



SITAC Quarterly Report

System Integration Technical Advisory Committee
Texas Workforce Investment Council
September 2010

System Integration Technical Advisory Committee

The System Integration Technical Advisory Committee (SITAC) is constituted as a Technical Advisory Committee to the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Chaired by a member of the Council's Executive Committee, SITAC includes executive-level representatives from the Council's eight partner agencies, as well as representation from the Texas Association of Workforce Boards. SITAC's key responsibility is the implementation of the workforce system strategic plan.

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 2, 2010 – 1:00 p.m.
Teacher Retirement System, Austin

The current plan, *Advancing Texas: Strategic Plan for the Texas Workforce System (FY2010-FY2015)* (*Advancing Texas*) was approved by Governor Rick Perry on October 23, 2009. It outlines 14 long term objectives (LTOs), grouped by the three key performance areas (KPA) that address the critical business issues identified during a yearlong collaborative planning process.

SITAC members meet quarterly, providing status reports on action plans (APs) for which their organization is solely or jointly responsible. The committee is authorized to create and deploy cross-agency teams in order to devise and execute collaborative solutions to issues associated with the system strategic plan's LTOs.

Featured Action Plan

Dual Credit Transfer [S3]

As one way to improve educational outcomes, system partners are working to improve secondary and postsecondary transitions. LTO S3¹ addresses the need for improved program and initiative alignment, with the goal of providing seamless education and career pathways. Streamlining processes, and in some cases shortening time to program completion, should help increase student enrollment and completion of courses, credentials and degrees.

A key strategy is dual credit, which the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) defines as a process by which a high school junior or senior enrolls in a college course and receives simultaneous academic credit from both the college and the high school. Dual credit courses are often taught at secondary schools for high school students only; however, high school students can also take courses at a college campus and earn both high school and college credits. Both academic and technical offerings may be provided.

Message from the Chair

During the early implementation stages of *Advancing Texas*, our focus continues to be on identifying ways to increase collaborative efforts. Reports on action plan progress and challenges – with excellent group discussion – continue to help improve and build upon established partner relationships.

In June, status reports were requested for several action plans, including one addressing dual credit – our featured plan in this issue of the *SITAC Quarterly Report*. As you will see, the Coordinating Board and TEA are making strides in this area.

In addition to the strategic plan updates reported here, members also received updates on agency strategic plan review, the Texas Work Explorer Portal and upcoming work on the Council's *Evaluation 2010* report.

Once again, I was glad several of my fellow Council members were able to attend. I encourage all members to join us at future meetings when your schedule permits. Partner reports and discussion bring the plan to life and will enable us to better support its implementation.

Paul Mayer

¹ Additional background information and data from: THECB, *Overview: Dual Credit* (April 2010), *Dual Credit – Frequently Asked Questions* (2010) and *Closing the Gaps Progress Report 2010* (June 2010).

In 2006, the Legislature required school districts to implement a program allowing students to earn at least 12 hours of college credit, with dual credit being one delivery option. Dual credit is also the focus of interim charges currently assigned to the House Higher Education Committee and jointly to the Senate Education and Higher Education Committees. Hearings have been held, with reports and accompanying recommendations to be issued in advance of the 82nd Legislative Session that will convene January 11, 2011.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and THECB are working together on all aspects of the infrastructure for transferring academic and technical dual credit courses from high schools to community colleges and four-year institutions. Administrative challenges and actions include:

- ★ Course content may be comparable across districts, but course credit may be handled differently. A crosswalk is being developed to address this issue.
- ★ There are multiple ways dual credit can be funded and student costs may vary by community college district. For example, dual credit may be free within a community college’s taxing district, but fee-based in their larger service area. THECB and TEA were working with Texas A&M University to conduct a cost effectiveness study.

Dual Credit Transfer [S3] – By 2013, education and training partners will have the infrastructure necessary (policies, procedures, data processes, rules, and capabilities) to facilitate the effective and efficient transfer of academic and technical dual credit courses from high schools to community colleges and four-year institutions.

