

Accountability for Success:

**Report of Progress by
Comprehensive Institutions in Texas**

Submitted by:

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Introduction

At the Coordinating Board's August 2007 Workshops, Accountability Groups discussed the meaning and implications of accountability data. Susan Brown, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Accountability, framed the purpose of the workshops: to focus on one of the original purposes of the Accountability System - improvement. The Coordinating Board (CB) intends to invigorate the accountability process by linking it more directly to Board evaluations and to provide greater institutional transparency.

Workshops were held separately for each of the four peer groups: Doctoral, Emerging Research, Comprehensive and Master's. During the workshops, the institutional representatives were asked to focus on the meaning of the data, not definitions or calculations. Further, the groups were asked to focus only on the "success" variables within the Accountability System.

With an eye toward preparing a report to be presented at the April 2008 Coordinating Board meeting, the groups discussed what the data reveal about strengths and weaknesses of the peer groups and the individual members of those groups. This report conveys the results of the subsequent data analysis for the Comprehensive Group conducted over the Fall 2007 and into Spring 2008.

The first step taken by the Comprehensive institutions was to choose several key accountability measures in the success area as the primary focus of evaluation and improvement efforts. These key accountability measures are:

- Graduation rates
- Degrees awarded by level and ethnicity
- Degrees awarded in critical fields.

This report is organized around the following elements:

1. Characteristics of the Comprehensive University group institutions.
2. Discussion of performance on the key accountability measures for the Comprehensive University Group.
3. Presentation of "best practices" that have positively affected performance on the key accountability measures at selected institutions.
4. Suggestions for improvement to the Accountability System in the area of "success."

Section One: Group Characteristics

As one describes student success measures of any group of comparison institutions, it is wise to look at the characteristics of the institutions in the group and examine ways in which they are similar and ways in which they differ from each other. In 2002, the Carnegie Endowment modified its classification scheme to include descriptors of program mix, student profile, and size and setting. The detailed descriptions of each institution in the comprehensive group are provided in the table below:

Expanded Carnegie Classification Descriptions

Carnegie Classification Profile (2002)

	Lamar University Beaumont	Prairie View A & M University Prairie View
Basic Classification	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
Undergraduate Program	Balanced arts & sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence	Professions plus arts & sciences, some graduate coexistence
Graduate Program	Doctoral, STEM dominant	Postbaccalaureate with arts & sciences (other dominant fields)
Enrollment Profile	Very high undergraduate	High undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	Medium full-time four-year, inclusive	Full-time four-year, inclusive
Size & Setting	Medium four-year, primarily nonresidential	Medium four-year, highly residential
	Stephen F Austin State University Nacogdoches	Tarleton State University Stephenville
Basic Classification	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
Undergraduate Program	Balanced arts & sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence	Professions plus arts & sciences, some graduate coexistence
Graduate Program	Single doctoral (education)	Postbaccalaureate comprehensive
Enrollment Profile	High undergraduate	Very high undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	Full-time four-year, selective, higher transfer-in	Medium full-time four-year, selective, higher transfer-in
Size & Setting	Medium four-year, primarily residential	Medium four-year, primarily nonresidential
	Texas A & M International University Laredo	Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi Corpus Christi
Basic Classification	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
Undergraduate Program	Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence	Balanced arts & sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence
Graduate Program	Postbaccalaureate with arts & sciences (business dominant)	Single doctoral (education)
Enrollment Profile	High undergraduate	High undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	Medium full-time four-year, inclusive	Full-time four-year, selective, higher transfer-in
Size & Setting	Medium four-year, primarily nonresidential	Medium four-year, primarily nonresidential
	University of Texas-Pan American Edinburg	West Texas A & M University Canyon
Basic Classification	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
Undergraduate Program	Balanced arts & sciences/professions, some graduate coexistence	Balanced arts & sciences/professions, high graduate coexistence
Graduate Program	Doctoral, professions dominant	Postbaccalaureate comprehensive
Enrollment Profile	Very high undergraduate	High undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	Medium full-time four-year, inclusive	Medium full-time four-year, selective, lower transfer-in
Size & Setting	Large four-year, primarily nonresidential	Medium four-year, primarily nonresidential

All universities in the group are classified as Masters (larger programs), but there is variation within the group in percent undergraduate, graduate program mix, admission selectivity, transfer in rate, and primarily residential vs. non-residential student population.

