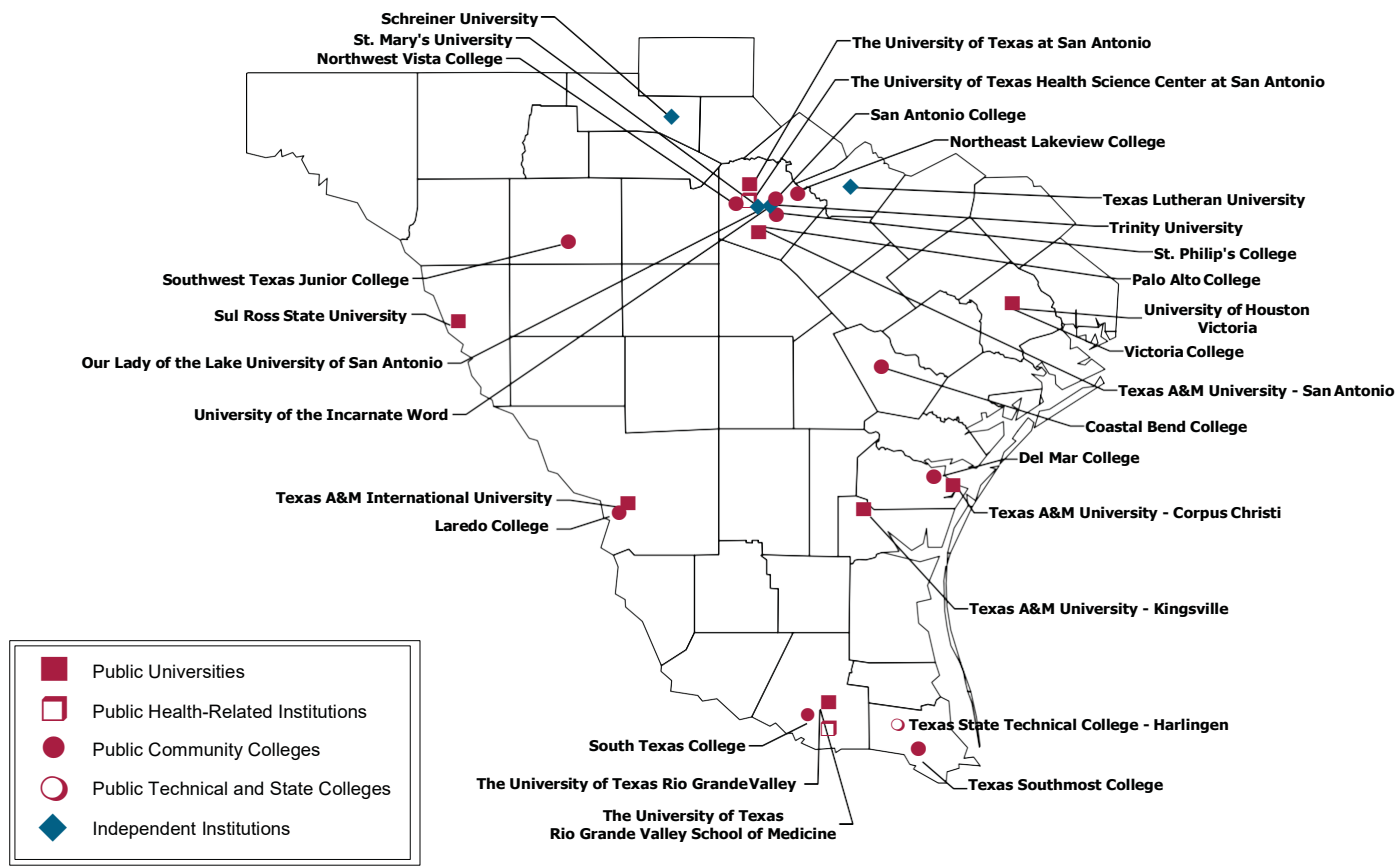
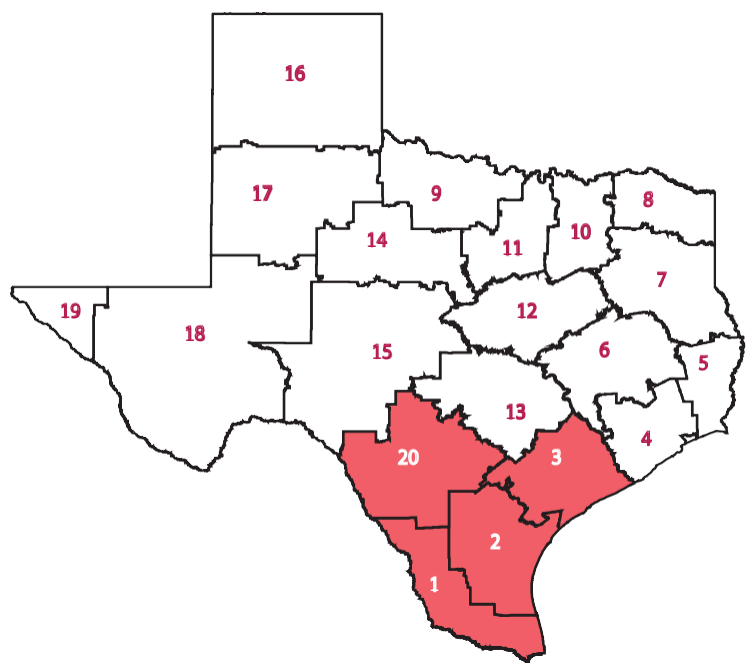


