support the guided pathways and improve student transfer rates; (3) work to decrease time to completion by implementing pathway intrusive advising to keep students on target towards degree/certificate completion and/or transfer to a 4-year university; and (4) based on input from business and industry and advisory committee members, design credit and non-credit courses and programs to fulfill current transfer, employment, and workforce needs.
- The strategic plan in place at **Grayson College** includes three goals: (1) Connect: transform lives by connecting students to the college and career pathways, (2) Commit: build community by inspiring students' commitment and momentum toward timely achievement of pathway milestones, and (3) Complete: inspire



pathway completion that launches successful career entry, career enhancement, or university transfer. The board of trustees participated in a board retreat in September 2022 facilitated by Dr. Martha Ellis of the Texas Success Center, where the board learned more about team building, academic planning strategy for growth, talent strategy, and financial planning strategy for growth.

- In 2022, the **Houston Community College** board launched its new strategic plan—Embracing Houston’s Future: A Comprehensive Strategy. The college committed to: (1) maintaining a clear and continuing commitment to the college’s mission; (2) concentrating on the strategic priorities of student success, diversity, and equity, personalized learning, academic rigor, community investment, and college of choice; (3) acting on those strategic priorities using the tools of Personas, organizational strategic competencies, integrated planning cycles, and relationship mapping; (4) attending to KPIs; (5) reaffirming the college’s commitment to the transformational progress that was made over the last five years; (6) building on the foundation of what was learned through practical experience; and (7) supporting a “Bias for Action” reinforced through clear expectations for individual and organizational behaviors.
- In March 2022, the provost at **Laredo College** presented the college’s Texas Pathways action plan. The board reviewed the plan and voted to adopt the Pathways team’s strategic goals. In March 2023, the provost announced to the board that the college was selected to participate in Talent Strong Texas Pathways to continue to build pathways that promote statewide economic mobility.
- The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan at **McLennan Community College** includes four main goals aligned with guided pathways: (1) help all students succeed at the highest level possible, (2) take care of our people, (3) impact the community, and (4) provide resources to fund success. Within these goals, the colleges committed to building strategic pathways that help all students succeed.
- **Victoria College** produces an annual report on the progress towards the goals in the strategic plan. The end of year report for 2021 opened with the college’s continued commitment to Texas Pathways, sharing that the college Pathways team focused on mapping pathways to students’ end goals (e.g., university transfer and career transition) and developing tools for informed advocacy for college trustees. They noted that the Texas Pathways work was influential in developing the new strategic plan.
- The 2022 annual report on the **Wharton County Junior College** strategic plan shared how the college was implementing and refining the Pathways Model to provide clear alignment of all academic and support functions, including the creation of an “Academic Recovery Plan” for students on probation, a faculty feedback plan to ensure students receive timely information, and proactive counseling interventions.



Driving Institutional Innovation and Sustainability

Community colleges have been working to reimagine practices and policies through Texas Pathways. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated even swifter changes and innovations to support students in a transforming environment. The community colleges of the future will need to make innovation a key component of their work to sustain postsecondary programs that are responsive to current needs.

- The strategic plan for **Alvin Community College** includes the objective to innovate educational options for all student populations and program types, including creating experiential learning, establishing micro-credentials, and increasing student engagement.
- **Amarillo College** opened the “Innovation Outpost” on campus to help students upskill, find paid internships, transfer, attain job promotions, start their own business, and advance in their jobs. In April 2022 and February 2023, the board heard how the Innovation Outpost will help the college keep up with the rapid growth of technology by offering programs that are sprints to upskill or reskill employees in their current jobs in 6-8 weeks through programs aligned with local employer needs.
- **Austin Community College** kept board members aware of the changing environment in which they were operating. In August 2022, the board heard about survey results conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Analytics that found that an overwhelming majority of students would like more 8-week courses and more hy-flex options that are in-person courses that allow students to join virtually on any given class period. As a result of these findings, the college decided to offer more hy-flex courses in the fall semester. In February 2023, the board heard about the strategic plan for enrollment management and the vision for the future of the college from leaders.
- In November 2022, the board at **Brazosport College** heard a report on grant funding for the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) initiative to build labor-market informed short-term credentials embedded in program pathways.
- The 2022 annual report on the strategic plan at **Wharton County Junior College** outlined how grants, including a TRUE grant, would allow the college to grow the Emergency Medical Technology, Computer Science, Vocational Nursing, and Dental Hygiene programs to develop high-quality, innovative curricular offerings.

