

2025-2026

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT  
Palo Alto College



## Letter from the Dean of Performance Excellence

On the Southside of San Antonio, where median household income trails the national average by more than \$6,000 and one in five adults age 25 and older has not completed a college credential, Palo Alto College (PAC) is driving measurable progress in expanding access, accelerating degree and certificate completion, and advancing economic mobility. Each year, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness analyzes the social, demographic, and economic conditions shaping the community, and, by extension, the students who rely on PAC to transform their futures. These external forces directly influence enrollment patterns, student needs, and long-term outcomes, making them central to institutional strategy.

This environmental scan provides a data-informed foundation for planning and decision-making by examining local, regional, and national population and educational attainment trends and projections; emerging workforce and economic trends; and legislative updates. This document is intended to aid in annual planning processes and guiding decision-making for college leaders.

*"I wish I had learned about the welding trade sooner... I am a single mom of three, and the instructors have become my mentors. They pushed me, even when I doubted myself. They made me realize this wasn't just a skill; it was my career."* - Sandra, PAC Welding Student

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# KEY FINDINGS

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## COLLEGE UPDATES

Palo Alto College's rapid enrollment growth, strong support for low-income students, and above-average completion outcomes highlight its capability to drive meaningful economic mobility in Bexar County and expand regional impact.



## RECORD ENROLLMENT

Fall 2025 Enrollment

**15,162**

Year-over-Year Growth



**+23%**



Graduation Rate  
**PAC vs. State**  
**33% vs. 24%**



Graduating with Debt  
**PAC vs. State**  
**13% vs. 23%**



Average Debt  
**\$15,271**



## POPULATION GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Despite national aging trends and slow growth, Texas—and particularly the San Antonio region—continues to expand rapidly and diversify, creating a strong and growing pipeline of future students for Palo Alto College.

San Antonio Population

**1,570,314**

6th largest U.S. city

Bexar County Population Growth

**+45%**

**(2.0M → 2.9M by 2060)**

Texas Population

**31.7 million**

1.2% annual growth rate (>2x U.S. rate of 0.5%)

U.S. Population 2026

**349 million**

U.S. Population 2056

**364 million**

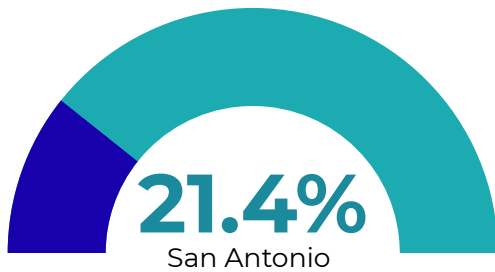
# KEY FINDINGS



## EDUCATION

Educational attainment in San Antonio lags behind state and national levels, and stark geographic inequities—particularly across the South and West sides—highlight how improving high school completion rates and a large population with some college but no degree position Palo Alto College as a critical pathway to upward mobility.

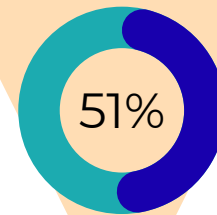
Adults 25+ with Some College/No Degree



High School Completion Rate

87.5%

College-Going Rate



Bexar County

Gap in Bachelor's Degree Attainment across ZIP Codes

6.2% - 78.6%



## INCOME

Educational attainment shapes economic outcomes, with higher levels of education dramatically reducing poverty and increasing earnings. Stark geographic concentrations of lower educational attainment and economic hardship underscore the critical role of Palo Alto College in advancing upward mobility on the Southside of San Antonio.

Median Household Income  
San Antonio vs. U.S.

\$65,056

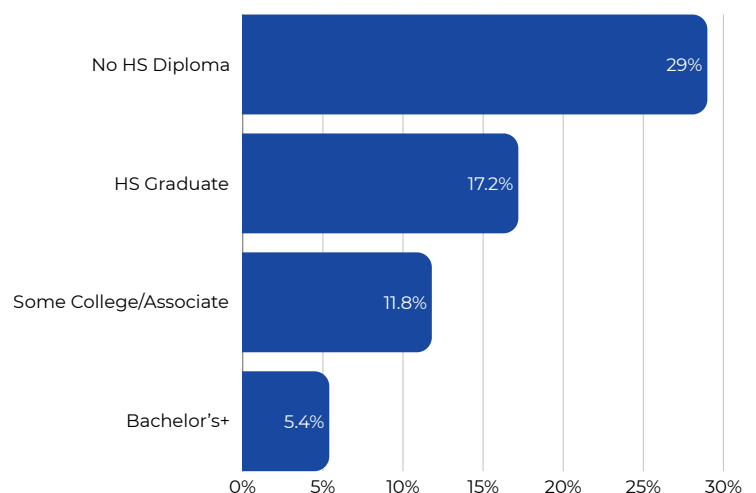
\$81,604

Earnings for Bachelor's Degree  
Holders vs. No HS Diploma



2X+  
more

Poverty Rate by Educational Level



# KEY FINDINGS

2025-2026  
Environmental Scan



## ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND WORKFORCE

San Antonio's steady job growth and low unemployment create strong opportunities for Palo Alto College to continue playing a central role in preparing students for high-demand careers with greater earning potential.