Enrollment Profile by Student Ethnicity (Fall 2007)

A second view of similarities and differences can be found in a brief analysis of student characteristics. Enhancing access and success of underrepresented student populations is one of the foundations of the Closing the Gaps plan.

The comprehensive university group includes among its members one historically black university and three Hispanic serving universities. Compared to the enrollment profile of all of the 35 public universities in Texas, the comprehensive university group enrollment has a lower percentage of white students than the state as a whole (41.4% compared to 51.4%), and higher percentages of African-American students (17.6% vs. 11.4%) and Hispanic students (34.6% vs. 23.7%). When looking beyond the group totals, there are large differences in student mix among the institutions, largely influenced by the historical mission and geographic areas served by the various institutions in the group. The table below summarizes the variations in the ethnic composition of students attending the member institutions.

Comprehensive University Group Enrollment Profile

Fall 2007 Enrollment	Total Enrolled	White, non-Hispanic	White, non-Hispanic %	Black non-Hispanic	Black non-Hispanic %	Hispanic	Hispanic %
LAMAR UNIVERSITY	10,213	5,755	56.3%	2,520	24.7%	689	6.7%
PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY	8,382	304	3.6%	7,442	88.8%	318	3.8%
STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIV	11,486	8,068	70.2%	2,031	17.7%	972	8.5%
TARLETON STATE UNIVERSITY	9,460	7,360	77.8%	905	9.6%	822	8.7%
TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIV	5,179	141	2.7%	37	0.7%	4,612	89.1%
TEXAS A&M UNIV-CORPUS CHRISTI	8,563	4,361	50.9%	381	4.4%	3,284	38.4%
U. OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN	17,435	944	5.4%	111	0.6%	15,041	86.3%
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	7,502	5,438	72.5%	328	4.4%	1,293	17.2%
Comprehensive Group	78,220	32,371	41.4%	13,755	17.6%	27,031	34.6%
Statewide Public Universities	497,195	255,620	51.4%	56,921	11.4%	117,816	23.7%

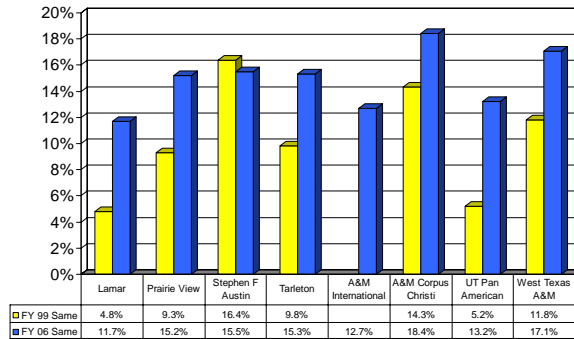
Section Two: Key Accountability Measures

Graduation Rates

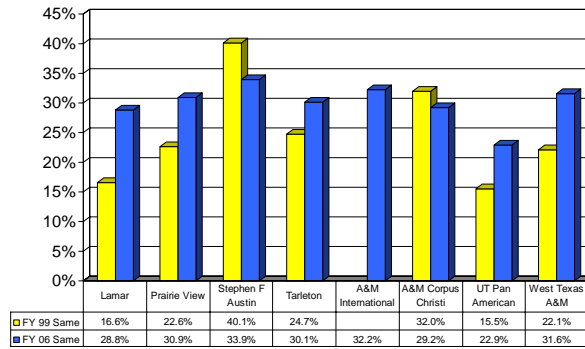
Baccalaureate graduation rates are one of the most important student outcome measures of higher education. While data consistently show that every year of higher education improves an individual's lifetime earnings, completing an undergraduate degree leads to more career opportunities and the highest levels of income. At least as important, if not more so, are the social benefits of higher education: decreased reliance on public assistance, increased tax revenues, lower demands on the criminal justice system, greater civic participation (voting, holding local office), better health status through improved lifestyle choices, increased participation in the arts and cultural activities, more charitable giving – both of time and money – improved parenting skills, increased entrepreneurial activity, and increased access to and use of computers and the Internet.