# South Texas 2019 – 2020 REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

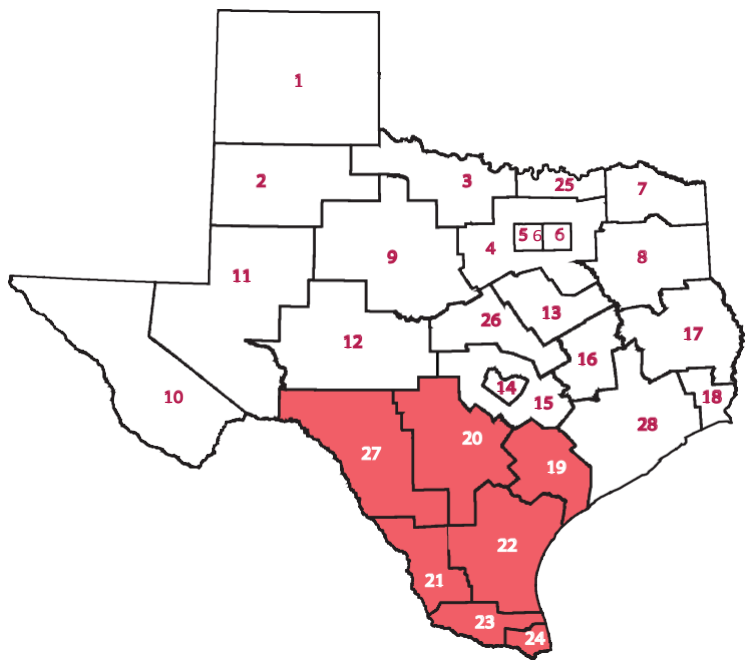
## Higher Education Region



## Education Service Centers (K12)



## TWC Workforce Development Areas



## South Texas Region

### San Antonio

#### 60x30: EDUCATED POPULATION

##### Completed Activities

In 2017, the Upgrade program launched to assist the 300,000 adults in Bexar County who have some college but have not yet completed a degree or certificate. Upgrade's advisors work with individuals, higher education institutions and employers seeking to upskill their employees. Upgrade's advisors assist returners with exploring educational options, financial aid guidance process, career advising, transfer and unofficial transcript evaluation, referrals for childcare, and financial planning. Alamo Colleges and AEL Alamo Consortium will coordinate training for AEL Career Navigators and other staff to raise awareness of Alamo Colleges opportunities, degree plans, application process, etc. This may involve direct involvement from Alamo Advise staff. Begin pilot classes for implementing Ability to Benefit for AEL students, especially in IET (Integrated Education & Training) services and for students who are college-ready in certain subjects and working on HSE (High School Equivalency) in other subjects (ex: Restore Education with SAC, started Aug 2019). Additionally, UTSA is partnering with Restore Education to provide an advisor currently working with Restore Education to provide IT training and college advising to deliver workforce preparation and college success sessions as well as CompTIATM A+ certification training.

