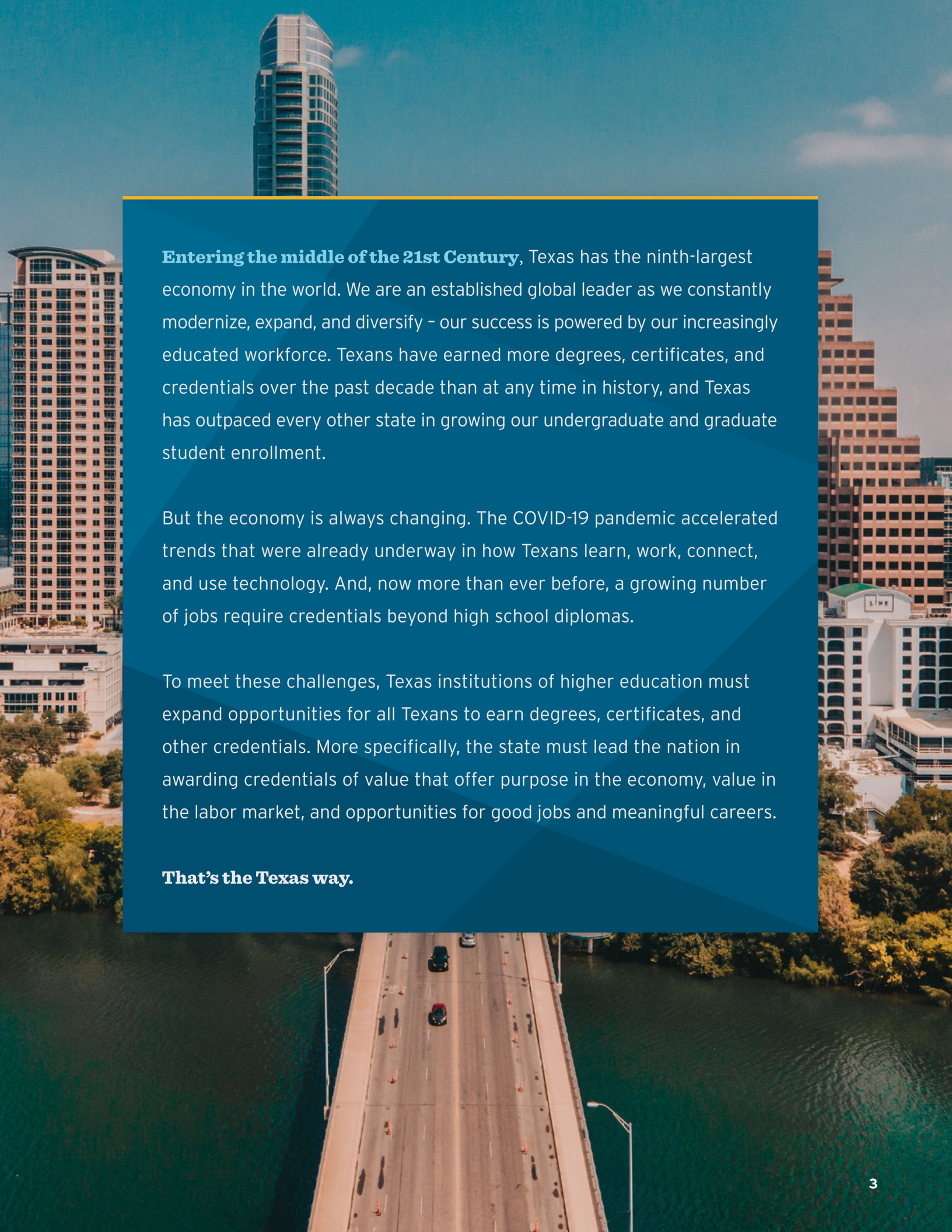


A photograph of a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a red sweater, raising her right hand with a pencil in her fingers. She is smiling and looking towards the upper right. In the background, other students are visible, including a woman with long hair and a man in a blue shirt. The image is framed by a large, stylized blue geometric shape that resembles a triangle or a large 'A'.

Building a Talent Strong Texas

Fostering the skills and spurring the innovation vital to the Texas economy.

The state of Texas is educating, graduating, and preparing more students to join the workforce and drive the economy than ever before — and remains firmly committed to Building a Talent Strong Texas for decades to come.

