



POLICY PRIORITIES

FOR THE 86TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION



State Funding Goals for Community Colleges

- According to information provided by the Texas Association of Community Colleges, the number of students completing credentials (certificates and associate degrees) at a Texas community college has increased 47% since 2010.
- Forty-Seven percent of all students currently enrolled in public higher education attend a community college, per the Texas Association of Community Colleges. Further, 70% of all freshmen and sophomores enrolled in Texas are at a community college, including 78% of all minority freshmen and sophomores.
- According to the Texas Association of Community Colleges, community colleges provide 90% of all dual credit opportunities and 91% of all career and technology education.
- To meet statewide demand for educational services, Texas community colleges must receive strong state support or pass the costs of expanding programs and services on to students.
- With this in mind, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Community and Technical Colleges Formula Advisory Committee recommends an 8%, or \$144 million, overall increase in state formula funding for community colleges in the 2020-2021 biennium. This increase would bring the total amount requested for community colleges in the 2020-2021 biennium to \$1.9 billion. Accordingly, Texas community colleges respectfully request this increase in general revenue to fund overall operations across the 50 Texas community college districts.
- Texas community colleges continue to advance programs and strategies that improve student success on multiple metrics. In order for the student success points system to effectively reward institutions for improvements in student success, the Legislature should increase the biennial rate for Success Points from the current \$173 to \$215 per point.

RECOMMENDATION

Blinn College supports the state funding goals for community colleges adopted by the Texas Association of Community Colleges and the Community College Association of Texas Trustees.



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Increase Policies, Programs, and Associated Funding for Workforce Development

- Educating the Texas workforce continues to be a point-of-pride and high priority for Texas community colleges; this includes expansion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) dual credit offerings and workforce continuing education (CE).
- Texas community colleges partner with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to deliver workforce training through two programs: Skills Development Fund (SDF) & the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant. This is why Texas community colleges recommend increasing state investments in community college formula funding, to help broaden the reach of their CTE and CE programs.
- The JET Grant program allocates \$10 million each biennium to defray start-up costs associated with the development of career and technical education programs to public community and technical colleges and independent school districts. The 84th Texas Legislature transferred oversight of the state-funded program to the TWC.
- JET grants provide potential economic returns by supporting new, emerging industries or high-demand occupations and offering new or expanded dual credit career and technical education opportunities in public high schools.
- JET grants benefit career training programs in fields such as registered nurse, electrician, welding, emergency medical technician, industrial maintenance mechanic, industrial engineering technician, diesel engine specialist, electronic engineering technician, and geology and petroleum technicians.
- The state-funded Skills Development Fund provides local customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers to increase skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. Training providers can use grant funds for curriculum development, training materials, instructor certifications, and training equipment additions or upgrades.
- The TWC administers funding for the Skills Development Fund program, which involves collaboration among businesses, public community and technical colleges who serve as grantee training providers, the Workforce Development Boards, and local economic development partners.
- Since its inception in 1996, the Skills Development Fund grants have created or upgraded more than 342,428 jobs throughout Texas. The grants have assisted 4,238 employers with their customized training needs. The Texas Legislature allotted \$48.5 million to the Skills Development Fund for the 2016-17 biennium.
- In addition to its variety of career and technical courses, the Blinn College District provides customized training programs for individual employers, utilizing TWC Skills Development Fund and Skills for Small Business grants to provide low-cost safety and skills training. Blinn has secured \$3 million in Skills Development Fund grants since August 2014, helping local employers such as Axis Pipe & Tube, Blue Bell, FUJIFILM Diosynth, Kaemark, NOV Grant Prideco, Igloo, Stanpac, and Tempur Sealy develop and implement employee safety and skills training programs.

RECOMMENDATION

The Blinn College District requests that the Legislature support enhanced policies, programs, and associated funding to strengthen workforce development services and initiatives. This includes continued growth of the JET Grant programs and the Skills Development program, both of which are administered by the Texas Workforce Commission, and the inclusion of community colleges in new workforce development policies advanced through the Legislature.