##### 2019 – 2020 Planned Activities

- August 31, 2020: 1,200 Upgrade students in the pipeline
- August 31, 2020: Demonstrated success by providing data on past and current students in the educational pipeline, e.g., number of those pursuing a degree or certificate.
- August 31, 2020: Identify 3 employer partners to support the initiative
- For the upcoming 2019/20 - Alamo Colleges will be staffing Upgrade with a dedicated advisor
- For the upcoming 2019/20 - UTSA will continue to provide a dedicated advisor

## Insights Related to Educated Population Data Trends

**2017 Educated Population 34.8%**

**2016 Educated Population 35.1%**

**2015 Educated Population 33.4%**

San Antonio is the city with the largest numeric increase in population based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates. The population of the city is 62.2% Hispanic and is projected to continue to grow, while Texas as a whole has a Hispanic population of only 37.6%. This difference in demographic representation may explain the Educated Population percentages in the region. The American Community Survey demonstrates that Hispanic individuals have a lower educational attainment than non-Hispanic White individuals, with 76.4% of non-Hispanic White persons obtaining some college or higher and only 44% of Hispanics obtaining the same in San Antonio. The percent of adults 25 and older with an associate degree or higher has slowly increased over time, but not at a rate great enough to meet the target by 2030. One concern is that the increase might largely reflect the higher educational attainment of recent in-migrants rather than improved outcomes among longer-term residents. Current residents who moved to Bexar County within the past year are about 50% more likely than current residents overall to have a bachelor's degree or higher.

## COMPLETION

### Completed Activities

**Guided Pathways** - The five colleges of the Alamo Colleges District along with Austin Community College District have joined together to create a guided pathways model for area colleges and universities in the San Antonio/Austin Region. This model is an integrated, institution wide approach—to student success from eighth grade through the baccalaureate degree. Transfer pathways are established through alignment of pathway courses and expected learning outcomes with transfer institutions, to optimize applicability of community college credits to university majors. **Transfer & Transition Student Success Services (T2S3)** and **Bridging Institutes** - The goal of Transfer & Transition Student Success Services (T2S3), a newly created unit under the Division of Student Success at the University of Texas at San Antonio, is to collaborate with UTSA's Division of Strategic Enrollment to provide seamless and efficient programming and services to transfer students as well as students transitioning to UTSA through special programs such as Alamo-Runners and Alamo-OnTrac. T2S3 is here to empower, support and assist transfer students before, during, and after their transfer to the university by providing timely, accurate information and a seamless transition. UTSA has formal agreements with the Alamo Colleges to provide bridging programs to help their transfer students with their academic transition to UTSA, for example, a cohort of eligible students access to a pathway that leads to a degree in education that is focused on meeting the underrepresented demands for Bilingual Bicultural (BBL), English as a Second

Language (ESL), and Special Education (SPED) Teachers. Activities or Steps taken in 2018-2019 Upgrade:

- Fall of 2018 - Spring of 2019 - Development and implementation of Bridging the Talent Gap Report (Trellis Foundation provided funding for 5 employers to participate in survey)
  - Fall of 2018 - Summer of 2019 - Partnership between CoSA and Palo Alto College to enroll 20 plus employees in Horticulture program is moving forward.
  - Fall of 2018 - Spring of 2019 - UTSA agreed to provide an Upgrade Advisor
  - Summer of 2019 - Participated in the CoSA pilot Career Coach Up event to provide education information to employees wanting to move up in their careers
- Guided Pathways:
- May 3, 2018 - San Antonio/Austin Region Collaborative Agreement Transfer Compact Partnership Meeting
  - May 13, 2019 - 2:00-4:00 - THECB Regional Completion Strategy Meeting; San Antonio and Austin Regional Pathways Summit: Partners from San Antonio/Austin area community colleges and universities met to hear about updates to transfer advising guides; University Requirements; Process for Connecting Students to University at or before 30 hours; Honoring Completion of Field of Study; Awarding Degrees Before Transfer to University; and Reverse Transfer Process. Transfer & Transition Student Success Services (T2S3) - Bridging Institutes: May through August:
  - Established and had Monthly Articulation Meetings-AVP Strategic Enrollment, Articulation Officer and Senior Director
  - Transfer Advising Guides for 2019-2020 created with Alamo Colleges
  - Implemented Alamo On-TRAC and Alamo Runners
  - Implemented bridging institutes for students pursuing engineering, teacher education, and public policy.