The following charts describe the changes that have taken place in baccalaureate graduation rates in FY 1999 vs. FY 2006 (the most recent year for which data is available). Graduation rate is calculated based on an entry cohort comprised of first time in college, full-time, degree seeking freshman students.

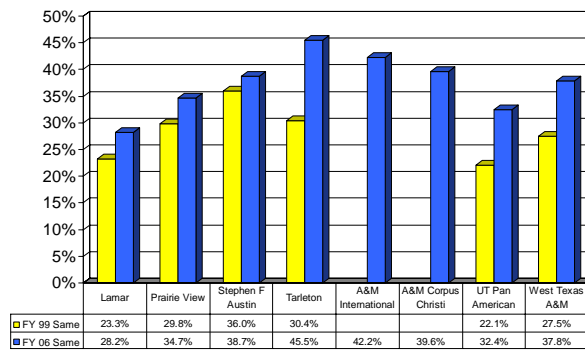
4 Year Graduation Rate Same Institution



5 Year Graduation Rate Same Institution



6 Year Graduation Rate Same Institution

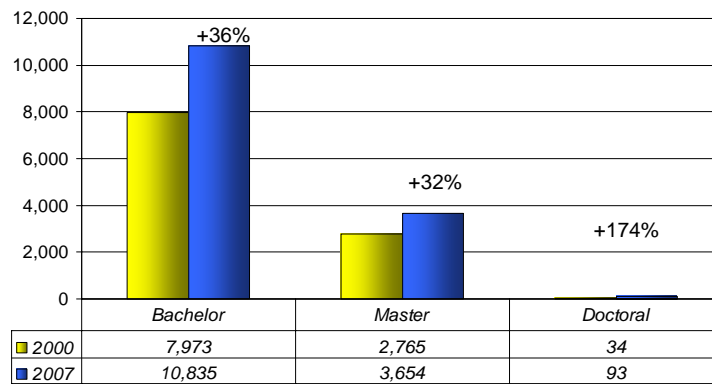


As evident from the graphs above, the graduation rates, whether measured at four years, five years, or six years have improved, often dramatically, in nearly all institutions in the comprehensive university group between FY 1999 and FY 2006. The disparities in graduation rates among institutions in the group have also narrowed. Clearly, progress is being made.

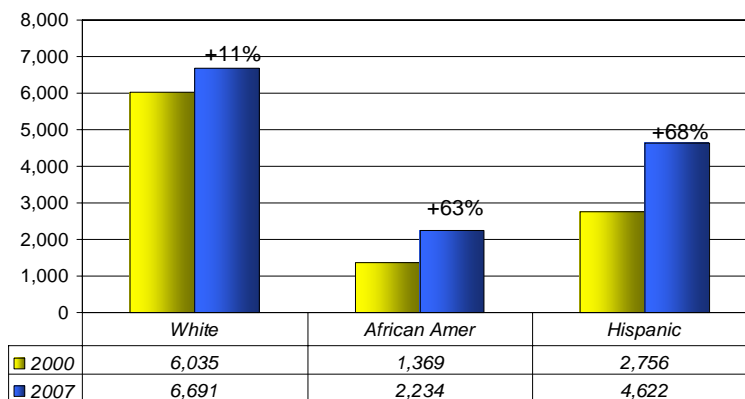
Degrees Awarded by Level and Ethnicity

In addition to decreasing the time to degree, increasing the number of degrees awarded is another important student outcome measure. Focusing on graduation rate data has been criticized, since it is limited to first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. Part-time students are not included in the data; nor are fulltime students who begin with a cohort, but stop out for work, family, health reasons, and take longer than six years to graduate. Many do graduate, however, and their successes need to be recorded. Monitoring degrees awarded does this.