## LABOR MARKET GROWTH

Total Non-Farm Employment

**1.215 million**

Year-over-Year Growth:

**+1.1%**

**TOP EMPLOYMENT  
SECTOR IS EDUCATION,  
HEALTH, BUSINESS**

**34.8%**

### San Antonio Workforce



Fastest Growing  
Sector

**Private  
Education and  
Health Services  
(+5.3%)**



Unemployment  
Rate

**3.7%**



Declining  
Sectors

**Government  
(-1.8%)  
Information  
(-1.0%)**



## LEGISLATION UPDATE

The evolving legislative landscape introduces new opportunities for access, workforce alignment, and global engagement, while also creating uncertainty around the future of federal education oversight, requiring community colleges to remain agile and responsive.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK & IMPLICATIONS

- Expansion of CTE and program alignment opportunities
- Increased military-affiliated student access
- Opportunity to scale local and global partnerships
- Potential volatility in federal funding and oversight



With HB8, state funding for community colleges is increasingly tied to student outcomes, particularly credentials, transfers, and workforce-aligned achievements.



# College Overview

## 1.1 College Update

Palo Alto College was founded in 1985 with a specific purpose: to serve the students the city's other institutions were not reaching on the Southside of San Antonio, Texas. Forty years later, enrollment continued to climb and the institution expanded to serve 15,162 students in Fall 2025, a 23% growth from Fall 2024. While this mirrors the trend of national increases in enrollments at institutions with vocational programs like PAC's, it surpasses enrollment increases nationally for all 2-year institutions by an additional 20% (National Student Clearinghouse 2026).

Fall 2025 saw PAC's highest enrollment (15,162), passing Fall 2024's previous record enrollment of 12,395 by nearly three-thousand students. Fall First Time in College (FTIC) students have been increasing at Palo Alto since Fall 2021, consistently setting a record each year. Fall 2025 saw 2,588 FTIC students enrolled at PAC, 36.4% (942) of whom enrolled full-time. As part of the Alamo Colleges District, PAC holds a very important and growing role in San Antonio's higher education system.

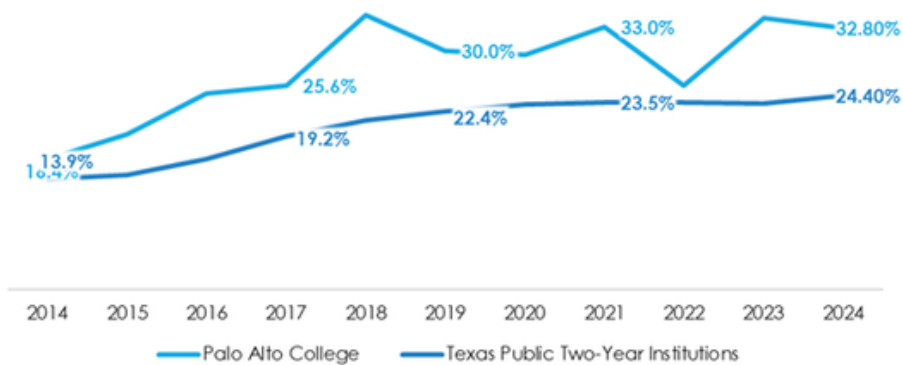
Serving the south of San Antonio and the surrounding region, Palo Alto College serves a high number of students who receive Pell Grants, an indication of household income. Nearly half of PAC students, 45.9%, receive federal Pell grants to support their education. This in part contributes to Palo Alto College graduates leaving PAC with less debt than graduates at similar institutions across the state. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), only thirteen percent of Palo Alto College graduates complete their degree with any student loan debt, compared to 23% of graduates across all public 2-year institutions in Texas. Among those thirteen percent of graduates, the average amount of student debt is \$15,271, which is slightly less than the statewide average of \$15,416 debt across all public 2-year institutions in Texas (THECB Almanac 2025). For a student launching a career, starting a small business, or graduating with one of the many high-opportunity credentials from PAC, graduating with little to no debt sets the foundation on which they build their lives. It allows graduates to establish themselves in the region and support their families from day one.

*“Being able to earn my nursing degree at PAC will help me to not go into so much debt in order to pursue a degree that I love.” -Angelina, PAC Nursing Student*



As seen in *Figure 1*, PAC students also graduate within 150% of normal time, or within 3 years, at a higher rate than their peers. On average, between 2020 and 2024, 31% of PAC full-time FTICs graduated within 150% time (3-years) compared to just 23% of their peers across the state.

**Figure 1. Graduation with Associate Degree within 150% Time Palo Alto College Compared to Texas Public, 2-Year Institutions, 2014-2024**



Source: THECB Accountability System 2026

Based on the Fall 2023 cohort, PAC students one-year persistence rate for full-time, first time in college students is 65.6 %, which is slightly lower than the state average for 2-year public institutions at 67.5% (THECB 2026). Internal data shows PAC’s full-time FTIC persistence rate from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 having rebounded to 62.3%.