### **2019 – 2020 Planned Activities**

Guided Pathways: South and Central Texas Transfer Compact to meet September 23, 2019. Discussion topics to include: Transfer Advising Guides updates; MOU signing ceremony; Dual Admission/Enrollment opportunities. Transfer & Transition Student Success Services (T2S3) - Bridging Institutes 2019/20: Establish data sharing processes and protocol between UTSA and Alamo Colleges to support the seamless sharing of individual student data for the students in transition programs and students following TAGs and transfer to UTSA September 30, 2019 - Transfer Guides for all institutions that UTSA has articulation agreements with posted on website

- August 30, 2019 - Facilitate the ongoing development of Alamo On-TRAC and Alamo Runners in collaboration Alamo faculty and staff
- May through August 2019 - Facilitate “Just in Time” Outreach to 1st semester transfer students (1st year retention)
- Begin planning of a dual enrollment agreement for engineering students with Alamo Colleges.
- August 30, 2019 - Facilitate “Intentional Outreach” with continuing transfers not enrolled for subsequent term (2nd year retention).
- October through May 30, 2020 - Develop a district-wide agreement with Alamo Colleges to help promote more bridging programs and potential dual enrollment opportunities.

## Insights Related to Completion Data Trends

**2018 Completion 51,471**

**2017 Completion 51,976**

**2016 Completion 49,621**

Economically disadvantaged students are less likely to complete a degree or certificate. In the Alamo Community College District, only 5,521 students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were awarded a degree or certificate in 2018. Some of the areas in the San Antonio region have up to 91.5% of the population living below the poverty line according to the U.S. Census Bureau. These same areas of economic disadvantage have a population that is less likely to have graduated from high school, and the vast majority will not complete a college degree.

## HIGH SCHOOL-TO-HIGHER EDUCATION

### Completed Activities

Strategy 1 - Outreach & Recruitment - Alamo Area College Access and Completion Consortium Summit, February 22, 2019, 4th Annual Summit. This consortium is led by a vision to develop relationships in order to forge academic and career pathways for students. Currently, the consortium consists of 28+ regional partners that include school districts, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, and civic and business leadership within the Alamo Area collaborating to promote greater student success outcomes. Working together year-round, consortium members work on three distinct task forces. These task forces include:

- Pathways – dedicated to creating seamless pathways for students to navigate from high school to college and beyond
- Common Metrics – to standardize language and data across high schools, colleges, universities, and the workforce
- Technology/Website - to create an online portal for students, parents, employers, and the community at large, to access all the information they would need throughout these transitions in one intuitive online space. This unique model of collaboration and collective impact strategies builds momentum to address educational and economic needs of our service area. The consortium hosts an annual Fall Summit for service providers to share best practices and models which support student success efforts. Latinos, an integral part of our school and workforce, comprise approximately 65% of the Alamo region population.

Strategy 2: Alamo Promise-Working with local government and community partners Alamo PROMISE provides the first two years of community college to eligible students who plan to earn an associate degree, certification, courses for transfer or workforce training. Alamo PROMISE provides a strategy to address that reality and the fact that San Antonio is one of the fastest-growing economic regions in the

country yet has the second-highest percentage of population in poverty among the top 25 largest U.S. metro areas. Alamo PROMISE will provide last-dollar scholarship funding to fill the gap between a student's financial aid award and the cost of tuition and fees for their first two years at one of the Alamo Colleges District's five colleges. The initial phase begins in 2020 will focus on graduating high school seniors from one of 25 local high schools.

Strategy 3 - Diplomas Latino Student Success - Collective impact networks that meet regularly to address issues and design interventions to increase postsecondary success for Latino students. Guiding Pathways to Dual Credit - focused on policy and vertical alignment to ensure equitable access to dual credit opportunities; vertical alignment teams focused on improving the quality of dual credit offerings through secondary-postsecondary partnerships through the AVATAR framework. Dreamers Network - working to streamline available resources to students with a focus on the college admissions process. Test Prep - dedicated to increasing access to existing test prep resources.