Degrees Awarded by Level
Comprehensive University Group

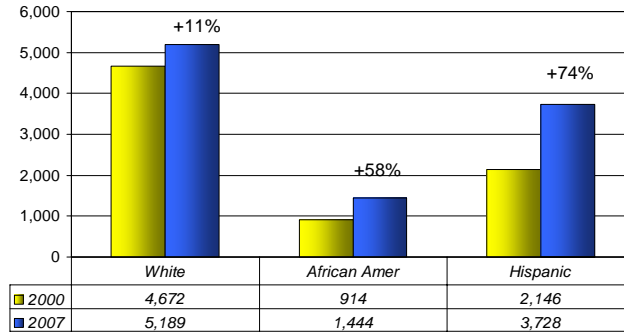


Degrees Awarded by Ethnicity
Comprehensive University Group

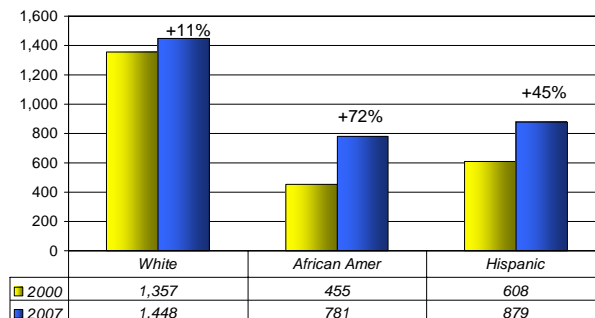


Both in terms of the number of total degrees awarded by level and the increasing number of degrees awarded to African-American and Hispanic students, the comprehensive universities are contributing to closing the gap in student success. A further breakdown of degree awards by level and ethnicity is given below:

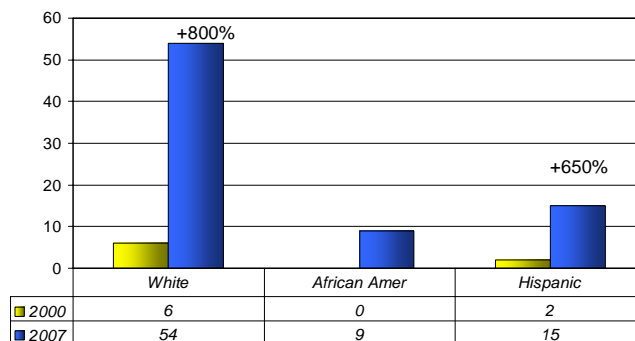
Bachelors Degrees Awarded by Ethnicity Comprehensive University Group



