



Texas Success Center: Time to Step Things Up

For the past six months, the Texas Success Center's (TSC) All In campaign has been celebrating the achievements of community colleges across the state. The successes are real, and they are especially impressive in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created unprecedented challenges for faculty, staff, and students.

Now, the TSC is looking toward the future with Talent Strong Texas Pathways (TSTP), which launched a year ago. TSTP builds on the work of Texas Pathways. It continues to include Institutes, coaching, Board of Trustees Institutes, and knowledge development. It also expands the scope of work colleges will be asked to address. TSTP includes:

- New on-ramps to pathways, including continuing education, adult basic education, dual credit, and Multilanguage Learners of English (formerly known as English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL).
- A greater focus on post-completion outcomes to improve economic mobility. This work includes looking at transfer success and wage data.
- Stronger partnerships with business and industry to incorporate the skills needed for post-completion careers.
- Cultivating students' sense of belonging as well as their mental health and well-being so students have the support they need to attain their academic goals.

These elements of TSTP will help colleges further improve quality, better serve students, and increase retention and completion rates. Some of these changes also align with new funding opportunities presented by House Bill 8 (HB 8).

“We are envisioning new ways for the TSC to empower colleges so they, in turn, can unlock new possibilities for their students,” says Kimberly Lowry, the TSC's new executive director. “The landscape of higher education is evolving rapidly. We've gained invaluable insights from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the new opportunities presented by HB 8 present a unique moment for us to elevate our collective efforts. This is a time for innovation and collaboration.”



Lowry is committed to amplifying the TSC’s focus on scalability, sustainability, and economic mobility — all essential components of a student-centered approach to success.

“My personal and professional experience at a community college has taught me the power of determination and hard work. However, it’s time to transform that dedication into strategies that are not just sustainable but also scalable across the state,” she says. “I believe we can support colleges in working more strategically and enhance the impact of their efforts.”

She continues, “I am eager to engage with colleges to understand their needs better. The Texas Success Center stands ready to listen actively, to innovate boldly, and to co-create solutions that unleash the full potential of every institution and student.”

Capitalizing on HB 8 Funding Opportunities

HB 8 shifts state funding for colleges to an outcomes-based model. It provides funding for:

- Credentials of value awarded by a college. Credentials of value include badges, certificates, and degrees that position graduates for well-paying jobs.
- Credentials of value awarded in high-demand fields in which employers are looking for skilled employees.
- Successful student transfers from community colleges to four-year universities.
- Completion of a sequence of dual credit courses, which are offered to high school students and can set them on early pathways to success.¹

HB 8 provides additional support for adult learners, academically disadvantaged students, and economically disadvantaged students. However, getting the extra funding for these areas will depend on having a robust data infrastructure.

Regarding HB 8 funding, Lowry adds, “This funding model represents a profound opportunity for us to use education to transform lives. We must work together to ensure that every college, regardless of its current capacity, is fully equipped to leverage these funds for the greatest possible impact on student success.”

¹ <https://www.highered.texas.gov/2023/06/09/texas-house-bill-8-becomes-law-paves-way-for-innovative-community-college-funding/>



Focusing on Economic Mobility

In the coming years, colleges will be exploring how to fully leverage the opportunities presented by HB 8, maximizing their funding potential and strategically using any additional resources. Lowry sees the TSC as a crucial ally in this journey, driving essential conversations and crafting actionable strategies to help colleges fully embrace their mission of advancing social and economic mobility.

"Our mission is to ensure that colleges are not just addressing the demands of today but also are strategically positioning themselves for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. By aligning educational programs with high-demand, well-paying careers and ensuring students earn credentials of value, we are laying the foundation for both student success and broader community prosperity."

She concludes, "As colleges across the nation confront complex issues of economic and social mobility, the TSC is committed to leading the charge across Texas to develop scalable, sustainable solutions that empower colleges to serve their students more effectively. Our focus is on equipping colleges with the right resources to ensure that every student has the tools they need to thrive."

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