An aerial photograph of a city skyline. In the foreground, a multi-lane bridge spans a wide river. Several cars are visible on the bridge. The background features a dense urban landscape with various high-rise buildings. A prominent, tall, cylindrical skyscraper with a glass facade stands out against the sky. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene conveys a sense of a modern, thriving metropolitan area.

Entering the middle of the 21st Century, Texas has the ninth-largest economy in the world. We are an established global leader as we constantly modernize, expand, and diversify - our success is powered by our increasingly educated workforce. Texans have earned more degrees, certificates, and credentials over the past decade than at any time in history, and Texas has outpaced every other state in growing our undergraduate and graduate student enrollment.

But the economy is always changing. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated trends that were already underway in how Texans learn, work, connect, and use technology. And, now more than ever before, a growing number of jobs require credentials beyond high school diplomas.

To meet these challenges, Texas institutions of higher education must expand opportunities for all Texans to earn degrees, certificates, and other credentials. More specifically, the state must lead the nation in awarding credentials of value that offer purpose in the economy, value in the labor market, and opportunities for good jobs and meaningful careers.

That's the Texas way.



For generations, the state has empowered Texans to succeed by fostering individual opportunities for both education and employment. In that spirit, Texas institutions of higher education must offer a broad range of degrees, certificates, and other credentials that help both traditional students and adult learners reach their goals. By doing so, we will lead the nation economically, since every student who earns a credential of value widens Texas' advantage.

The demands are clear – employers increasingly rely on highly educated workers, employees need postsecondary credentials of value, and innovation remakes the economic landscape daily.

Higher education leaders, educators, employers, and policymakers have a unique opportunity to better align the educational opportunities Texas offers with the skills Texans need. This will be accomplished through a statewide strategic plan that empowers all students to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from our world class economy.

Raising the Bar for Higher Education in Texas

Texas has continually raised the bar for higher education, through *Closing the Gaps* in 2000, and *60x30TX* in 2015. We will not back off the goals set by those plans. Instead, we will raise the bar even higher. Our economy demands nothing less. We will do this by focusing on three measurable, data-driven goals:

- **Attainment of certificates and degrees** so at least 60% of Texans ages 25-64 have a postsecondary credential of value by 2030.
- **Postsecondary credentials of value** aligned with workforce demands that will raise incomes for individual Texans while reducing debt.
- **Research, development, and innovation** that drives discovery, improves lives, broadens education, and creates new jobs.

Across all these goals, we will renew our **commitment to equity**. Texas is one of the youngest and most diverse states, so if we're not advancing our goals equitably, we cannot meet those goals. In the updated plan, equity will be embedded throughout our goals.

All goals will be tied to metrics that are publicly available for students and families, colleges and universities, employers, and policymakers to use in making decisions. These goals can only be achieved collaboratively, working with public and private sector stakeholders to break down historic silos and serving as a resource, partner, and advocate for Texas higher education.

The path forward is clear: When we help more students graduate with credentials of value and foster innovation, we ultimately increase Texans' opportunities to succeed, while also bolstering Texas' ability to flourish. That's how we keep Building a Talent Strong Texas.