Masters Degrees Awarded by Ethnicity Comprehensive University Group



Doctoral Degrees Awarded by Ethnicity Comprehensive University Group

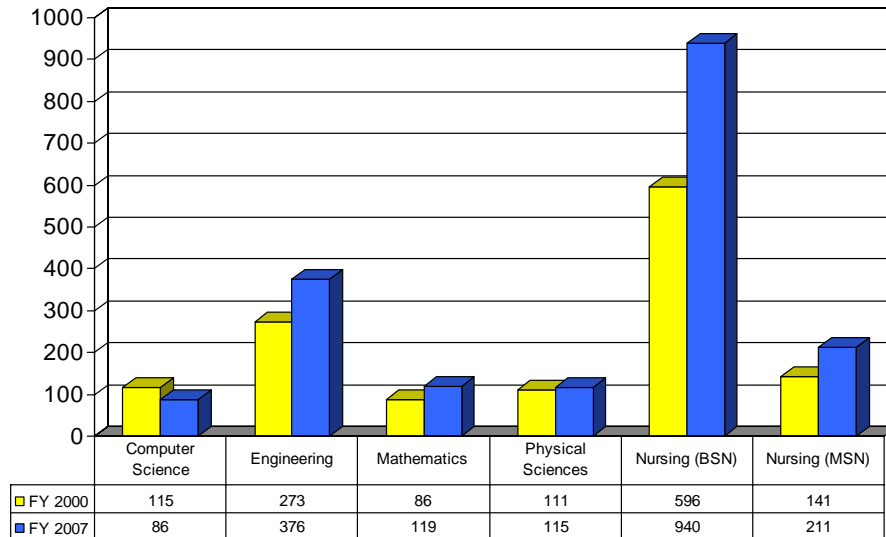


Degrees Awarded in Critical Fields

To meet the current and projected workforce needs, Texas must award more degrees in all areas. Of particular need are degrees in nursing and in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

The rate at which Texas prepares individuals for careers in health, science and technology fields is not sufficient to satisfy current demands for educators, nurses, health professionals, science and math teachers, engineers, etc. This situation will only be exacerbated in the future if the production of graduates with degrees in nursing, allied health and STEM fields does not improve. The number of degrees awarded in key fields by institutions in the comprehensive university group is shown in the following chart.

Degrees Awarded in Key Fields Comprehensive University Group



Nursing/Allied Health Degrees

The largest increase, both in terms of the number of degrees produced and the percent increase has been in nursing. At the Baccalaureate level, the increase was 57.7%, compared to the statewide average of 30.5%. At the master's degree level, the increase was 49.6% compared to 41.7% statewide. Clearly, institutions in the comprehensive group have been successful in increasing Nursing enrollment and degree awards.

STEM Degrees

While Nursing has been the biggest success story, Computer Science has experienced a significant decline. The most recent year shows a decline from 115 degrees in FY 2000 to only 86 in FY 2007, a decline of 25.2%. Although providing little cause for celebration, the comprehensive group decline was not as steep as the state as a whole which registered a decline of 31.5% over the same period. Physical sciences showed a very small gain of 3.6% in the comparison period, which was counter to the statewide situation of a decline of 22.0%. Mathematics showed a percent gain of 38.4% compared to the statewide increase of 40.0%, while degrees awarded in engineering were up by 37.7% compared to 24.3% statewide.

There is much more work to do in increasing degree production in these key fields.

Section Three: Best Practices Improving Performance on Key Accountability Measures

In this section, comprehensive institutions share some of their best practices that have led to improvements in their performance on the key accountability measures in this report.

Graduation Rates

Graduation Rates (Lamar University)

Lamar University employs a variety of student retention programs, all of which have as a goal enhanced retention and graduation rates. These include mentoring; academic and career advisement and counseling; learning skills workshops; financial counseling and assistance; tutorial activities; student engagement programs; remediation activities; and incentive programs (e.g., tuition rebates).

In addition to the programs mentioned above, Lamar University awards scholarships, assistantships, fellowships and internships to encourage undergraduate, masters and doctoral students to complete their studies and graduate. Furthermore, both undergraduate and graduate research opportunities are emphasized and a variety of non-traditional course delivery systems are used to provide access to degree programs.

Graduation Rates (Stephen F. Austin State University)

One example of the Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) dedication to student achievement and success is the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC) - a center designed to increase student retention and academic performance by offering peer tutoring for core courses and upper division high risk courses. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recently recognized this excellence program by naming AARC as a winner for the 2006 Texas Star Awards. The AARC is only learning center in the country that has advanced level certification from the National Association for Developmental Education. Additionally, the AARC is one of only two university centers in the country with a tutor training program all certified at the master's level by the College Reading and Learning Association. The SFA AARC serves approx. 7,000 students annually with 41,000 tutoring visits per year; approximately one-half of first-time freshmen participate in AARC and achieve significantly higher 6-year graduation rates. The graduation rates of AARC participants are usually 10 or more percentage points higher than the overall rates. The AARC's structured academic help and early social connection with successful AARC students are believed to greatly facilitate student achievement.

