

NEWS RELEASE



Veronica Obregon
ACC
Desk (512) 223-7596
Cell (512) 658-0772
vobregon@austincc.edu

Barbara Johnson
AARO
Desk (512) 477-4000

Dr. Gregory Vincent
The University of Texas at Austin
Desk (512) 471-3212

bjohnson@aaroregion.com gvincent@mail.utexas.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW COLLABORATIVE TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN CENTRAL TEXAS

*E³ Alliance to Build Vision and Better Align Education
Systems Across the Region, Close the Gaps and
Increase Global Competitiveness*

Austin, Texas – July 14, 2006 – Improving educational outcomes across the board to create a home-grown, highly qualified area workforce is the goal of the Education Equals Economics - E³ Alliance - announced today. The E³ Alliance will formulate a cohesive regional vision for education, provide objective data on real leverage points and outcomes, and better align resources and practices in our education systems.

Founding partners of the E³ Alliance include the Austin Community College (ACC) District, The University of Texas at Austin and the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO).

Susan Dawson, an Austin business entrepreneur and civic leader, was named executive director of the collaborative. The organization will be based at ACC's Highland Business Center and will be guided by a steering committee composed of representatives of the founding partners and Texas State University, Region XIII Education Service Center, the United Way, and business and foundation leaders.

"Central Texas faces a steady loss in household income, reaching \$2.4 billion annually by the year 2040, unless we align all the components of our regional education system to better fulfill the potential of every student," Dawson said. "A vision for education in Central Texas that establishes a direct link between education and workforce development is critical to the region's economic vitality."

Closing the Gaps by 2015 is an initiative by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to assure the state has an educated workforce by increasing

-- more --

Austin Community College District
5930 Middle Fiskville Road ● Austin, Texas 78752
Phone 512.223.7596 ● Fax 512.223.7272

NEW CONSORTIUM TO FOCUS ON CLOSING GAPS

participation and success in higher education. The THECB estimates Texas needs an additional 630,000 people to enter higher education by 2015 if the state is to have a qualified, competitive workforce to fuel economic development and job growth.

The Central Texas goal is to enroll 60,000 additional students in higher education by 2015.

“ACC is expected to enroll the majority of new students needed to meet the region’s *Closing the Gaps* goals,” said Dr. Stephen B. Kinslow, ACC president. “The collaborative’s focus on a regional, systemic and coordinated approach to college and career preparedness is essential to meeting those goals.”

“We are committed to a continuum of education from pre-kindergarten to graduate and professional studies that is responsive to our students, and the communities we serve,” said William Powers Jr., president of The University of Texas at Austin. “This collaborative gives us a common forum to develop and recommend programs and policies that will increase the number of academically prepared students in college to better prepare them for the innovation economy.”

Dawson said the collaborative will work to break down barriers and build better alignment across the education continuum to strengthen access and student success – and ultimately, the competitiveness of the region. Specifically, the group will seek to:

- Share lessons and best practices across education providers at all levels;
- Align regional resources and investments in education and education-related services to use our dollars more efficiently;
- Support efforts to improve P-12 curriculum to increase the number of “college-ready” high school graduates, thereby reducing the need for remedial coursework in higher education;
- Promote Early College Start opportunities for high school students and increase the number of high school graduates who enroll into higher education;
- Promote the alignment of curriculum objectives from P-16+ levels to enhance college-readiness skills and student success, and prepare students for rewarding careers; and,
- Improve high school graduation rates.

“The interaction and alignment of educational systems from pre-school through post-secondary institutions are required if we are to maximize the social and intellectual potential of our adult workforce, particularly among under-represented populations,” said Dr. Ed Sharpe, chair of the AARO Higher Education Committee and professor at The University of Texas at Austin. “In today’s world, education truly does equal economics.”

Emphasis of the E³ Alliance will be on the Central Texas ACC service area. Collaborative staff and activities will be funded by grants and donations.

#