### **2019 – 2020 Planned Activities**

Activities, steps or milestones planned for 2019-2020 Strategy 1 - Outreach & Recruitment - Alamo Area College Access and Completion Consortium (AACAC&CC) Summit: The 5th annual summit will convene in 2020. Strategy 2 - Alamo Promise - Alamo Colleges plans to implement the Alamo Promise initiative beginning in 2020. Preliminary infrastructure work is occurring this year. Strategy 3 - Diplomas Latino Student Success - Collective impact networks that meet regularly to address issues and design interventions to increase postsecondary success for Latino students. Guiding Pathways to Dual Credit - focused on policy and vertical alignment to ensure equitable access to dual credit opportunities; vertical alignment teams focused on improving the quality of dual credit offerings through secondary-postsecondary partnerships through the AVATAR framework. Dreamers Network - working to streamline available resources to students with a focus on the college admissions process through a Dreamers Conference called Growing Up in San Antonio, October 11, 2019. Test Prep - dedicated to increasing access to existing test prep resources through professional development and digital badging (FutureReadySA.org).

## **Insights to High School-To-Higher Education Data Trends**

**2018 High school-to-higher education rate 52.0%**

**2017 High school-to-higher education rate 53.4%**

**2016 High school-to-higher education rate 51.1%**

San Antonio was recently named the most economically segregated city in the United States. This effects secondary schools throughout our community. School districts in San Antonio that primarily serve low-income students do not have the resources of school districts that are located in higher income areas. There is a direct correlation between economic disadvantages and college enrollment present within San Antonio area schools. San Antonio Central has a high school dropout rate of 29%, which is the highest in the area and is larger than the average dropout rate for Texas, which falls at less than 20%. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this area is not only largely Hispanic, but the population is also more likely to be living in poverty and to have English as a second language. These factors contribute to a lower educational achievement, as the individuals lack the resources to further their education.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Steering Committee: Alamo Colleges, UTSA, San Antonio Education Partnership (SAEP), and ESC-20 collaborate to facilitate 60x30SA regional meetings with 60x30SA institutions.



## South Texas Region

### Laredo / Kingsville / Corpus Christi

#### 60x30: EDUCATED POPULATION

##### Completed Activities

The institutions on the South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region have varied approaches toward the educated population strategy. These approaches include increasing awareness of and collaboration on degree pathways between colleges and universities, the development of meta-majors to form the basis of the advising process, bridging continuing education students into credit-bearing programs, developing a co-requisite model for math, reading and writing, automating inquiries into an application process (including information regarding housing and financial aid) for prospective students. Additional strategies that reach beyond the higher education campus level include increasing recruitment events with potential students and families, making conscious efforts to engage and collaborate with local ISDs, and working with community leaders and businesses to improve the quality of life in ways that align with the Educated Population Goal.

##### 2019 – 2020 Planned Activities

Activities planned for the South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region for AY2019-20 include continuation of program mapping and meta-major development and updating this information on institution websites and recruiting materials; increased participation at recruiting events; and revising and strengthening student advising. The student advising components is further broken down to include increasing the number of part-time advisors, increasing the focus on a pathway-to-career model (including input from regional economic partners) with beginnings in the P-12 schools and including articulation agreements between institutions. The activities are ongoing. Any specific dates, as appropriate, will be discussed at our next convening.

##### Insights Related to Educated Population Data Trends

**2017 Educated Population 34.8%**

**2016 Educated Population 35.1%**

**2015 Educated Population 33.4%**

The very slight decrease (.3%) from the previous year is most likely due to three main factors:

- 1) low unemployment rates and a good economy tend to result in students leaving their academic pursuits in favor of more immediate employment opportunities, especially in an era that includes increasing cost of higher education and awareness of the student debt crisis.
- 2) Hurricane Harvey affected areas of the region such that students were unable to or have delayed continuation their education.
- 3) Increased recruitment pressure from areas of Texas outside the South Region and from out-of-state universities will draw students away from the South Texas region.