Graduation Rates (Tarleton State University)

Tarleton State University has several efforts aimed at improving the retention and graduation rates of students. One initiative has been Tarleton's involvement in designing programs for the first year of college. Elements of the program begin with summer orientations prior to student's fall enrollment. Various activities are scheduled during the academic year to provide students with avenues to improve their success. An early alert program encourages faculty to contact the Division of General Studies to identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their classes. Various tutoring and other instructional assistance programs are available to assist students. In fall 2008, a new academic advising center will feature a proactive advising approach to insure students are enrolled in appropriate classes and are aware of various support academic programs that are available.

Graduation Rates (Texas A&M International University)

Enrollment and graduation growth is wholly dependent upon the commitment of the university community to provide access and services to our students. First-time freshmen have access to university recruitment and financial aid staff at all area high schools at least twice per week with advisement and registration also conducted on site. All first-time students are scheduled into learning communities with progress closely monitored by faculty. An Early Alert program also provides a variety of support services including personal, financial aid and career counseling.

A Dual Admission program between Laredo Community College and the university provides students a seamless transition. The university maintains an office on the community college campus to assist students in the transfer process.

Local philanthropic families/foundations provide scholarships to cohorts of students that include a mentoring component to insure continuation through graduation.

Collaborative Title V Grants between the community college and the university provide student support, advisement and mentoring through graduation.

At any given registration period, university staff contact students individually if they have not completed payment arrangements. Information on financial programs is provided along with answers to enrollment questions. Unpaid students are monitored through twentieth class day.

Graduation Rates (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has one of the oldest and most comprehensive first year learning community programs in Texas, in operation since 1994. It links instruction in major core course disciplines with a freshman seminar course enabling entering students to develop a sense of engagement and community from the very beginning of their university experience. This program is a Coordinating Board Star Award winner, and has received national recognition, honored as one of thirteen "Institutions of Excellence" in the first year experience.

The University's Tutoring and Learning Center provides tutoring and supplemental instruction services in a wide variety of disciplines. The TLC was recognized as the outstanding program of its kind in the nation in 2004 when it received the Tutoring Excellence Award from the National Tutoring Association.

Graduation Rates (UT-Pan American)

UTPA has instituted many programs over time that collectively have contributed to the improvement of 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates. These programs are highlighted here.

Academic Advisement and Mentoring (AAM) Center. This centralized comprehensive, university-wide advisement center employs staff who serve each of the six colleges, freeing faculty to provide specialized academic advising for majors. In addition, Student Development Specialists advise undeclared majors in the colleges.

Early Warning System (EWS). UTPA's computerized Early Warning System allows faculty to identify students who are having difficulty in the courses they are teaching at mid-semester. Student Development Specialists working under the University Retention Advisement Program alert students via letter, email and/or telephone calls that they are at-risk of failing the course and encourage them to meet with the professor and/or seek assistance. The EWS initiative has grown over the years to now include all courses in the core curriculum.

University Scholars. The University Scholars program is designed to encourage high school students to enroll in rigorous academic courses that would prepare them for success at the university level. Scholarships are awarded to students who successfully earned college credit through Advanced Placement examinations and/or Concurrent Enrollment at UTPA and who are from counties in the South Texas area. It is the only primary scholarship that UTPA has in order to recruit top students in *any* discipline.

Supplemental Instruction. This academic enrichment program is offered in traditionally difficult courses that are characterized by a 30% or greater failure rate. Discussion and review sessions are facilitated by trained student leaders who have successfully completed the course. Supplemental instruction sessions are interactive and collaborative.

Learning Frameworks Course. Incoming freshmen are required to take a "Learning Frameworks" course custom-designed to meet the information and skills needs of new students. The goal of the course is to help students understand how people learn and provide them with the skills that are needed to be successful in college. The course focuses on the research, theory, and application of the psychology of learning, cognition and motivation.