Owners / Participants: THECB, TEA

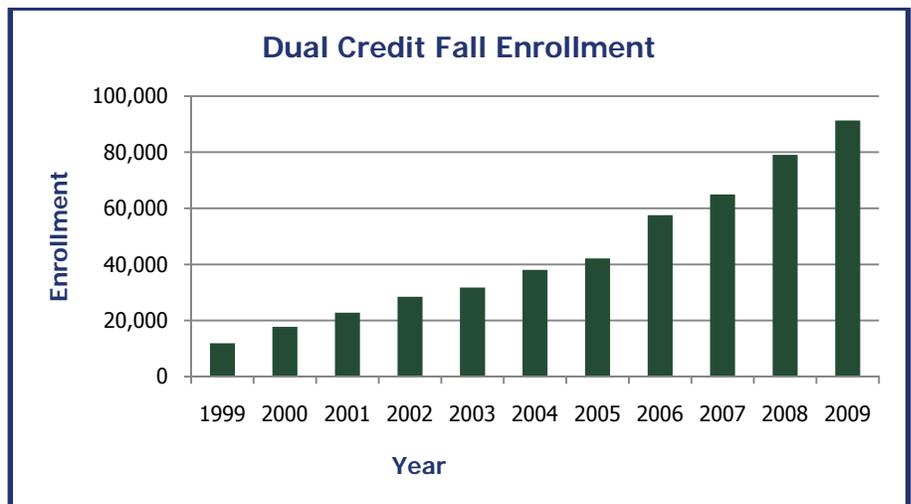
TEA also plans to fund a research study to assess utilizing dual credit as a substitute for end of course exams. In addition, the agencies will work to improve data systems for tracking and evaluating student outcomes.

Positive Outcomes of Dual Credit

- ★ Studies show that dual credit increases the likelihood that a student will complete high school, and enroll in and persist in college.
- ★ Decreases cost of tuition and fees for students by accelerating time to degree.
- ★ Accelerated degree time may free up facility space and faculty for additional students to enroll.
- ★ New graduates enter the workforce sooner and begin to earn wages, benefiting themselves and the economy.
- ★ Contributes to the goals of *Closing the Gaps* through greater participation and increased success.

Source: THECB, *Overview: Dual Credit* (April 2010).

Such efforts are critical, as evidenced by data showing that public high school graduates who participated in dual credit while in high school enroll in higher education at a slightly higher rate than the full population of high school graduates. As shown in the chart below, dual credit enrollment has risen annually since record keeping began in 1999, climbing from 11,921 in 1999 to 91,303 in 2009 – an increase of over 765 percent. Total enrollment also increased annually over that time span; however, dual credit as a percentage of total enrollments did as well. In 2009, dual credit accounted for 6.7 percent of total fall enrollments, up from 1.4 percent in 1999.



Source: THECB, *Dual Credit and Total Enrollments, Fall Semesters* (February 2009).

Performance for the *Closing the Gaps* higher education participation rate is 'well above target' for the goal of 5.6 percent and 5.7 percent by 2010 and 2015, respectively. In fall 2009, 5.8 percent of the state’s population was participating in higher education, slightly over the 2015 target. However, with projected population growth, public and independent institutions must enroll about 229,000 more students in 2015 to meet the 5.7 percent target. Notably, dual credit enrollments accounted for 18 percent of the enrollment growth from 2000 to 2009.

With major worker and skill shortages projected across the state, continued expansion of dual credit and related initiatives should help meet the education and training needs of future workers.

Implementation Update: June 2010

In addition to dual credit [S3], reports for several other *Advancing Texas'* APs were presented at the June 3 SITAC meeting. Summaries are provided below, grouped by the plan's three KPAs.

KPA: Systems, Operations, Competencies and Integration

Career technical education (CTE) programs provide valuable skills training, and often lessen the risk of students dropping out. Texas needs enhanced and more effective integration of academic and CTE options at both the secondary and postsecondary levels in order to increase graduation rates and assist with the transition to further education or the workforce. Multiple LTOs address this critical issue, including **LTO S4** that focuses on improving the perception of CTE as a desirable career option.

CTE Demo – Improve Knowledge / Value Perception [S4] – By 2013, design and implement a demonstration program targeted to improve perception of career options that career technical education (CTE) programs enable.
Owner / Participant: Council

During strategic plan development, the Council elected to retain responsibility for this AP, with the Executive Committee providing oversight. The intent is to increase awareness and educate high school counselors by creating a secondary school culture where all students and parents understand the wide range of education and career choices available today. This is

increasingly important as over the next 20 years, many high skill, high wage jobs critical to Texas' economy will require some postsecondary education, but less than a four-year degree.