Economic Growth for the Region

Community colleges are the largest contributor of workforce credentials in the state of Texas. Colleges have deep ties to their communities, regional industries, and local businesses. Recognizing their unique position to train regional workforces efficiently and effectively, boards supported efforts that drive economic growth in their regions.

- The **Alamo Colleges** board has a Workforce Committee that presents reports on a regular basis. In September 2022, the board heard about job trends in the region and the state as well as continuing education to credit pathways in manufacturing, information technology (IT), business, health, and public service. In October 2022, the board heard about how much completers of continuing education programs could expect to earn in logistics, health, and business. November 2022, the board heard how the colleges were building new workforce programs aligned with regional needs and engaging employers in strategic ways.



- The **Alvin Community College** strategic plan for 2022 – 2025 includes a goal to respond to growth within the region. The board heard updates on progress towards this goal. For example, in February 2023, the president reported that Alvin Community College was awarded a large grant from the Texas Workforce Commission to serve more students to become cybersecurity analysts, serving a local workforce need.
- In April 2022, the board at **Brazosport College** reaffirmed its core value related to partnerships: maintaining and fostering innovative partnerships, we contribute to the educational, economic, and cultural advancement of our local and global communities. In October 2022, the board heard an economic impact study finding that the college promotes economic growth in Brazoria County through its direct expenditures and the resulting expenditures of students and county businesses, with a total impact of \$276 million.
- One of the institutional goals of **Coastal Bend College** is to identify and develop focused initiatives and activities supporting cultural, workforce, and economic development to improve quality of life. The strategic plan states one objective is to provide workforce and continuing education certification and training opportunities that meet the needs of local and regional businesses and industry. In June 2022, the Coastal Bend College board heard that the college was awarded a TRUE grant to grow the high-demand commercial driver license program. At the same meeting, the board approved the development of a new cybersecurity certificate program and an airframe and power plant program to support local workforce needs.
- The 2021-2025 strategic plan for **El Paso Community College** sets out goals for fostering engagement and partnerships that promote innovation and accountability at the college; align partnerships with regional educational, economic, and workforce needs; and increases the visibility of the college in the region.
- The **Tyler Junior College** strategic plan outlines actions to build relationships with East Texas business and industry to stimulate and promote workforce opportunities, including expanding the college's role in economic and workforce development by collaborating with government agencies, as well as city, county, and state workforce organizations to establish regional economic priorities.
- The board at **Wharton County Community College** recognizes the importance of the college for the vibrancy of their community. In the board's vision statement, they envision the Bay City campus as a model for cooperation with the active city government, chamber of commerce, and local industry that could be a model for other campuses. This aligns with the strategic goal to rise to the needs of the diverse communities served by addressing local needs, cultivating collaborative partnerships, and responding to the area's workforce demands.

The Value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Community colleges are open enrollment institutions that serve student bodies that reflect the diversity of the state. Educating a diverse student body requires that leaders understand their student and faculty demographics, acknowledge the supports necessary to provide quality education to all students, and enable colleges to enact practices and policies that lead to student success.

- The **Alvin Community College** strategic plan for 2022 – 2025 includes a key goal to cultivate a culture of inclusion, flexibility, innovation, and resiliency to support all students to meet their goals. The college set a goal to close equity gaps in access, retention, progression, and completion with plans to accomplish



this through ensuring diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are woven into the fabric of programs, curriculum, services, and staffing.