K-12 Outreach. UTPA works with high school students to promote concurrent enrollment in college courses. The program is designed to encourage more rigorous course taking by high school students and to allow them to earn college credit while in high school. Entering students who have concurrent enrollment credit have greater retention and graduation rates.

Graduation Rates (West Texas A&M University)

Our “best practices” come from our Quality Enhancement Plan for improvement of graduation rates. We believe that student engagement must begin with the prospective student and continue through to graduation. We have implemented several initiative that focus on student engagement:

- Readership WT – a common reader program for all first year students, including other students, faculty and staff. The authors have been invited to campus to speak at the Freshman Convocation.
- Readership WT Ambassador Travel Program – students will travel abroad to experience a different culture. These students will do extensive research of the country and then will present to classes, community organizations, etc. about their experiences and insights.
- Advising – we developed a centralized advising program for all freshman and sophomore students with 12 faculty advising fellows and professional advisors.
- Core Fellows – developed a Faculty Learning Community to those faculty who teach core curriculum courses. The fellows receive a stipend and tablet pc and are charged with integrating innovative techniques and technological applications to core curriculum courses.
- First Year Experience course – developed and marketed themed and-or linked FYE course with core curriculum courses.
- Learning Communities – linked core courses with FYE courses targeting at-risk students.
- New Student Orientation (NSO) – campus-wide program orientation focused on academic success, involving the entire campus in programs, schedules and activities.
- Peer leaders – infused peer leaders (students) as the foundation for first-year programs. Peer students receive a salary and work with first year students during the year so they will succeed.

Degrees Awarded in Critical Fields

STEM Degree fields (Lamar University)

At Lamar University, additional scholarships and faculty have been added to the STEM disciplines. Along with the programs mentioned above, STEM disciplines make ample use of field placement and internships to attract, retain and graduate majors.

Engineering (UT-Pan American)

The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) has one of the fastest growing and most successful engineering programs among the comprehensive institutions in Texas. Indeed, it has increased production of majors in engineering from 21% to 26% of the total by comprehensives in Texas over the past 7 years. The University credits four factors for contributing to its success: student outreach, scholarships, faculty recruitment, and facilities.

Student Outreach. UTPA engineering faculty have been participating in the TexPREP (Texas Prefreshman Engineering Program) since 1986. This 8-week enrichment program prepares rising 8th to 11th graders for careers in math, science, technology and engineering. This program is a rich source for recruitment of future engineering students at UTPA. UTPA’s national Hispanic Science, Engineering and Technology (HESTEC) week is another opportunity to acquaint public school students with engineers and engineering career opportunities; attendance in 2007 numbered about 40,000. A new activity is “cyber mentoring”, whereby UTPA engineering faculty are working with Region One to reach 9th grade students via the Internet to make them aware of engineering opportunities and the courses needed to be successful in college.

Scholarships. The scholarships that UTPA offers to recruit and retain students is another element in our success. About \$200,000 per year in scholarships are awarded from an endowment formed by UTPA in partnership with major industries and corporations interested in increasing the number of engineers in the U. S.

Faculty. The engineering program at UTPA contributes a large portion of its success in recruiting, retaining and graduating engineers to the faculty it recruits. All the faculty members are experts in their fields of engineering, but the major quality they bring is a desire to work with students. They are very involved with high school science teachers to help and counsel them as they prepare students for the engineering curriculum. UTPA’s WIRED project is a driving force to bring engineering to the public

schools. Our engineering faculty raise research funds that provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to be involved in research activities. They spend much of their free time mentoring, supervising projects, and career counseling. The motto of the engineering faculty captures their mission-driven attitude that their students' successes are their responsibility: "We are the pumps, not the filters". Facilities. Modern, state-of-the art classrooms, labs and research equipment are essential for a successful engineering program. UTPA's engineering building, built in 1996, is kept up-to-date by faculty who work hard to maintain and upgrade equipment and stay current with the latest technology. Undergraduate students are allowed to use the best and most current equipment in their laboratory studies rather than sequester the equipment for the post graduate students.