Work is underway on the AP's first task which requires the design and execution of a research study to identify models of best and promising practices for Texas' high schools. Council staff is focusing on identifying practices that improve the perception of CTE, rather than the specific components of selected CTE programs.

Council staff worked with TEA and the Career and Technology Association of Texas (CTAT)² to identify nine CTE programs considered 'excellent'. Program staff is being interviewed to collect information to supplement that available in TEA's online best practices clearinghouse³. Study results will be used to determine common program characteristics and possible elements for replication in a demonstration project(s). This fall, a team will be convened to design an outreach model designed to improve the perception of career options and pathways offered by high school CTE programs.

KPA: Customer Outcomes

To meet the shifting demands of Texas' employers, everyone must be part of the critical pool of potential employees. *Advancing Texas* specifies four target populations, including:

- ★ *Veterans*, who often have a wide range of disabilities but with training, referral and placement services can return to the civilian workforce; and
- ★ *Those with low literacy skills*, who can be assisted through targeted literacy programs to gain or maintain employment.

LTO C2 specifies that the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) will work to ensure state and leveraged federal services provide veterans with the programs, products and services necessary to accommodate their needs and to enable them to enter the workforce successfully.

Veteran Employment [C2] – By 2013, the veteran population will achieve additional employment outcomes.
Owner / Participant: TVC

Although the entered employment rate has declined during the economic downturn, TVC reported that progress has been made for most of the AP's major tasks, calling special attention to enhanced employer outreach activities. Last fall the agency launched a new statewide initiative by hiring a dedicated Business Outreach Coordinator. Since November 2009, the Coordinator has worked directly with approximately 25 employers to secure jobs and 'vet preference' commitments. Veterans continue to receive support through a network of over 90 field offices, including assistance from locally-based Veterans Employment Representatives.

Other recent actions include:

- ★ *REALifelines* – Working with the DOD and the Veterans Administration, TVC has increased outreach, awareness and participation in this program which helps injured veterans return to civilian life.

² CTAT (<http://www.ctat.org>) promotes quality instructional partnerships with business and industry to successfully prepare every student for the challenges of postsecondary education, a globally competitive workplace and active citizenship.

³ Accessible at <http://www.teabpc.org/>.

- ★ *Transition Assistance Program (TAP)* – In coordination with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), TVC facilitates multi-day TAP seminars. Additional trainers have been requested to assist with the seminars that are designed to provide job search and related services to military personnel within 180 days of separation or retirement.
- ★ *Outreach* – TVC launched a new website (<http://texas-veterans.com>) that provides state and federal benefits information for veterans, active duty service members, spouses and dependents.

LTO C4 requires TEA and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to develop new and enhance existing methods, programs and processes for programs targeted at the over 17 workforce literacy⁴ population that address workplace literacy acquisition.

ABE / Low Literacy Level Employment [C4] – By 2013, design and implement targeted Adult Basic Education programs to enhance employment outcomes for populations requiring workplace literacy skills.

Owner: SITAC

Participants: TEA, TWC

As part of the Council's mandate to monitor and facilitate adult education work, the Council published⁵ *A Primer on Adult Education in Texas* (January 2010). Several companion papers are planned, with two published to date.

Since the March SITAC meeting, Council staff met with TEA staff charged with the responsibility for adult education in order to review the AP's intent and tasks. Due to pending reauthorization of the federal Workforce Investment Act, TWC is not requiring submission of local board plans this

year; therefore, TWC will be surveying local boards in an effort to identify strong relationships with adult education providers. Council staff will provide input on the survey design and review TWC's analysis of the survey responses, with a report to be provided to the Committee at a future meeting.

TEA staff is working to increase efforts of the tri-agency partnership with THECB and TWC, and will also be working with TWC on the local board survey. In addition, a curriculum consultant will be reviewing low or no-cost curriculum options available nationally.