- The “No Excuses 2025 Strategic Plan” for **Amarillo College** aims to create equitable degree and certificate attainment by building inclusive systems to increase minority hiring, enrollment, and completion by systematizing training for inclusivity and equity for board of regents and employees, becoming an anti-racist institution, and ensuring equitable access to college and its resources.
- The chancellor of **Austin Community College** made equity his first strategic priority. Board members were presented with examples of this at many board meetings. For example, in June 2022, the chancellor shared how student affair employees attended the 14th Annual Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institution Educators Best Practices Summit to look for ways to improve service to Latinx students. In August 2022, the chancellor shared that the college participated in Juneteenth celebrations and was sharing resources relate to Pride Month. In January 2023, the board heard a report on the equity charge, including information on racial diversity and faculty hiring and racial equity leadership work.
- In April 2022, the **Brazosport College** board reaffirmed its commitment to the core value of people: recognizing that education is a human endeavor, we create a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment in which we recruit, develop, and retain excellent people, encouraging all to pursue excellence. In January 2023, the board heard a diversity report for college employees finding that the college had made progress in increasing diversity among employees over the last six years.
- The 2021 -2025 strategic plan for **El Paso Community College** includes an equity statement: recognizing that there are obstacles for students in attaining academic goals, equity strives to achieve fairness through inclusion and active removal of barriers to eliminate disparities by supporting student progress, degree completion, transfer and/or gainful employment. El Paso Community College is committed to addressing equity as a basis for creating opportunities and providing resources to historically underrepresented students and to the success of all members of its college community.
- **Galveston College** adopted a strategic plan that included the goal to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in and out of the classroom as part of the campus culture. The board heard an equity report from Houston GPS at the October 2022 meeting highlighting improvements in metrics associated with targeted populations.
- In February 2023, **Kilgore College’s** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee composed of faculty, staff, and students who are committed to creating a more equitable and inclusive campus was discussed. The committee was formed in 2022 in response to the college’s new strategic plan, which includes a goal of increasing equity and access for all students.
- In July 2022, the **Laredo College** board heard a report on the 2022 Louis Stokes Center for the Promotion of Academic Careers (LS-PAC) Models Diversity in STEM Conference and the recognition of two of the program’s students with the LS-PAC STEM Scholarship and how these initiatives are helping to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students from underrepresented groups in STEM fields.
- In July 2022, the board at **Lee College** heard about the Racial Equity Leadership Academy, a year-long program that supported teams of leaders as they developed bold, strategic racial equity plans and implemented actionable change efforts at their institutions. The academy is designed to help leaders



develop the skills and knowledge they need to address racial inequities in their institutions, and to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and staff.

- In August 2022, the **San Jacinto College** board was presented with a landscape analysis of diversity, equity, and inclusivity at the college.

Conclusion

The 2022 BOTI provided participating trustees with an opportunity to elevate their knowledge of effective governance that contributes to student success, equity, and completion. The following recommendations can support boards to maximize their impact on student success and economic mobility:

- Board members should continue to examine disaggregated student data to understand the impact of policy and practice on different student groups and consider changes in policy based on this data. The board should seek out their student voices to provide context and understanding of the data to inform their governance decision-making process.
- Create a systematic method for boards to examine student success data, including program and wages outcomes. These methods could include board retreats, the formation of student success committees, and regular data reports to the board.
- Upon the conclusion of the BOTI, board members and CEOs should agree on a commitment to action (CTA) that includes measurable and timely student success goals.
- Board members should create a CTA implementation plan and determine improvement cycles for each action item to ensure adequate time and resources are committed to achieving CTA goals.
- Board members should create a formal agenda item or design a retreat to review the BOTI curriculum and CTA items. During this meeting, BOTI content can be presented to all board members, including those were not present at the BOTI, to ensure all board members have access to the resources provided by the Texas Success Center and the full board can have opportunity to adopt the CTA items.
- Board members should create a recurring agenda item to review progress on CTA items and review college reports associated with CTA items. Boards and colleges should review existing reports to see if they meet the current needs of the board.
- Board members should continue to seek out resources from the Texas Success Center to address professional learning related to CTA goals.



Artifacts

Many of the participating colleges have integrated the goals set at the BOTI into board meeting agendas and minutes, strategic plans, mission statements, and external communications. A few examples are provided below:

- Alvin Community College Strategic Plan
- Amarillo College Strategic Plan
- Brazosport College Economic Impact Study
- Coastal Bend College Strategic Plan
- Del Mar College Strategic Plan – Operational Plan
- El Paso Community College Strategic Plan
- Galveston College – Houston GPS Equity Report
- Galveston College Strategic Plan
- Houston Community College Strategic Plan
- Kilgore College Strategic Plan
- McLennan Community College Strategic Plan
- Tyler Junior College Strategic Plan
- Trinity Valley Community College Strategic Plan
- Victoria College End of Year Report
- Wharton County Junior College Strategic Plan Annual Update



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Correspondence

Kristina Flores, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation, Texas Success Center, kflores@tacc.org

