

## Texas Commission on Community College Finance

*September 12, 2022 Meeting*

Good afternoon Mr. Hunt and Honorable Members of the Commission,

My name is Isabel Torres. I recently completed my degree in allied health sciences at Austin Community College and work in the Office of Student Affairs supporting others through their college experience.

I had the opportunity to testify at the June Commission meeting and am honored to be here again on behalf of the Community College Student Advisory Council. Our Council has continued to study root causes and policy solutions to our most pressing challenges as students: affordability, dual credit access, and transfer success. I'm proud to share our recommendations and hope you will review our written testimony.

### **First, make dual credit accessible for all Texas students.**

We are grateful to the Commission for prioritizing the impact of affordable, accessible, and aligned dual credit.

We are pleased to see dual credit completion recognized in a non-competitive outcomes-based formula and thank you for weighting the success of under-represented populations.

We strongly encourage you to **ensure financial aid for dual credit reduces barriers for students** who already qualify as economically disadvantaged by directing funds to the college and avoiding any student application process.

Now is the time to ensure dual credit is equitable and helps all students successfully complete valuable credentials.

### **Second, make community college affordable for all Texas students.**

Thank you for recognizing the financial struggles of community college students and for recommending increased investments in financial aid, especially in **Texas Educational Opportunity Grants**.

This should start by **ensuring at least the same percentage of eligible community college students are served as eligible four-year students currently served by the TEXAS Grant program** - from 28 percent to 68 percent. Increasing TEOG funding will also increase access to the TEXAS Grant for students who pursue a bachelor's degree, especially adult returning students.

We also applaud your recommendation to expand **paid work-based learning opportunities** and ask you to consider **increased investment in the Texas College Work-Study program**, which already incentivizes partnerships between colleges and employers.

### **Finally, value transfer success for community college students.**

We appreciate that you included transfer success within a new outcomes-based formula that incentivizes the success of low-income students, who are critical to meet the state's postsecondary attainment goals.

A bachelor's degree more than doubles our chances of earning at least \$50,000 per year. But lost transfer credits cost students an estimated \$227 million every year while delaying, or even preventing, completion.

To solve this problem for students and taxpayers, we encourage you to recommend **incentivizing all colleges to adopt the Field of Study curricula developed under the Texas Transfer Framework.**

On behalf of the Student Advisory Council, thank you for your leadership and for including the input of students as you finalize your recommendations to build a stronger, brighter future for Texas.

Sincerely,

Isabel Torres  
Member, Texas Community College Student Advisory Council