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Clarification in the Definition of a Transfer Student in Relation to Student Success Points

- A portion of the funding received by community colleges is based on student success points. One of the success points occurs when a student transfers to a 4-year public or private university after successfully completing at least 15 semester credit hours at a community college.
- Blinn College believes in creating innovative programs that advance the delivery of the higher education system in Texas. Because of this, Blinn College has several co-enrollment programs with the Texas A&M University System where students are enrolled at both Blinn College and Texas A&M at the same time. In these programs, the students complete most of their courses for their initial two years at Blinn College while taking several courses at Texas A&M as well. Upon successful completion of the program, the students simply become full-time students with the Texas A&M University System. These co-enrollment programs allow students to complete their education at a substantial savings.
- However, since the students are enrolled at both Blinn College and the Texas A&M University System at the same time, there is not an official transfer once the student successfully completes the program. That student simply becomes a full time student with the Texas A&M University System and Blinn College does not receive the corresponding success points under the transfer category for these students.
- Blinn College has the largest co-enrolled student population in the state of Texas. Further, the second highest success point for Blinn College is the transfer to a 4-year university category. Therefore, by engaging in these innovative co-enrollment plans, Blinn College is reducing its own success point funding.
- Blinn College is proud to be leading the way with innovative co-enrollment programs. However, Blinn College must also be mindful of how its operations of such programs affects the funding levels of the college. Because of this, Blinn College respectfully requests that the 86th Legislature clarify the definition of the transfer to a 4-year university success point category to include transfers of co-enrolled students.

RECOMMENDATION

Blinn College respectfully requests that the 86th Legislature clarify the definition of the transfer to a 4-year university success point category to include transfers of co-enrolled students.



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Dual Credit Goals for Community Colleges

- Texas community colleges completely support dual credit as both a proven means for students to earn college credit even while they are still in high school, and for its critical role in meeting the state's 60X30TX plan. To both broaden the reach of dual credit and sustain program quality, Texas community colleges recommend:
 - Establishing as a state goal for dual credit: by 2030, no less than 30% of high school graduates will have earned at least 12 semester credit hours (SCH) in dual credit.
 - Establishing a state taskforce to include the THECB, Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, and stakeholders from K-12 and Higher Education, to study equitable access to quality dual credit programs across the state and the role of dual credit in meeting the goals of the 60X30TX plan.
- Requiring that dual credit students declare a meta-major/field of study upon completion of 12 SCH in core academic subjects or declare a career path upon completion of 12 SCH in career and technical education (CTE).
- Broaden dual credit access by expanding student eligibility for the Texas Education Opportunity Grant (TEOG) program to high school students enrolled in dual credit for up to 12 SCH in core academic transfer subjects or in CTE courses leading to certifications.

RECOMMENDATION

Blinn College supports the dual credit goals for community colleges adopted by the Texas Association of Community Colleges and the Community College Association of Texas Trustees.

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State Funding to Offset the Rising Expenses Associated with Hazlewood Exemptions

- The Hazlewood Act is a State of Texas benefit that provides qualified veterans, spouses, and dependent children with an education benefit of up to 150 credit hours of tuition exemption, including most fee charges, at public institutions of higher education.
- The Blinn College District's Veterans Services Office provides services for more than 600 active duty service members, veterans, and their families as they work to achieve their academic goals. Veterans Services staff and advisors provide assistance in identifying and applying for available military educational benefits.
- Each year, Hazlewood Act exemptions cost Texas community colleges approximately \$20 million.
- In 2009, the Texas Legislature established the Hazlewood Legacy Act, which permits eligible veterans to assign unused hours to their child. Eligible dependents must be a veteran's stepchild, biological child, adopted child, or claimed as a dependent; be less than 26 years old at the time he/she uses the exception, and meet financial aid satisfactory academic progress requirements.
- During Fiscal Year 2015, Blinn College's \$1.19 million in Hazlewood Act exemptions ranked second in the state among Texas community colleges, behind only Austin Community College's \$1.76 million in exemptions.
- Since then, the amount of Hazlewood Act exemptions given to Blinn College students has increased to approximately \$1.53 million, including \$1.19 million in exceptions awarded to dependents. This represents an increase of 147% over the \$617,598 in Hazlewood Act exemptions awarded to Blinn College students in Fiscal Year 2012.
- Blinn College's total number of Hazlewood Act exemptions has increased from 347 to 606 between FY 2012 and FY 2017. This is driven primarily by the increase in veterans' dependents utilizing the exemption, which has more than doubled from 220 in FY 2012 to 471 in FY 2017.