Nursing (Stephen F. Austin State University)

Since 2001, state of Texas growth funding and a rural nursing initiative have allowed SFA to significantly increase the number of bachelor degrees awarded in the critical field of Nursing. Within the last five years, SFA reported a 75% increase in bachelor degrees. Additionally, individualized attention and small class sizes have enabled SFA nursing students to consistently report one of highest pass rates and graduation rates in the state. SFA plans to better serve its more than 800 pre-nursing and nursing majors through a new nursing facility on a recently donated 17-acre property. The number of SFA nursing degrees is expected to continue increasing in coming years.

Nursing (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi makes extensive use of on-line and off-site instruction to extend its capability to address the statewide shortage of university-trained nurses. The innovative "E-line" program is delivered via the internet in 5-week modules, which enables distance learners to work around busy personal schedules. The nursing master's degree program is also delivered on the internet. In addition, the program offers nursing programs at Scott and White Hospital in Temple, Texas, and is assisting in launching a nursing program at the Texas A&M University System Health Sciences Center in College Station.

Nursing and Allied Health (UT-Pan American)

UTPA's College of Health Sciences and Human Services graduates the largest number of health professionals among comprehensive institutions (over 300 in recent years) and has nearly doubled its output in the last 7 years. A variety of factors have contributed to this success, including scholarships, improved advising, increased numbers of faculty, and increased number of affiliation agreements. Scholarships. The College distributes \$2 million a year in scholarships that contributed to improved retention of majors.

Advising. The institution has placed general advisors in each college. This has allowed the faculty in the College of Health Sciences and Human Services to focus more on discipline-specific advising, which has resulted in better prepared and mentored students who retain to graduation.

Faculty. Resources directed at the critical area of nursing and allied health resulted in an increase of faculty in this College of over 50% in the last 7 years. This allowed increase in faculty in areas where enrollment is restricted by accreditation standards, as well as those where these severe restrictions do not exist and where student and society demand is great. In addition, recruitment of student-centered faculty has contributed to the College's success. These faculty are especially influential as enthusiastic recruiters of future undergraduate and graduate students.

Affiliation agreements. In the last 5 years, the number of affiliation agreements has doubled to over 550. These agreements provide clinical sites and preceptors for nursing and allied health students to complete this critical element in their curriculum.

Teacher Education (Stephen F. Austin State University)

SFA's dedication to preparing outstanding teachers is exemplified through the both quality and quantity distinctions. As one of the largest, most comprehensive producers of Texas educators, SFA routinely achieves one of the highest educator certification pass rates (98-100%) in the state. Approximately 1,500 majors are specifically focused on teacher education (1,200 in Elementary Education). SFA prepares successful educator professionals at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels.

A new SFA Education Research Center (ERC) is being constructed to provide improved teaching and research opportunities for this important field. The new ERC will likely further increase the number of expertly qualified teachers in Texas.

The diversity and distinction of successful educational programs facilitates the SFA vision to be a national model of a high quality, student-focused university whose graduates are productive citizens and successful leaders.

Section Four: Suggestions for Improvement to the Accountability System

Throughout this report, the limitations of the current accountability measures were discussed. In this section, improvements to the Accountability System are suggested to overcome these limitations. In some cases, improvements can be made to the way current measures are collected or interpreted. In some cases, new measures may be necessary to improve the system.

Improvement to Current Measures

To reiterate issues raised earlier, the traditional measure of graduation rate success, although valuable, is restricted to only a portion of the students we serve. All of the institutions in the comprehensive university group serve large numbers of non-traditional and part-time students. That trend, both in Texas and nationally, is increasing. We need to continue to explore ways to capture the wide variation in the students we serve and the success they achieve. It is unlikely that we will find a simple, "one size fits all" solution.