## COMPLETION

### Completed Activities

The South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region completion strategy focusing on effective advising included providing professional development for advisors with a focus on pathways, centralizing of strategic student advising and giving advisors access to early alert systems so they can help guide students to on-campus resources for assistance if needed. Several institutions' advisors began working more closely with the school districts to ensure their dual credit courses apply to the students' anticipated degree programs after entering the institution of higher education. This increased advising and communication for dual-credit participants helps them negotiate the higher-education application process, including having access to student support services. A few institution-specific strategies were initiated in the AY2018-19. One institution instigated programs and partnerships to ensure seamless transfer, advising, and timely completion. Another institution made student advising the focus of their SACSCOC Quality Enhancement Plan, providing a long-term initiative with specific measurable outcomes. It was noted that some interventions will require extramural funding.

### 2019 – 2020 Planned Activities

Institutions in the South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region have a variety of activities planned for AY 2019-20. These activities include increasing awareness of reverse transfer, investigate the awarding of small completion grants or debt forgiveness for students near graduation but have exhausted funding sources, automated degree audits, and continual refinement of guided pathways and advising models that can include an improved internal communication/early-alert network to include student analytics in an effort to support student success. There is also a plan to initiate a tutoring program for dual-enrollment students at some institutions. Any specific dates, as appropriate, will be discussed at our next convening.

### Insights Related to Completion Data Trends

**2018 Completion 51,471**

**2017 Completion 51,976**

**2016 Completion 49,621**

Similar to the educated population goal, the South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region saw a slight decrease (.1%) in the number of completions for the previous year. Although the number of completions increased at several institutions, low unemployment rates tend to correlate with lower college enrollments, as the availability of jobs incentivizes employment rather than college enrollment and completion. Additional contributing factors may also be socioeconomic (e.g., low income) and sociocultural (e.g., high percentage of first-generation students). However, the number of completions is still up (3.7%) from two years ago. The longer-term increase may be attributed to the implementation of a corequisite model to accelerate students' college readiness, the development of articulation between credit and non-credit, improved advising efforts and course sequencing, and motivation to complete in order to enter the current robust employment environment.

## HIGH SCHOOL-TO-HIGHER EDUCATION

### Completed Activities

Senior leadership at higher education institutions met with leaders at the independent school districts to affirm commitments toward transitioning from high school to higher education. Some of these commitments include implementing strategies for advising students using shared files with other student success professionals to keep students on track and increase completion rates and developing orientation programs to provide advising information for high school counselors and principals. One institution secured grants to provide mentors in the high schools to help facilitate and prepare students for the transition to higher education environment and inform students about support services. There are also summer bridge programs. One program prepares underserved students for the transition to the university environment and helps them learn about support services. There are also Upward Bound programs to help prepare high school students for higher education. Other activities include refining the alignment of guided pathways between high school and higher education institutions. These alignments include community college to university pathways. One institution assigned higher education advisors to dual credit students, and mandatory advising at 15 credit hours of dual enrollment to help ensure that dual credit courses will fit into their plans for higher education, and to inform the dual education students of the support resources available to them. Some institutions developed outreach programs, including attending parent nights, meeting with middle school students to make them aware of career options, and assisting with Apply Texas.

### 2019 – 2020 Planned Activities

Activities planned for the South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region for AY2019-20 include counselor workshops to help strengthen partnerships and encourage counselors to gain knowledge of higher education programs and processes. Additional meetings are planned to allow stakeholders from all facets of education to employment to collaborate, exchange information, and discuss successes, concerns, and resources for best practices. One area of focus is career counseling for high school students that will work into the guided pathways leading from high school through one or more institutions of higher education, leading to appropriately prepared graduates ready for employment. Other areas of investigation include increasing regional articulation agreements across multiple programs and curriculum adjustments to align with the guided pathways. Any specific dates, as appropriate, will be discussed at our next convening.

## Insights to High School-To-Higher Education Data Trends

**2018 High school-to-higher education rate 52.0%**

**2017 High school-to-higher education rate 53.4%**

**2016 High school-to-higher education rate 51.1%**

Continuing with the trend of the other South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region targets, the most recent year is slightly lower than the previous year but still higher than two years ago. The current drop in high school-higher education numbers is most likely due to the low unemployment rates in the region and potential students choosing to go into the workforce rather than higher education. Another aspect is that graduating high school students have had to prioritize recovery from Hurricane Harvey and delay higher education. There is also increased competition from institutions outside of South Texas and an increasing number of students that delay entry into higher education as they take more time to plan their post high school futures. To help counteract these issues, some institutions have increased efforts to work with high schools to recruit dual credit students, ensure college readiness, and work with counselors to make certain they are aware of all programs available to students.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