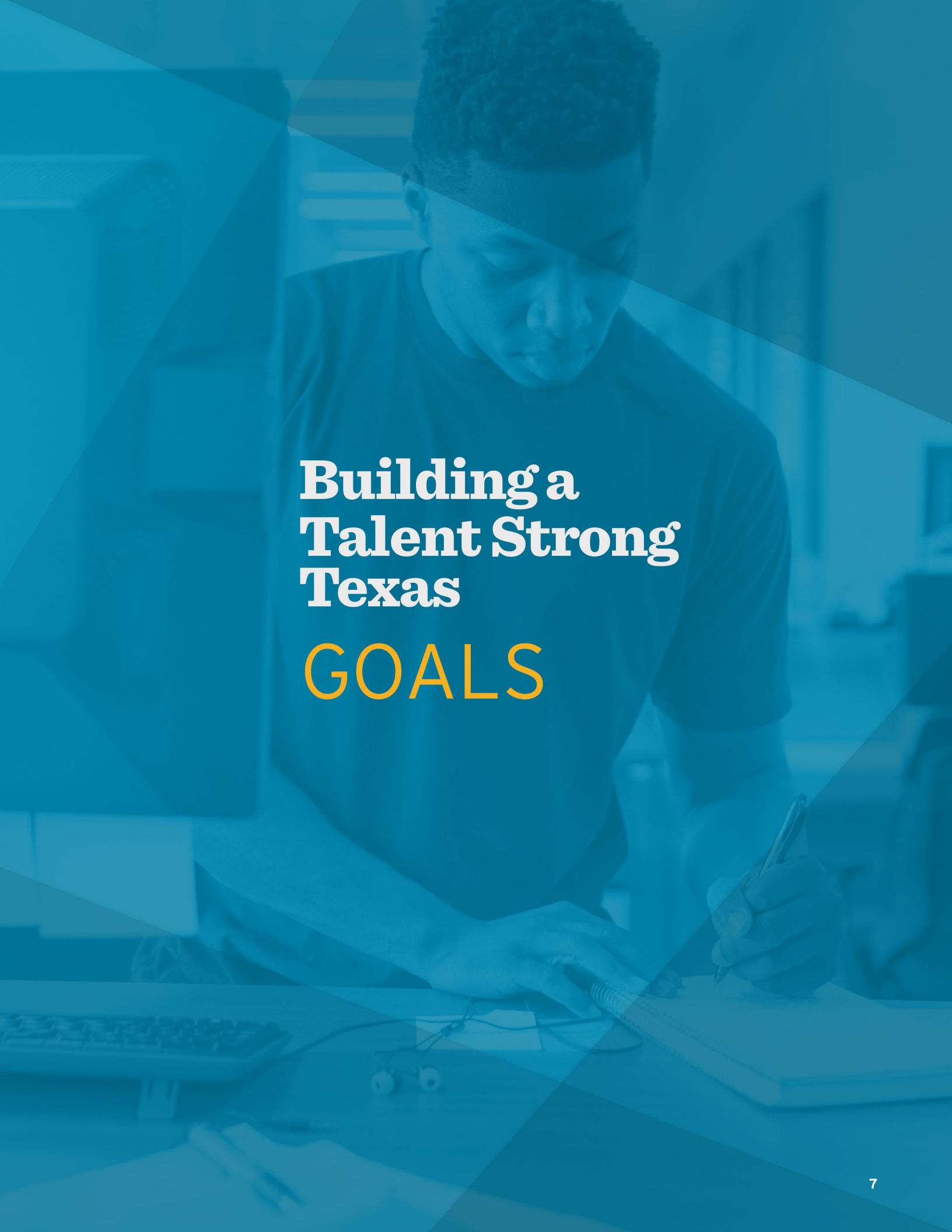
Advancing Equity for the Benefit of All Texans

In raw numbers, Texas grew more than any other state over the past decade, and more than 95% of that growth was in communities of color. That's why data for these indicators will be disaggregated and reported by race, gender, income level, and geographic area to monitor that all goals are being advanced equitably and all Texans have an opportunity to succeed.

“Texas continues to be a leader in higher education thanks to our shared dedication to educating and training the next generation of Texans. It is critical we continue to foster our homegrown talent to ensure all Texans are prepared to participate fully in the workforce and be part of our economic success story.”



Greg Abbott
Governor



Building a Talent Strong Texas

GOALS

ATTAINMENT OF POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

*Historically, efforts to increase the impact of higher education have focused on expanding access to institutions of higher education. **Building a Talent Strong Texas** will require us to shift our focus to completion with purpose and value.*

Texas' two previous strategic plans built on this important goal by emphasizing equity and attainment – making sure Texans of all backgrounds not only started college and professional programs but completed them.

60x30TX, in particular, set a goal for 60% of Texans ages 25-34 to earn a degree or certificate by 2030. That goal remains vital. However, we can't address the workforce needs of tomorrow by focusing solely on traditional students and early-career Texans. We must expand our focus to include mid-career employees who can advance in their jobs and meet the changing demands of Texas employers.

This group includes a range of potential adult learners: from those who never attended college or programs after high school, to nearly 4 million Texans with some college credit but no credential. Reskilling and upskilling are within reach for many of them.

