



---

---

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

---

---

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:  
ACCOUNTABILITY SUCCESS MEASURES**

---

---

**What is the Accountability System?**

The Accountability System was launched in December 2004 to evaluate the performance of public higher education institutions in achieving the goals of the state's higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. The Coordinating Board worked directly with all public institutions of higher education to develop the system's performance measures related to the four goals of Closing the Gaps: Participation, Success, Excellence, and Research. It is a "living" system, wherein data is updated regularly and the institutions are afforded opportunities to provide contextual information to explain results. Policymakers, parents, and students may review the data on a statewide basis or by institution.

**Is there one accountability success measure that accurately reflects the relative performance of an institution of higher education?**

No. Each accountability success measure has its own unique characteristics that reflect only one perspective on the overall performance of an institution of higher education. For this reason, the Coordinating Board recommends using multiple success measures in order to develop a comprehensive evaluation of an institution's performance.

**What measures are used to demonstrate Success in the Accountability System?**

*Closing the Gaps by 2015* calls for a 50 percent increase in the number of degrees, certificates, and other identifiable student successes. The Accountability System measures:

- Number of Degrees Awarded;
- Graduation Rate;
- Graduation and Persistence Rate; and
- Transfer Graduation Rate.

These measures are reflected in a number of different ways in order to help demonstrate success at a statewide and institutional level.

**What do each of the accountability success measures evaluate?**

The *Number of Degrees Awarded* measure provides accountability in terms of the total number of degrees awarded to students, whether they initially enrolled as full-time or part-time students, in the fall, spring or summer semester.

The *Graduation Rate* measure provides accountability in terms of the percentage of students over a prescribed timeframe who: 1) enroll in college for the first-time at a Texas public institution of higher education in pursuit of a degree; 2) enroll for at least 12 semester credit hours during their first fall (or summer) semester immediately after graduation from high school; and 3) graduate from the institution in which they enrolled, or another Texas public or independent institution.

The *Graduation and Persistence Rate* provides accountability in the same manner as the *Graduation Rate*. However, this measure also includes positive credit to an institution for a student that may not graduate within the prescribed timeframe, but is making demonstrable progress towards a degree.

The *Transfer Graduation Rate* provides accountability in terms of the percentage of students who graduate that accumulated at least 30 semester credit hours at a community college before transferring to a four-year institution for the first time during the fall semester.

**What is the value of measuring *Graduation Rate* as an accountability success measure?**

While no single measure alone should be used to evaluate the performance of an institution, graduation rates measured at various intervals are generally recognized as a critical indicator. Studies demonstrate that the longer a student takes to graduate, the more academic hours are accumulated. In fact, students generally accumulate courses in excess of what is required for a degree the longer they stay in college. This practice results in an increase in state and personal resources expended on education, as well as a delay in additional personal income for the student. Moreover, increases in the *Graduation Rate* over the past six years have resulted in an additional 3,600 degrees awarded for each cohort evaluated—marking clear progress towards the goals of *Closing the Gaps*. For these reasons, *Graduation Rate* is a key success measure.

**How are transfer students accounted for within the accountability success measures?**

Transfer students are accounted for differently depending on the measure utilized. For *Graduation Rate*, transfer students are credited to the sending institution. For the *Number of Degrees Awarded* and *Transfer Graduation Rate* measures, transfer students are credited to the gaining institution.

**How are part-time students accounted for in the accountability system?**

Part-time students are accounted for in the *Number of Degrees Awarded* measure. *Graduation Rate*, on the other hand, only includes students that enrolled full-time the fall (or summer) semester immediately following graduation from high school.

**How are students that start their college career during a spring semester accounted for in the accountability system?**

Students who start their college career in the spring semester are only accounted for in the *Number of Degrees Awarded* measure. The *Graduation Rate*, *Graduation and Persistence Rate*, and *Transfer Graduation Rate* measures are predicated on fall enrollment.

**How does the Legislative Budget Board and the Department of Education measure success?**

The Legislative Budget Board and the Department of Education both collect information on the *Number of Degrees Awarded* and the *Six-year Graduation Rate* (but only for those students that enroll and graduate from the same institution).

**Resources:**

Accountability System:

<http://www.txhighereddata.org>

**For more information please contact:**

Office of External Relations

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

(512) 427-6111