David Allen at Texas A&M International University is the point person for coordinating and compiling the overall information for the South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region and is responsible for submitting reports to the THECB for the region. The 60x30TX leads from each institutional communicate via email on a regular basis. We have agreed to host in-person convenings twice per year, alternating among the various location throughout the region. The South Texas - Corpus Christi/Kingsville/Laredo region uses a shared leadership model through the institutional leads. These institutional leads guide the work on their campus as well as serve in an ad hoc leadership role for region activities, such as hosting the convening and representation at state-level meetings. The marketing head from each institution is involved in the marketing subcommittee led by Cheryl Cain, vice president for Marketing & Communications at A&M-Corpus Christi. The group communicates via email with the possibility of teleconferencing as needed. Marketing materials are shared electronically. Other marketing staff are involved when needed to develop materials.

## South Texas Region

### Lower Rio Grande Valley

#### 60x30: EDUCATED POPULATION

##### Completed Activities

We have established a working group of professionals from three of the four higher education institutions to encourage reengagement of stop outs and support reverse transfer activities between UTRGV, South Texas College and Texas Southmost College. The group has focused on communication strategies and engagement events, sending out correspondence through email, letter, text and phone call.

##### 2019 – 2020 Planned Activities

The working group planned two region-wide re-engagement events in August (3 and 10, 2019) held on each college/university campus. The group is also working with the dual enrollment departments at each of the institutions to implement strategies that encourage immediate continued enrollment in higher education upon the students' HS graduation.

UTRGV is looking at the 2017 Pre-Nursing Cohort to gain a deeper understanding of stop outs. The cohort included 561 Pre-Nursing students; 335 are still enrolled at UTRGV; 49 are currently in another institution (per national clearing house); and 1777 are nowhere to be found. The goal is to build a strategy to re-engage these students many of which have very high GPAs. This pilot will be utilized to further inform the Stop Out work.

##### Insights Related to Educated Population Data Trends

**2017 Educated Population 34.8%**

**2016 Educated Population 35.1%**

**2015 Educated Population 33.4%**

In fall 2018, 77.3% of all undergraduates received need based at UTRGV. 67% all undergraduates were Pell eligible. A large number of students leave higher education for financial reasons. They cannot afford the cost, they have to provide support to the family or they lose eligibility for financial aid. Additionally, access to online instruction vs traditional in class lecture and availability of evening classes for the non-traditional adult learners who work full time as well as juggling fulltime jobs and school are often challenges for our students.

## COMPLETION

### Completed Activities

In addition to the traditional reverse transfer data sharing, one of our community college partners shared a list of students who, upon transferring to the University, were close to having completed their associate degrees. This supplemental process resulted in 4 students being awarded an associate degree through reverse transfer, up from a previous 2 the prior fall semester.

Also, South Texas College and Texas Southmost College are both participating in the Texas Success Center's Guided Pathways work. South Texas College is further along as they were part of Cadre 1 colleges. Texas Southmost was part of Cadre 4, which meant they were in the learning phase of the work. The community colleges are continuing to work with the Texas Success Center over the 2019-2020 academic year. UTRGV began its guided pathways work by focusing on redesigning the advising process to build a differentiated advising model that will address the needs of the different subgroups of students. UTRGV is making a substantial investment by adding 16 new advisor positions in 2019-2020 and 16 additional positions in 2020-2021 to reduce the student-advisor ration from 550:1 to closer to 350:1. UTRGV is also beginning the process of redesigning the onboarding process for entering students. Additionally, UTRGV is utilizing the UTRGV PROMISE (student compact) to build Finish in 4 pathways for students.

### 2019 – 2020 Planned Activities

As indicated above, UTRGV will continue its guided pathways work by focusing on redesigning the student experience. The UTRGV PROMISE is scaling from the Business pilot to launch student compacts in Liberal Arts, Health Professions, Sciences, and Education with plans being developed in Nursing, Social Work and Engineering to be launched in 2020-2021.

We are currently building a calendar for the reverse transfer process at UTRGV and revising the steps undertaken to complete this process each semester. As part of this work, we are also sharing the white paper developed by EPCC and UTEP with our higher education partners.