KPA: Programs, Products and Services

Middle-skill jobs⁶ currently account for nearly half the jobs in the U.S. and in Texas. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects about 45 percent of all job openings over the next decade will require some postsecondary education or occupational training. However, Texas is facing an increasing need for workers with appropriate middle skills, created by job growth and future workforce retirements. The projected need crosses a range of industries and occupations, including health care and energy.

Under the Council's leadership, LTO P2 requires expansion of the 'earn while you learn' model to address employer demand for skilled workers. Key actions to date include:

- ★ *January 2010* – Council Chair Jurey appointed eight members to the new Apprenticeship Project Leadership Team, including representatives from system partners THECB and TWC.
- ★ *January 29, 2010* – At the team's organizational meeting, members discussed elements of an apprenticeship model and what demand or emerging occupations held the best potential for pilot projects. The group decided to consider target industries in allied healthcare, health information technology, energy, and logistics and distribution.
- ★ *April 2010* – In response to a team recommendation, Chair Jurey appointed a TVC representative to the group.
- ★ *May 11, 2010* – The team heard two presentations at their second meeting. Recommendations to approve them as pilot and demonstration projects were to be made to the Council's Executive Committee at their June 3, 2010 meeting.
- ★ *August 9, 2010* – The team will hear presentations on additional pilot programs

Apprenticeship [P2] – By 2012, design, develop, and implement a pilot program to demonstrate flexibility of the 'earn while you learn' model of traditional apprenticeship programs. Where appropriate, expand and replicate into new occupational areas by 2015.

Owner / Participant: Council

⁴ *Executive Summary of Texas Adult Education Standardized Curriculum Framework: Workforce Literacy* – The basic skills necessary to perform in entry-level occupations or the skills necessary to adapt to technological advances in the workplace.

⁵ Accessible at <http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/work/>.

⁶ Jobs requiring education and/or training beyond high school, but less than a four-year college degree. Training may range from apprenticeships, certificate programs, and open-ended on-the-job-training, to two-year associate academic or technical degrees.

Data gaps regarding employers’ needs and customer satisfaction hinder the ability to assess whether existing programs and services are adequately meeting customer requirements. During the previous strategic plan cycle, several partner agencies increased their efforts to become more familiar with employers’ awareness and perception of existing services, as well as gather information about projected hiring and training needs.

LTOs **P5 and P6** incorporate five and three agency projects, respectively, that were continued under *Advancing Texas*, with updates on several presented in June.

- ★ *THECB [P5.2]*– THECB developed an online survey system and worked with TWC to notify employers of its availability, also informing the Texas Association of Community Colleges and local workforce boards in an effort to increase awareness and participation. At the conclusion of the initial data collection phase in April 2010, THECB had received a lower than anticipated response to the web-based employer survey. The agency is considering new options at the community college level or ways to coordinate efforts through local associations.
- ★ *Texas Youth Commission (TYC) [P5.4]*– After approval by their research department, surveys are conducted with in-house units and youth as well as employers. A paper-based survey, originally scheduled for implementation in April, will be piloted in August or September. TYC will then assess capacity and resources for automating the survey for future releases. In addition, the annual review of Prison Industry Enhancement (PIE) programs will be conducted in late July or early August.
- ★ *TVC [P6.2]*– Over the last year, TVC shifted to one on one intensive services to better serve the crucial needs of recently separated veterans. The agency utilized employment data to help identify the need for this change.
- ★ *Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Windham School District (TDCJ-Windham) [P5.5 and P6.3]* – Local board visits and surveys have been completed with no program changes indicated this cycle. Windham plans to continue conducting the board surveys annually; however, plans for a joint conference with Project RIO and local board staff have been deferred due to travel and budget constraints.

Employer Needs / Satisfaction [P5] – Partner agencies will gather data from employer customers at appropriate intervals to determine employer needs and satisfaction.
Owner: SITAC
Participants: HHSC-DARS, THECB, TVC, TYC, TDCJ-Windham