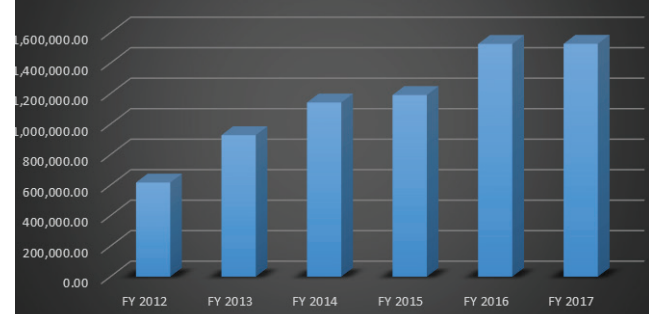
RECOMMENDATION

Blinn College requests that the Legislature support additional state funding to offset the rising expenses imposed upon community colleges associated with Hazlewood Act exemptions.

BLINN COLLEGE HAZLEWOOD ACT EXEMPTIONS

Year	Students	Total Reimbursement	State Reimbursement
FY 2012	347	\$617,598.30	No Reimbursement
FY 2013	541	\$928,330.25	No Reimbursement
FY 2014	521	\$1,142,426.00	\$204,616.00
FY 2015	535	\$1,191,219.00	\$90,857.00
FY 2016	570	\$1,526,008.38	\$206,517.00
FY 2017	606	\$1,527,367.77	\$208,696.00

Blinn College Hazlewood Act Exemptions, FY 2012-17



Blinn College District

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www.blinn.edu/gov_public/legislative_matters.html



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MAINTENANCE OF THE EXISTING LEVEL OF STATE FUNDING FOR THE OPERATION OF THE STAR OF THE REPUBLIC MUSEUM

- In 1969, House Bill 634 of the 61st Texas Legislature transferred oversight of the Star of the Republic Museum to the Blinn College District and appropriated an annual operating budget.
- The Star of the Republic Museum is the only American Alliance of Museums accredited museum in the State and the only museum created by the Legislature devoted exclusively to collecting and preserving the material culture of the Texas Republic.
- Each year, the Museum educates approximately 30,000 visitors, including more than 6,800 public and private school children from throughout Texas. These visits, coordinated in partnership between the Museum and schools across the State, provide students hands-on learning opportunities and bring history to life at the very location where Texas became Texas.
- Last year, the Star of the Republic Museum's website, Facebook page, and Pinterest page combined for more than 780,000 page views and more than 97,000 files downloaded, as more than 145 school districts across the State of Texas utilized the Museum's online content in the classroom.
- The Star of the Republic Museum's collection items have been viewed more than 507,000 times during the past eight years, including 80,000 views last year.
- The Star of the Republic Museum spearheaded a special project to identify the descendants of the 60 men who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836. To date, more than 4,500 descendants have been identified, and more than 200 have submitted their documented lineages to join a registry the Museum sponsors.
- The Star of the Republic Museum is an important part of Blinn College's community education and outreach, and fits seamlessly with the College's institutional mission and objectives. As a community education resource, the Star of the Republic Museum benefits from its affiliation with Blinn College, as this allows the Museum to focus its energies on education and research.
- Each year, the Star of the Republic Museum serves as host to the Brazos Valley Regional History Fair, where students from local junior high and high schools present exhibits, performances, historical papers, documentaries and websites for the opportunity to qualify for the national history fair at the University of Maryland.
- Each year, the Star of the Republic Museum celebrates Texas Independence Day, March 2, with historical demonstrations, educational seminars, and visits by state dignitaries and visitors from Texas and throughout the United States.
- During the 85th Legislative Session, the Legislature decreased state funding for the Museum 8.8% for each year of the biennium.

RECOMMENDATION

The Blinn College District requests that the Legislature restore the lost funding to ensure the Star of the Republic Museum's continued success in educating visitors from across the region and State regarding the proud history of the Texas Republic.