To accomplish this, we will expand Texas' attainment goals to include working-age adults. In addition to the 25-34-year-olds who are already central to 60x30TX, we will aim for at least 60% of Texans ages 35-64 to

have a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value by 2030. In particular, we will encourage higher education institutions to expand work-based learning and offer a broader array of credentials – including short-term credentials or badges, some of which the state has never before tracked or measured.

The 60% goals are not arbitrary. They are data-driven targets designed to increase employment opportunities and income for individual Texans, create a deeper talent pool for employers, and align skills with the increasing number of jobs that require postsecondary education. The 60% goals were selected to ensure Texas will remain globally competitive.

“At El Paso Community College, we understand that for our region and our state to continue to succeed, we must ensure that all students, regardless of age, have the opportunity to enroll and complete credentials that lead to economic prosperity.”

William Serrata
President, El Paso Community College

By expanding our attainment goals to include all working-age Texans, we will increase employment opportunities and incomes for individuals, create a deeper talent pool for employers, and align skills with the jobs our economy demands.

Primary Indicators

GOAL: 60%

Percentage of Texans ages 25-34 with a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value by 2030.

GOAL: 60%

Percentage of Texans aged 35-64 with a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value by 2030.

Future Indicators

The data we collect and report will continually evolve. As such, we aim to also evolve our indicators for each of the three goals to ensure we have a robust and timely understanding of the ongoing impact. This includes identifying and collecting data for some indicators that have not traditionally been tracked until now.

Unfilled high- and middle-skilled jobs in high-demand and/or high-growth industries

Strategies

Establish and maintain a statewide repository with information on all credentials offered by Texas institutions of higher education and other providers, including non-degree, postsecondary credentials of value.

Modernize the state's educational and workforce data infrastructure, including improved collection of occupation-specific data to better inform students, educators, institutional leaders, employers, and the public about the talent pipeline, while maintaining student privacy.

Build upon the work of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Workforce Commission, and Texas Education Agency through the governor's Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative to expand high-quality education and workforce training opportunities that empower Texans to achieve their full potential.

POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS OF VALUE

*By **Building a Talent Strong Texas**, our state will play a leading and unprecedented national role in prioritizing credentials of value.*

The credentials that students earn must, at a minimum, provide a positive return on investment: The economic benefits exceed the costs to receive them, and students leave higher education better off financially than they would otherwise be.

We have already laid a strong foundation for the Texas workforce through a broad commitment to increase postsecondary attainment. However, the modern economy demands more – we must award credentials that offer purpose in the economy, value in the labor market, and opportunity for a good job and meaningful career.

“Texas higher education plays a critical role in preparing future workers for our available jobs while upskilling our existing employees to stay competitive in the workforce.”

Meagan McCoy Jones
President & COO,
McCoy's Building Supply

To achieve this, educators will work with employers to understand today's high-demand, high-quality fields, aligning courses, programs, and credentials with current and emerging workforce needs, for both first-time and mid-career students. In particular, programs must help students progress efficiently toward completion and align with potential career opportunities.

The value of an individual credential can also be increased by targeting financial aid to ensure opportunities are affordable and student debt is low. Manageable student debt is essential to expand economic mobility for historically underserved populations, who often have the greatest needs but the least access to higher education and support

services. This combination of increased value and economic mobility for students leads to greater economic prosperity for their families, communities, and the state.

Containing costs and increasing value for students and Texas taxpayers is a shared responsibility among the Texas Legislature (which funds higher education), institutional leaders (who set tuition and create educational pathways to credentials), and students (who choose their paths to completion).

Credentials from Texas institutions of higher education must equip graduates for continued learning and lasting, successful careers, with no or manageable student debt.

Primary Indicators:

GOAL: 550K

Students completing postsecondary credentials of value each year.

GOAL: 95%

Percentage of graduates with no undergraduate student debt or manageable levels of debt in relation to their potential earnings.

Future indicators:

Number of students graduating with credentials linked to high-demand occupations, disaggregated by race, gender, and income.

Strategies:

Support Texas' commitment to higher education through a strategic mix of state appropriations, tuition and fees, philanthropy, and other revenues, while leveraging state and federal financial aid to keep student debt low.

Streamline student pathways to credentials of value through course and program redesign, digital tools to help address individual student needs, credit for prior learning, and flexible program options – all while increasing support services and advising that assist students through key transitions in higher education and the workforce.