### Insights Related to Completion Data Trends

**2018 Completion 51,471**

**2017 Completion 51,976**

**2016 Completion 49,621**

The intentional connections between K-12 and higher education are the greatest contributors to the increase in completers. The Rio Grande Valley has scaled the use of

dual credit to create early colleges connections and experiences for students. Almost every school district in the Rio Grande Valley participates in traditional dual credit, early college high schools, or special programming that leverage dual credit. The community colleges are graduating larger numbers (over 1500) students per year with two-year degrees and/or certificates. The university is maximizing the preparation of these students by creating seamless transitions. STC and UTRGV are updating 18 articulation agreements and planning new agreements during 2019-2020. STC and UTRGV have established three working groups: 1) Connections & Admissions; 2) Research & Data Sharing; and 3) Student Progression. TSC and UTRGV have a larger working group focused on improving the student experience through seamless transitions. UTRGV and STC faculty teams met in May 2019 to discuss updates required for 18 articulation agreements, which are being finalized. New agreements will be discussed in early Fall. UTRGV and TSC also completed new agreements are will be adding additional agreements in 2019-2020. These efforts should continue to impact time to completion for our students in the Rio Grande Valley.

## HIGH SCHOOL-TO-HIGHER EDUCATION

### Completed Activities

RGV FOCUS and local school districts and higher education partners have focused intently on financial aid completion through the following activities:

- Super Saturday Financial Aid Application completion day at each of the higher education institutions and at Workforce Solutions in Willacy County.
- Hosted two counselor trainings
- Partnered with TxCAN to promote awareness of the online FAFSA dashboard.
- Created or revised multiple financial aid guides for students and families including an ITIN guide, a Tax Transcript guide, and others.
- Presented about financial aid and other college access topics at counselor convenings and workshops across the region.
- Supported local high school financial aid events
- South Texas College is partnering with employers to reengage stop out students. Hosting application and financial aid drives at employment locations

## **2019 – 2020 Planned Activities**

We will continue to support the following activities:

- Super Saturday
- Presenting at counselor convenings and workshops
- Updating or creating financial aid guides, as needed
- Support local high school financial aid events
- Promote the use of the TxCAN FAFSA dashboard
- Expand our community relations and partner with employers looking to support staff development and continuing education
  - Supporting school districts with compliance of HB3 Financial Aid Application completion

## **Insights to High School-To-Higher Education Data Trends**

**2018 High school-to-higher education rate 52.0%**

**2017 High school-to-higher education rate 53.4%**

**2016 High school-to-higher education rate 51.1%**

The Rio Grande Valley has a strong history of collaboration between K-12 and Higher Education. The history of collaboration extends to partnerships with non-profits/community-based organizations. The school districts in the Rio Grande Valley take proactive approaches to ensure that students complete the FAFSA and TASFA. They also work hard at educating families through their parental engagement strategies and partnerships with non-profits to build stronger understanding of the financial aid process. The collaboration through RGV FOCUS continues to strengthen the process and facilitates an understanding of the barriers/obstacles students and their families face in completing the process. Many of these barriers/obstacles have been tackled as a region. The impact of the collaboration can be seen in the numbers.

In the Rio Grande Valley, 60% of high school seniors enroll immediately into higher education after HS graduation. Two of the biggest factors we have seen are summer melt and financial aid verification. RGV FOCUS and the Culture of Attending College Action Network created some online resources and counselor workshops to help students, families and college access professionals understand the financial aid process, including what to do if selected for verification.



This coming fall, RGV FOCUS is partnering with TxCAN and National Postsecondary Strategy Institute to offer a workshop designed for school district teams to create plans for addressing immediate enrollment.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The work described in this document is produced two action networks at RGV FOCUS: Culture of Attending College Action Network which focuses on financial aid completion and will begin working on summer melt strategies this year, and the Talent Hub Working Group that focuses on stop-outs and reverse transfer.

Additionally, the university (as described previously) launched working groups related to 1) Connections & Admissions; 2) Research & Data Sharing; and 3) Student Progression. RGV FOCUS will continue to play the backbone role for the region and the institutions of higher education will mobilize efforts to ensure the work includes systems and policy changes through the institutional working groups.