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## NEW REPORT SHOWS TEXAS' PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES PROVIDE "EXCELLENT" EDUCATIONAL VALUE

Report analyzes historic and modern role of public research universities, and outlines how well UT Austin and Texas A&M perform against peer institutions nationally

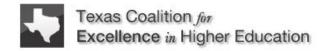
**AUSTIN**—The <u>Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education</u> today released a major new report examining the unique role of public research universities, and outlining how well Texas' two flagship universities, Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Austin, compare with their peer institutions nationally. The report, "Committed to Excellence: An Assessment of the Conditions and Outcomes of Undergraduate Education at the University of Texas at Austin and at Texas A&M University," was commissioned by the Coalition and authored by Dr. Michael K. McLendon, Professor of Higher Education Policy at SMU's Simmons School of Education and a national expert on state higher education policy. It uses the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to provide "apples to apples" comparison of public research universities.

"UT Austin and Texas A&M provide excellent educational value for their undergraduates," said Dr. McLendon. "They perform at high levels when compared to their national peers on many of the dimensions of importance to students, to the public, and to the State of Texas. Additionally, UT Austin and Texas A&M recently have undertaken a series of important innovations aimed at improving undergraduate student learning and increasing student graduation rates on their campuses."

The Coalition, a grassroots group of citizens committed to excellence in public higher education, commissioned the report to provide a baseline look at where the state's Tier One institutions perform as compared to their national peers. The report is intended to contribute to ongoing public policy conversations about the quality, value, affordability and accessibility of higher education, and demonstrate to taxpayers the unique and important role that UT Austin and Texas A&M play in Texas' higher education ecosystem.

## Support for the Report from University of Texas and Texas A&M Leadership:

"I am grateful to the Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education for its profound commitment to supporting our state's public universities and for commissioning a report that examined the undergraduate educational missions of our state's two public flagship institutions, UT Austin and Texas A&M," said Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D., Chancellor of the University of Texas System. "I was particularly pleased that the report reaffirmed the extraordinary educational and economic value that UT and A&M offer to the state and nation, as well as the dedication of university leaders, faculty and staff to continuously engage in qualitative improvement of the undergraduate experience. I commend UT and A&M for holding true to respected, established university traditions and enthusiastically blending them with new innovations to position students for long and successful futures."



"We strive to focus our efforts on continual improvement of our core assets, teaching and research," said John Sharp, Chancellor of the Texas A&M University System. "This allows us to deliver significant value to our students and in turn, to their parents and future employers. We are currently the largest research university in Texas and our goal is to be the best public research university in the world. To accomplish that, we have to be good stewards of all investments in Texas A&M."

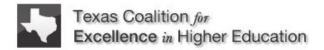
"This report validates what the data and many external rankings have indicated for some time — that Texas A&M University is extremely effective and efficient in serving the needs of our students and the state of Texas," said Texas A&M University President R. Bowen Loftin. "With that said, all of us understand that we are in a period of significant, rapid change in higher education. We must continuously evolve to meet growing demands for accountability and transparency by our stakeholders, as well as to address changes in the marketplace, such as changes in our traditional funding models, new technology that supports different learning styles, and emerging research areas that hold great promise."

"Professor McLendon's report provides us with a systematic and insightful overview of the value of an undergraduate education from our state's two flagship universities," said University of Texas at Austin President William Powers Jr. "This report confirms what we know to be true — that UT Austin and Texas A&M provide outstanding educations. The report also raises legitimate concerns — such as over four-year graduation rates and African-American enrollment — that we share and are working hard to address."

## **Key Findings:**

Overall, the report finds that the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University create enormous educational value for their undergraduate students. The report has praise for UT Austin and Texas A&M but also points out areas where both universities should seek improvement, and in many cases have already begun the work to do so. The full report can be viewed on the Coalition's website. Key findings from the report include:

- Student quality, selectivity and demand at the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M
   University are outstanding. The universities today boast record numbers of applicants, enjoy high
   admissions yield rates, and attract from the highest caliber of students in the nation who choose to
   attend public research universities. Additionally, the academic quality of their undergraduate
   student bodies has improved relative to peers.
- The six-year graduation rates of UT Austin and Texas A&M are right on par with those of the
  institutions' peers and stand well above the average of other Public Research I universities. Although
  the four-year graduation rates at both UT Austin and Texas A&M lag behind peer averages, both
  universities exceed the average of Public Research I institutions and both recently have made
  noteworthy gains to their four-year graduation rates gains that exceed the average of those of
  peers and of other top-tier research institutions.



- While the state's share of the total institutional revenues at the two universities continues to
  decline, UT Austin and Texas A&M remain a good bargain. Each university charges prices (i.e., the
  total of tuition and fees) that are competitive with the finest universities of their kind in the United
  States. UT Austin charges roughly \$1,000 less than the average of its peers, while Texas A&M
  charges roughly \$2,000 less than the average of its peers.
- Over the past five years, from 2006 to 2011, the rises in tuition and fees at UT Austin and Texas A&M have been less than the average of the increases seen at the universities' peers and at the nation's 70 other Public Research I institutions.
- The institutions' ongoing efforts to improve student learning and produce high-quality learning environments is evident. From reported levels of academic challenge to student-faculty interaction to enriching educational experiences, both universities score extremely well on a number of measures when compared to their peer institutions nationwide. Additionally, curricular redesign efforts underway at both institutions, such as UT Austin's First Year Signature Courses, and Texas A&M's Freshman Critical Thinking Seminars, are high-profile initiatives designed to promote and improve undergraduate educational outcomes and learning on the campuses.

As the Texas legislative session draws near, the Coalition hopes this report will be a useful resource to lawmakers as they consider legislation that will impact the quality and trajectory of the state's Tier One institutions, as well as the ability of other universities to achieve Tier One status. Additionally, with the potential appointment of 17 new regents for the state's university systems, this report provides an important baseline for considering leaders with the experience, quality and governance capability necessary to be good stewards of these important public resources.

## **About the Coalition**

The Texas Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education was launched in the summer of 2011 by a group of concerned citizens who believe strongly in the power of higher education to transform lives, build our economy and shape Texas' future. Formed in response to a growing concern over recommendations being floated that could have long-term damaging effects on our institutions of higher learning, the Coalition hopes to advance a thoughtful, constructive and transparent dialogue around higher education in Texas, seeking to improve the quality educational opportunities for all Texans.

For more information on the Coalition and information on higher education in Texas, please visit: www.TexasEducationExcellence.org

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