Make the costs of higher education more transparent, predictable, and affordable for Texas students, and bolster students' financial literacy.

Expand high quality, work-based learning opportunities through partnerships among institutions and employers, including paid internships and apprenticeships.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, & INNOVATION

Building a Talent Strong Texas means developing a workforce that meets the current and future needs of employers and expands opportunities for individual Texans to earn credentials of value.

As part of that mission, Texas institutions of higher education also play a vital role in generating knowledge through basic and applied research, and working with industry to translate innovations and discoveries into new inventions or treatments. Often, these innovations can also be commercialized to spin off new companies, create jobs, and support local and state economies.

“At Prairie View A&M University, we are pushing boundaries in research and innovation. With this renewed focus by the state, we hope to achieve even greater success in driving Texas’ knowledge economy.”

Ruth Simmons
President, Prairie View A&M University

These research activities simultaneously power the global economy and provide students with opportunities to work at the frontiers of human knowledge. Institutions of higher education drive the research and development that produce the insights, innovations, and highly skilled graduates essential for economic competitiveness.

For Texas to maintain and advance its economic leadership for 2030 and beyond, it must continue to bolster its capabilities in these areas. Research and emerging research universities and health science centers should recruit and retain world-class scholars and innovators, provide modern campus research infrastructure, and support robust industry partnerships.

Research, development, and innovation are not the sole purview of the state’s research universities and health science centers. All institutions of higher education play increasingly important roles to incubate innovation, generate new businesses, and promote economic development.

These include community colleges, regional universities, and regional collaboratives that can build on existing industry partnerships and develop new collaborative models to drive research and innovation.

Texas must be a leading state in generating knowledge through basic and applied research and translating discoveries into innovations that benefit individual Texans' lives and drive economic development.

Primary Indicators:

GOAL:
\$1 Billion

Increase in annual private and federal research and development expenditures.

GOAL: 7,500

Research doctorates awarded annually by Texas institutions of higher education.

Future indicators:

Measures of commercialization, knowledge transfer, and economic impact.

Strategies:

Recruit highly distinguished researchers and world-class innovators to Texas universities through the governor's University Research Initiative and other programs, and provide support for universities to hire high-potential, early-career researchers.

Strengthen state research funding and programs to align with state priorities for university research and development.

Develop and mentor world-class future faculty for Texas institutions, emphasizing disciplines with high current or projected workforce demand (including nursing, software development, and data sciences), especially faculty from diverse backgrounds.

Establish high-impact university research parks and improve research infrastructure at all research and emerging research universities, and develop incubator capabilities in two- and four-year colleges to support private-sector partnerships, innovation, and technology commercialization.

Background: How the Updated Plan was Developed

In 2000, we adopted *Closing the Gaps* as the state's 15-year higher education plan. It was designed to close achievement gaps among groups across the state as well as between Texas and other states. The plan focused on four major areas: participation, success, excellence, and research. Texas was able to close the gaps in most areas, sometimes by wide margins, though not all goals were fully met.

In 2015, we adopted the follow-up *60x30TX*, which committed to 60% of all Texans ages 25-34 earning a certificate or degree by 2030. The plan also set out the ambitious goals of having 550,000 students complete a certificate or degree every year by 2030, each student graduating with identified marketable skills, and having debt that amounted to less than 60% of first-year wages. The state is making progress toward those goals.

However, the pace of change in the Texas economy is accelerating, and the COVID-19 pandemic brought new disruptions to the workforce while changing expectations for the future. In response, state officials led by Commissioner of Higher Education Harrison Keller have determined that *60x30TX* should be refreshed as it nears its halfway mark in 2022 and that Texas should accelerate its national leadership and renewed focus on students completing degrees with purpose and value.

Building a Talent Strong Texas Steering Committee Members

- Neal Adams, committee co-chair, Texas Higher Education Foundation
- Stuart Stedman, committee co-chair, former chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Fred Farias, chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Donna Williams, vice chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Darryl Heath, Texas Higher Education Foundation
- Fred Heldenfels, Texas Higher Education Foundation
- Woody Hunt, Texas Higher Education Foundation
- Welcome Wilson Jr., Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

A special thanks to the leadership of the steering committee and the thought partnership from our institutions, business and industry colleagues, Tri-Agency partners, and more.

