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## **GOV. GREG ABBOTT ADVANCES FUNDING OVERHAUL, POURING \$2.2B INTO TEXAS' COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

By Valeria Olivares  
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Texas is set to overhaul the way it funds its community colleges by tying state dollars to student outcomes through a new formula funding model that will funnel more than \$2.2 billion to such institutions in the next two years.

Gov. Greg Abbott signed off on the legislation on Friday, jumpstarting the process of revamping the state's college funding model, according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which oversees public post-secondary education in the state.

"The future of Texas remains bright thanks to the educational opportunities provided by community colleges and the hardworking students who will help build the Texas of tomorrow," Abbott said in a statement.

The previous model awarded the institutions about \$1.8 billion for the current biennium based on enrollment — marking a funding increase of about 23%, said Kelle Kieschnick, director of postsecondary policy at the Commit Partnership. Commit seeks to increase educational success in Dallas County.

The move had wide bipartisan support across both chambers and was backed by Texas' 50 community college districts. Such institutions in the state are currently funded through a blend of local property taxes, student tuition and fees.

The legislation — which was part of House Speaker Dade Phelan's priorities for this legislative session — will guide the state to consider different measurable outcomes when deciding how much funding to funnel to each community college.

Such measurable outcomes include the number of degrees and certificates a college awards; the number of students who transfer to a four-year university; and the number of students who complete at least 15 hours of courses that apply toward academic and workforce program requirements.

College leaders have said the changes could help improve affordability, create innovative programs that address the state's workforce demands and support wraparound services — such as food pantries, child care or transportation assistance.

"Community colleges around the state will be able to provide more support services for [students] and then more opportunities," said Dallas College Chancellor Justin H. Lonon.

Other advocates have said the move is historic and transformative for Texas.

The bill drew from recommendations included in a report by the Texas Commission on Community College Finance, a group that spent much of last year looking into the way the state funds such schools.

The move puts "a focus on student success ... we want them to be successful," said Melissa Irby, Collin College's chief financial officer.

"We want [students] to be able to go out into the workforce and earn a wage, [with which] they can support their families and our community," Irby said.

More than 60% of jobs across the state will require postsecondary credentials by 2030, said [Justin Yancy](#), president of the [Texas Business Leadership Council](#), in a statement. Because Texas businesses are already struggling to find qualified workers, he said the legislation is "vital."

Texas had more than 800,000 unfilled job openings as of March, according to the most recent federal data.

High school students from low-income families will also be able to enroll in dual credit courses at no cost through a new Financial Aid for Swift Transfer program.

"These solutions will help ensure students in every community can access the opportunities needed to provide for our families and contribute our talents to a strong workforce," Angel García Donjuán, a former Dallas College student and member of the Texas Community College Student Advisory Council, said in a statement.

"We can achieve our full potential," he said.