

SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS: POSTSECONDARY ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY & ATTAINMENT

Despite rising costs of attending college and growing levels of student debt nationwide, **postsecondary education remains key to economic equity and mobility** for individuals and for the prosperity of our communities.

On March 23, 2018, Trellis Foundation hosted a **Summit** on Postsecondary Access, Affordability & Attainment, convening many of the foremost stakeholders in Texas to discuss both public policy and philanthropic levers to support statewide priorities, such as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's **60x30TX**. The Summit served as the formal public launch for our newly-formed **foundation**.

Presenters included **Rob Kaplan**, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, the **Tri-Agency commissioners**, and **higher education leaders and philanthropists**.

✓ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Despite current debates on the importance of post-secondary education, college is worth it, but the need for financial assistance is great.
- Philanthropic dollars can serve in a key catalyst role, but long-term sustainability must be through systems change and prioritization of public funding.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY CONTEXT

We know that, as The Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce has stated, 65% of jobs in the U.S. in 2020 will require some form of postsecondary degree, certificate, or credential.

This aligns with the goals set out by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board that by 2030, at least 60% of Texans ages 25-34 will hold a post-secondary credential. Texas remains around 40%.¹

One of the greatest challenges students and families are facing is the declining affordability of higher education. The chart on this page represents Texas students' "unmet need" – essentially the leftover amount that a student is required to pay – even after all of the grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans have been applied.

While the remaining need varies based on family income level and the type of institution attended, the **average unmet need for low-income students in Texas is nearly \$9,000 at public universities**.



Source: State of Student Aid and Higher Education in Texas, January 2017, Section 7

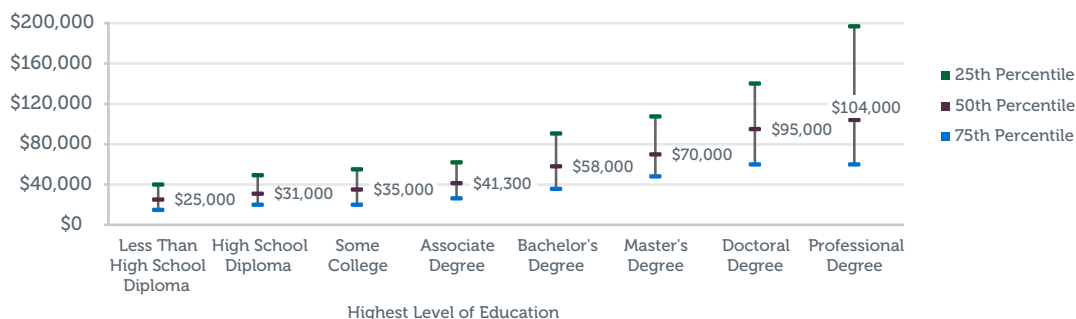


Photo: Isa Arizola, American Youthworks

¹ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2018 *Texas Public Higher Education Almanac: A Profile of State and Institutional Performance and Characteristics*

College Graduates Earn Far More Than High School Graduates and Experience Less Unemployment

Annual Earnings, Full-Time U.S. Workers (2016)



Source: State of Student Aid and Higher Education in Texas, January 2017, Section 8

If these numbers continue to grow, it's highly likely to correlate with greater rates of dropout and declining enrollment – even with the improvements we're making to programs and services. We really are talking about system-level change – coordinating policy and practice to truly make a difference for degree attainment.

Providing equitable education and workforce access and outcomes for low-income and historically underrepresented populations requires cross-sector collaborations.

Philanthropic partners, nonprofit organizations, and the business community have a significant role to play, but we will never reach true equity through universal scale unless institutional, state and federal policies align to support effective practices and structures.

Finally, we know that, as Horace Mann posited, education is still the great equalizer – and a degree or credential beyond high school is still the surest path to upward economic mobility.