To be successful, Building a Talent Strong Texas will require coordination across the public and private sectors, with input and support from educators, institutional leaders, policymakers, employers, and students and their families.

To update the plan most effectively and meet the needs of all stakeholders, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board officials:

- established an eight-member steering committee of current members of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Higher Education Foundation Board of Trustees;
- engaged leaders across public and independent institutions of higher education including chancellors, presidents, provosts, deans, and faculty members;
- facilitated discussions with business leaders from across the state and a cross-section of Texas industries to understand challenges and opportunities in the talent pipeline;
- held virtual forums across Texas, each sponsored jointly by a university and community college and/or chamber of commerce in that region;
- convened a statewide virtual summit with leading national experts, Texas employers, educators, and other stakeholders;
- reviewed national best practices and data in various domains, including adult learning, credentials of value, and research and development; and
- met with leading state and national experts in relevant areas of higher education and workforce policy.

These conversations and reviews led to the updated goals, indicators, and strategies that drive Building a Talent Strong Texas.

Texas Higher Education

COORDINATING BOARD

The Commissioner



Harrison Keller, Ph.D.

Dr. Keller has more than two decades of experience in educational budget and policy, digital learning, senior university administration, management, fundraising, and building effective coalitions among school districts, community colleges, universities, systems, and policymakers.

The Board



Fred Farias III, OD, MCSO

Chair

Fred Farias III, OD, MCSO, of McAllen, Texas, is president and CEO of 20/20 Vision Care and a fellow of the American Academy of Optometry. He is chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and a member of the Texas Higher Education Foundation Board.



Donna N. Williams

Vice Chair

Donna N. Williams is a vice president and program manager for Parsons Transportation Group Inc., managing a multi-year contract at Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport. She is vice chair of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and is a member of the Texas Higher Education Foundation Board.



Javaid Anwar

S. Javaid Anwar was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and after high school, immigrated to the United States. His 40-year career in Texas oil and gas has led to his foundation and ownership of several oil and gas exploration companies and related entities.



Richard L. Clemmer

Richard L. (Rick) Clemmer is a global technology CEO, most recently leading the turnaround of NXP Semiconductors. He continues to serve as chairman of NXP NA and as a strategic advisor. He also serves on the boards of Aptiv PLC., HP Inc., Privafy, and Axon Networks.



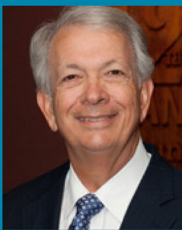
Robert P. Gauntt

Robert Gauntt is a founding partner of Capital Creek Partners. He previously served as founding partner at Avalon Advisors, building the firm's Alternative platform with a focus on private equity, real estate, and hedge funds.



Emma W. Schwartz, MPH

Emma Wollschlager Schwartz, MPH, is president of the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation, a nonprofit operating in El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico, which she and her board founded in 2006.



R. Sam Torn

Sam Torn and his wife, Susan, own and operate Incomparable Camp Ozark, one of the nation's largest residential summer camps. He is also the executive director of Camp War Eagle, a youth development nonprofit organization for underserved children.



Welcome W. Wilson, Jr.

Welcome Wilson, Jr. is president and CEO of Welcome Group LLC, a commercial real estate development firm. He is also the joint venture partner in Kingham · Dalton · Wilson Ltd., a design/build construction affiliate, and a director of River Oaks Financial Group Inc.



Daniel O. Wong, PhD, PE

Daniel O. Wong, PhD, PE, is president and CEO of TolunayWong Engineers Inc., which is headquartered in Houston with 10 offices across Texas and Louisiana. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of Houston.



Matthew Boyd Smith

Student Representative

Matthew Boyd Smith of Copperas Cove was appointed to serve as the student representative on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board by Governor Greg Abbott in June 2021. He attends Texas State University as a political science major.

**We must raise the bar to ensure
all Texans can participate in,
benefit from, and contribute to
the unique opportunities of
our great state. Working together,
we'll lead the nation and
Build a Talent Strong Texas.**





THECB

Texas Higher Education
COORDINATING BOARD

www.highered.texas.gov/TalentStrong