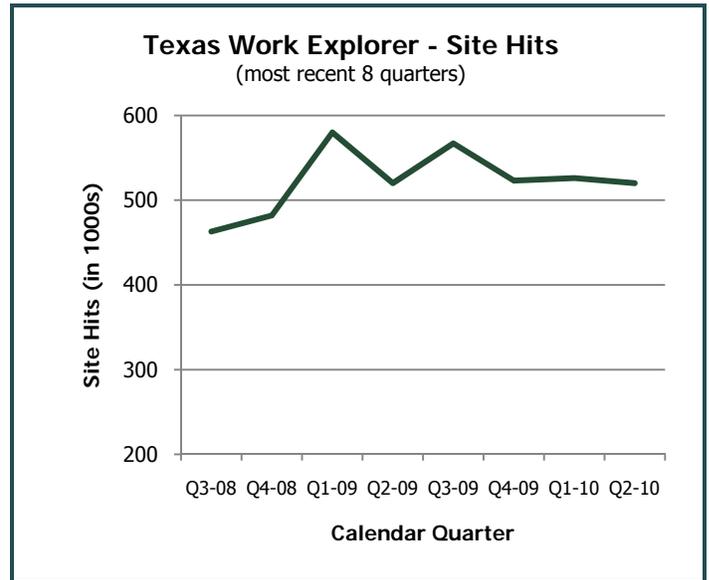
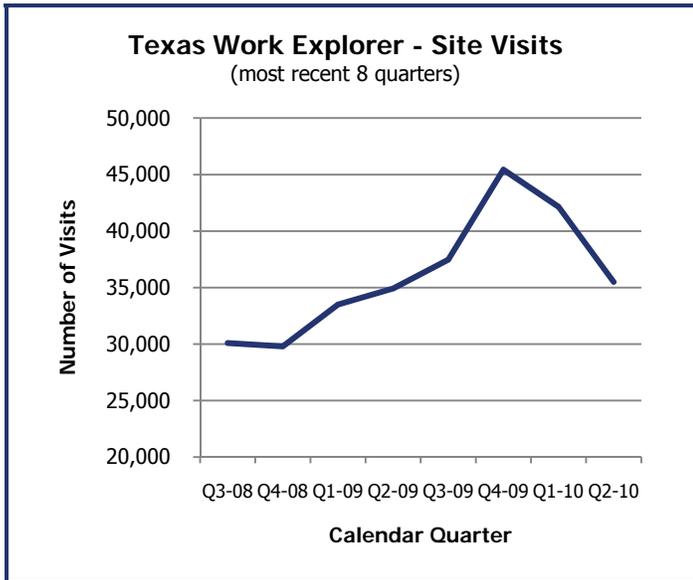
Use of Employment Data for Program Improvement [P6] – Partner agencies will use the employment data/outcomes of their programs to understand and improve those programs.
Owner: SITAC
Participants: HHSC-DARS, TVC, TDCJ-Windham

<i>SITAC Members</i>	
<i>Chair</i>	Paul Mayer, Executive Committee Member, Texas Workforce Investment Council
<i>Economic Development and Tourism Division</i>	Keith Graf, Director, Aerospace and Aviation
<i>Texas Association of Workforce Boards</i>	Chakib Chehadi, Executive Director, Workforce Solutions Alamo
<i>Texas Department of Criminal Justice</i>	Debbie Roberts, Superintendent, Windham School District
<i>Texas Education Agency</i>	Vangie Stice-Israel, State Director for Career Technical Education
<i>Texas Health and Human Services Commission</i>	Debra Wanser, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services
<i>Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</i>	Dr. MacGregor Stephenson, Assistant Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Research
<i>Texas Veterans Commission</i>	Bill Wilson, Director, Veterans Employment Services
<i>Texas Workforce Commission</i>	Gene Crump, Deputy Executive Director
<i>Texas Youth Commission</i>	Dr. Clint Carpenter, Superintendent of Education

Texas Work Explorer Portal

Available at www.texasworkexplorer.com, the Texas Work Explorer Portal has been on texas.gov (formerly TexasOnline), Texas' official website, since April 2007. A full site review, focusing on changes as a result of the 81st Legislative session, will be completed this summer; however, partners are encouraged to submit corrections, additions or featured link suggestions at any time.

WebTrends 'visit' and 'hit' data is presented below:



Visit – A series of actions that begins when a visitor views the first page from the server and ends when the visitor leaves the site or remains idle beyond the idle-time limit (30 minutes).
- WebTrends®

Hit – Each file requested by a visitor registers a hit. There can be several hits on each page. While the volume of hits reflects the amount of server traffic, it is not an accurate reflection of the number of pages viewed.
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