

Texas Community Colleges: Shaping Opportunity for Texans

Today's community colleges have been undergoing a remarkable transformation, evolving in tandem with students' interests, community needs and employer opportunities.

Community colleges provide flexible opportunities for students to work part-time while adding valuable professional skills, gaining vital workforce experience while minimizing debt and creating a flexible, adaptable approach.

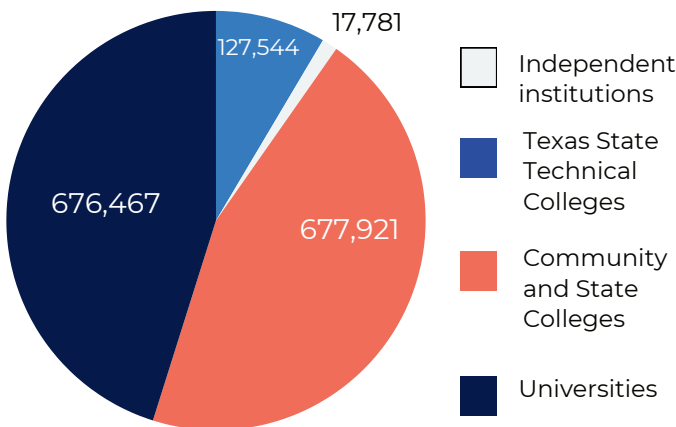
Where are Texas community colleges?

There are **50 community college districts** that serve multiple areas of the state and offer thousands of Texans the opportunity to earn nearly 130,000 degrees and certificates, including young Texans a chance to earn dual credits or even an associate degree before high school graduation.

Who's enrolled at Texas community colleges?

If trends look like fall 2023, **close to 678,000 students** are preparing to start the fall semester in 2024.

Texas Higher Education Fall Enrollment 2023



SOURCE: Texas Tribune

What's the difference between a college and university?



Community colleges offer:

- courses of study of a **shorter duration than universities**, including technical and vocational certifications
- **two-year programs** leading to the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree
- some community colleges, though, have begun to offer 4-year bachelor's degrees.

Most community colleges are also open enrollment, meaning they accept all applicants who meet enrollment requirements. Some specific programs, like nursing, may have competitive admissions.

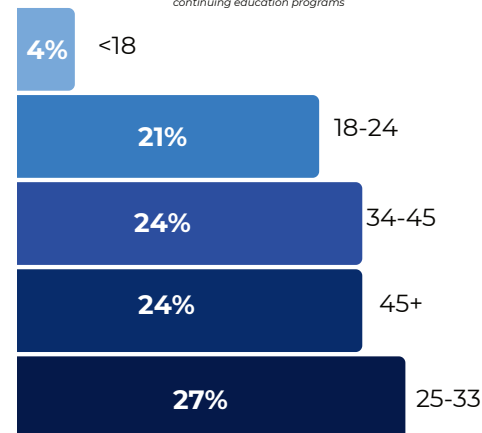
The new faces of community college in Texas

Unlike four-year colleges, where 90% of students are traditional college age, community colleges touch a much broader swath of the population, older and younger, according to the [Federal Reserve of Dallas](#).

Community college across the state are adjusting to this changing student body by meeting these new students where they are, either by accommodating non-traditional school schedules or different learning styles.

Noncredit* students in job-focused programs by age, 2020-21

*noncredit is defined as nondegree-granting or continuing education programs



SOURCE: Opportunity America community college survey 2020-21

Dual Credit: Shaping the classroom to career pipeline

What's dual credit? The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board defines dual credit as a system in which an eligible high school student enrolls in college courses and **receives credit for the courses from both the college and high school.**

How is it shaping students? From 2001 to 2021, students under age 18 at public community colleges in Texas increased by almost 500% from 29,000 to 171,000, **according to data from Texas A&M.**

By expanding access to dual credit courses, community colleges are transforming high schools into effective classroom to career pipelines.

Did you know?

Nearly one-quarter of credit enrollments at Texas community colleges **were less than 18 years old.** In 2020, 25% of credit-seeking students were in dual enrollment programs.

Setting up community colleges for success: Funding now rewards improved outcomes



In addition to investing **an additional \$691 million** into the state's community college system, **HB 8 established a new set of funding formulas,** changing how Texas provides community colleges with state dollars.

Community colleges in Texas have now positioned themselves to equip large numbers of Texans with the specialized skills required by emerging and high-demand jobs and to support the continued growth of the Texas economy.

How are community colleges using the new funds?

One important way that community colleges are using the new funds is by offering free tuition.

High school students in Corpus Christi no longer have to pay tuition to take dual credit courses at **Del Mar College**, and beginning with the class of 2024, graduates from Austin-area high schools will receive free tuition at **Austin Community College.**

What do community college students study?



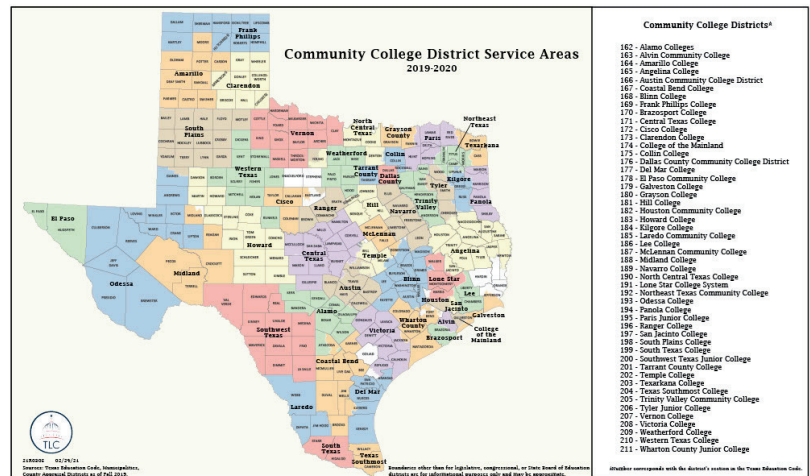
Texas community colleges awarded **nearly 130,000 degrees and certificates in 2023.**

40,780 technical and vocational certificates: These credentials represent a quicker and less expensive route toward preparing for a specific career. The time needed to earn one of these varies depending on the subject matter.

1,522 bachelor's degrees: While these four-year degree programs are most commonly associated with universities, community colleges also award bachelor's degrees.

87,661 associate's degrees: Most degrees awarded by community colleges are still for a two-year associate's degree. The number of degrees given, though, is down 4% from 2021.

Find a local community college in your area.



How are community colleges helping students create career pathways?

Many Texans must balance going to school to improve their job skills with the demands of their current employment and their family.

Learn more about these pathways at texas2036.org.



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