✓ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Population growth is key to GDP growth.** While nationally aging demographics over the upcoming years will slow GDP growth, robust migration (from other countries and states) to Texas will counter this trend.
- **Workforce development is critical:** 60% of small business owners report a lack of skilled workers to fill open positions.
- **Support of early education is key** for improved outcomes across the pipeline, including at the postsecondary level.

ROB KAPLAN, FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF DALLAS

Summit conversations kicked off with an interview by Evan Smith, CEO and Founder of the Texas Tribune, of Rob Kaplan, President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Topics ranged from the current state of the economy to the importance of international trade to the role of education in Texas' future.



Photo: Evan Smith and Rob Kaplan

TRI-AGENCY COLLABORATION

Following this robust discussion, Smith moderated a panel of the commissioners from the Texas Education Association, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

The conversation provided an update on progress to date on Governor Greg Abbott's [Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative](#), including those charges relevant to higher education affordability:

- Updated tools support students in their path from education to career: [Texas OnCourse](#), [Texas Reality Check](#), [Texas CREWS](#)
- Increased alignment with industry, including funding of [Texas Innovative Academies](#)
- Modified K-12 accountability system to align with 60x30TX



WE HAVE TO ELEVATE OUR ABILITY TO INFORM AND EXCITE STUDENTS."

— ANDRÉS ALCANTAR, CHAIRMAN, TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

Photos: Mike Morath, Texas Commissioner of Education, Raymond Peredes, Commissioner of Higher Education, and Andrés Alcantar, Texas Workforce Commission Chairman

HIGHER EDUCATION SECTORS

Panelists representing associations for three higher education sectors discussed opportunities for collaboration and current best practices in post-secondary education to support students. Educators and policy-makers continue to grapple with challenges such as the magnitude of scale in Texas, the perception of the value of postsecondary education, and the perception versus reality of students served by institutions in Texas. Despite this, several promising practices have emerged, including:

- Dual credit
- Focus on financial education and emergency support
- Collaboration of community colleges and public and private nonprofit universities

Panelists cited the community effort to aid recovery following Hurricane Harvey as a key example of the sectors' ability to collaborate. "I would argue that underneath that [joint recovery efforts] was an ecosystem of working together. A foundation of collaboration," said Jacob Fraire, President and CEO of the Texas Association of Community Colleges. "We could not have created that after a natural disaster if it had not already existed."



Photos: Ray Martinez, Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas, Jacob Fraire, Texas Association of Community Colleges, and Rissa McGuire, Council of Public University Presidents and Chancellors

✓ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Postsecondary degrees and credentials remain key for economic mobility. Students need to continue to receive this message.
- Leaders should uniformly ensure students understand the relevance of education to career opportunities.
- Communities must re-elevate teaching as a career.
- Each agency should target resources with specific outcomes in mind.

✓ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Higher education institutions must remember **Community-Based Organization** partners, particularly in areas around messaging the importance of education and cost/debt considerations.
- Education leaders should underscore both the **public and private benefits** of education.

ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY

✓ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Private funding cannot supplant the role of public funding;** rather, it can provide opportunities to support innovation, assume risk, assess efficacy, and assist with scaling practices as a pre-cursor for eventual public funding for demonstrated effective practices.
- **To establish trust with grantees,** funders must emphasize responsibility over accountability in metrics, provide transparency of processes and decision-making, and avoid imposing its goals against the judgment of grantees.
- **Private funding can serve as a catalyst** for collaboration and policy change.

To close the event's discussions, representatives from various foundations discussed the key role that philanthropic funding can have in improving postsecondary outcomes across the state.



Photo: Mark Milliron, Civitas Learning, Sidney Hacker, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, John Fitzpatrick, Educate Texas/Communities Foundation of Texas, and Kevin Byrne, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation

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About

Trellis Foundation supports the innovation and growth of ideas and strategies that positively influence postsecondary attainment and affordability. We believe all students deserve equal educational opportunities and that means that some students need, and should receive, additional benefits, support, and/or resources.

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