



Dallas County Community College District

DCCCD's 81st Legislative Session Legislative Priorities 2009

Working in tandem with the Texas Association of Community Colleges, the Dallas County Community College District supports the goals of TACC for the 81st session of the Texas Legislature in 2009, as well as key priorities set for the district itself. Each of those priorities is critical to the success of the entire state's community college student population, as well as the economic prosperity of Texas and higher education for all of its residents.

Underlying each statewide priority is sufficient funding in several key areas: base funding for community colleges; proportionality and funding for community college employee health insurance; and increased financial aid for community college students (whose needs are significantly underfunded when compared to the state's four-year institutions, on a 1:10 basis).

DCCCD's districtwide priorities during the 81st session of the Texas Legislature focus on the areas of dual credit, college readiness funding, nursing education funding models, the Community College Purchasing Bill and the "Six Drop Rule." These local and statewide priorities are summarized below.

Sufficient base funding for community colleges : DCCCD supports sufficient base funding for all community colleges.

Community colleges are a critical component of the state's *Closing the Gaps* plan, which seeks to increase higher education opportunities for all Texans. Community colleges require sufficient base funding in order to fulfill this mission: to provide quality higher education and workforce preparation for everyone, in partnership with the state and with local taxpayers. That effort, in turn, builds the economic well-being of Texas. Sufficient base funding enables community colleges to keep tuition affordable. For the 2010-11 biennium, sufficient base funding for community colleges is \$2.29 billion, an increase of \$595 million. Once base funding is secured, achieving the state's economic and educational goals requires community colleges to demonstrate their commitment to innovation and outcomes. DCCCD supports **incentive funding** for these measures.

Proportionality: DCCCD urges the legislature to pass a bill to bring closure by statute to the issue of funding health insurance for employees.

The 81st Legislature should codify its historic commitment of funding community college group health insurance based on employee eligibility; it also should provide funding for community college group health insurance at a level consistent with that historic commitment. In order for community colleges to provide excellent educational experience for all students, they must hire and retain talented and dedicated faculty and staff. In the upcoming session, legislators must take definitive action to ensure that these funds are reliable and predictable.

Increased financial aid: DCCCD supports increased financial aid for its price-sensitive students.

Low community college tuition is the single largest and most effective financial aid program in the state. DCCCD is doing its part, offering tuition at \$41 per semester credit hour. However, as the state's commitment to sufficient base funding has eroded, the ability of community colleges to maintain their commitment to low tuition has decreased. A commitment by the state to sufficient base funding will enable community colleges to keep tuition affordable.

The state also must step up and answer the unmet financial needs of Texas community college students, which is 10 times that of students at public universities. The state also provides less than 10 percent of all needed-based aid for community college students, and its financial aid policy is not aligned with the goals of *Closing the Gaps*. While the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant Program (TEOG) provides assistance directly to students who attend two-year institutions, only 6,000 of the 160,000 eligible students receive those grants. Funding for TEOG should be **increased from the current \$14 million allocated biennially to a minimum of \$50 million per biennium** to enhance community college affordability for students.

Key DCCCD priorities include:

- **Dual credit:** Dual credit offerings must be given the same status as Advanced Placement (AP).
- **College-readiness funding:** Provide "college readiness" funding to assist with the tremendous expense of developmental education.
- **New nursing education funding models:** DCCCD supports the development of new funding models for nursing education that would focus on the need for "front-end" funding to encourage enrollments.
- **Community College Purchasing Bill:** Pass the "Community College Purchasing Bill" to clarify purchasing guidelines for community colleges.
- **Exclude community colleges from the "Six Drop Rule":** This rule, which prohibits students from dropping more than six classes at any institution of higher education during their entire undergraduate career, should be eliminated for two-year institutions.