

Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Texas Workforce



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Motivated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) 60x30TX strategic plan for ensuring 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 complete a postsecondary credential by 2030, this project examined the path to and through college and into the workforce for students in the Houston area and state of Texas. By analyzing a number of data sources and using different methodological approaches, the project developed seven products:

1. Tracking Eighth-Graders' Postsecondary Outcomes in Harris County
2. Transitioning to College and Work – Part 1: Where Are High School Seniors from 2006-2008 Now?
3. Transitioning to College and Work – Part 2: A Study of Potential Enrollment Indicators
4. Transitioning to College and Work – Part 3: Labor Market Analyses in Houston and Texas
5. The Role of College Prep Course Offerings and Course-Taking in Long-Term Educational Outcomes
6. School-to-Work Linkages in Texas
7. Will tuition-free college increase college graduation rates?

Strong academic supports in ninth-grade, college prep course-taking during high school, free college or tuition subsidies, and ensuring students have clear paths from education to occupations may be strategies to increase college attendance and graduation and plug the leaky educational pipeline in Harris County.

Links to these all of these products are available at kinder.rice.edu/houston-education-research-consortium.

Key Findings on the Path to and through College

- Female, white, Asian, and non-economically disadvantaged students were more likely to enroll in college and complete a certificate or degree than male, Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students.
- Students with many absences and poor or mediocre test scores and grades were less likely to go to college than students with high daily attendance rates and good test scores and grades.
- Students who took more advanced courses during high school, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, were more likely to complete a postsecondary credential or bachelor's degree within 12 years of graduation.
- Ninth-grade was a challenging year for students and many fell off-track from the path to college.

Key Findings on the Path into the Workforce

- Demand for workers with a bachelor's degree will increase at a faster rate than supply through 2030. Demand for workers with an associate's degree will increase slightly, but supply will decrease.
- Workers with a bachelor's or associate's degree will continue earning more than workers with a high school diploma.
- Individuals who majored in fields with close connections to specific occupations in the labor market earned higher wages and were less likely to be unemployed.

Key Findings on the *60x30TX* Goal

- The Houston area and Texas are projected to fall 20 and 10 percentage points short, respectively, of reaching the *60x30TX* goal.
- To meet the goal, the state would need to provide an annual tuition subsidy of \$5,320 for community college students and \$3,640 for public four-year college students. The total cost would be \$2.3 billion, far in excess of the THECB's \$807 million budget.

Recommendations

- 1: Continuing to provide strong academic supports, in addition to information and personal assistance in the college application process, may help male, black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students enroll in college.
- 2: Practitioners should provide additional supports for ninth-grade students to help them stay on-track to college enrollment. College enrollment indicators may be part of these efforts if they can help teachers, counselors, and administrators identify students in need of special assistance.
- 3: Schools should consider encouraging students to enroll in college prep courses already offered and gradually increase course offerings as student enrollment grows.
- 4: Free community college and tuition subsidies may be effective ways to increase college graduation rates in Texas.
- 5: Leaders in PK-12 and higher education are encouraged to partner with employers and policymakers on initiatives that can prepare students for both college and the workforce, as well as meet the demands of the Houston area and Texas economies.



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