One contributor to student success at Palo Alto College is AlamoPROMISE, which covers tuition and fees for students from participating high schools to attend one of the Alamo Colleges District colleges. AlamoPROMISE provides “last dollar” funding through partnerships with local governments and community groups, bridging the gap between student financial needs and their education.

Student success has long been the priority at PAC, and now the state funding model has also shifted to outcome-based funding under HB 8. For a college where nearly half of students receive Pell Grants, where graduates leave among the lowest debt loads in the state, and where enrollment just hit a 40-year high, HB 8 is an opportunity.



# Texas House Bill 8

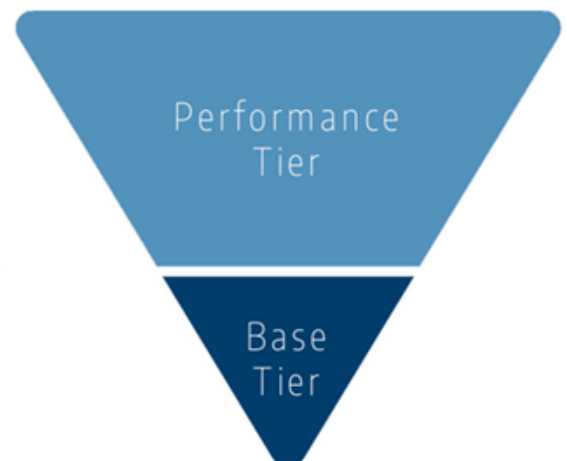
On June 9, 2023, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed the bipartisan House Bill 8 relating to public higher education finance, including the public junior college state finance program, introduced by the 88th Texas Legislature.

## 2.1 Student Funding for Outcomes

The funding model used by HB 8 is composed of two major components that are based on dynamic outcomes: Base Tier and Performance Tier.

The expectation is that a larger share of the state funding allocated to community colleges will be comprised of the Performance Tier. The model intends to be a strategic funding source for aligning those student-focused outcomes to Texas's emerging workforce needs.

### HB 8 Funding Model



### **2.1.1 Base Tier**

The Base Tier of the funding formula entails the estimated costs of operations and the estimated local share of tax revenue. This tier of funding only applies if the estimated costs of operation outweigh the estimated local share.

The Base Tier has two main components: Instruction & Operations and Local Share.

#### **Instruction & Operations**

The Instruction & Operations component is an estimate of a college's operating needs based on characteristics of its student body and courses taught (basic allotment and contact hour production, respectively).

The basic allotment portion is calculated as the number of weighted full-time student equivalents multiplied by the basic allotment rate established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Full-time student equivalents are weighted for the following characteristics: economically disadvantaged, academically disadvantaged, or adult learner.

Contact hour production is weighted by discipline as determined by the Report on Fundable Operating Expenses and funded at a statewide percentage.

The two portions are then summed to constitute the Instruction & Operations component of the Base Tier.

#### **Local Share**

The Local Share component of the Base Tier is an estimate of a college's local resource availability for meeting its Instruction & Operations cost. It is a function of the sum of the college's tax revenue and enrollment, expressed through tuition and fees.

A college's tax revenue is estimated by the amount that would be raised with a \$0.05 Maintenance and Operations tax rate determined by THECB, and it is not dependent on what the colleges raise each year or local tax rate charges.

The tuition and fees estimate is the amount that would be raised with average in-district tuition and fees per full-time student equivalent for non-dual credit students and the FAST rate for dual-credit students.

### **2.1.2 Performance Tier**

The Performance Tier of the funding formula is composed of weighted student outcomes including: credentials of value (for-credit and non-credit); credentials of value in high-wage, high-demand fields; students who transfer with at least 15 SCH to 4-year universities; and students who complete a sequence of at least 15 SCH in dual credit courses.

Weights of these outcomes include economically disadvantaged students, academically disadvantaged students, and adult learners (25 years of age or older).

For these items, colleges would receive funding based on their FY26 projections or their three-year average for FY24 outcomes, FY25 projections, and FY26 projections — whichever is higher.

#### **Credentials of Value**

A "Credential of Value" is defined by the THECB as a "credential that meets a certain cost-benefit threshold: a typical student with that credential must earn enough within 10 years to pay for the cost of their education and surpass the earnings of a typical high school graduate."

The credentials included in the FY26 calculation are:

- Bachelor's Degrees
- Associate Degrees
- Certificates (Advanced Technical Certificates, Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates, and Continuing Education Certificates)
- Occupational Skills Awards (OSA)
- Institutional Credentials Leading to Licensure and/or Certification (ICLC)
- Opportunity High School Diploma (starting with diplomas awarded in FY 2025)
- Transcribed third-party credentials recognized by the American Council on Education's National Guide

## **2.2 Affordability for Students**

A recommendation from the Texas Commission on Community College Finance (TXCCCF) was to increase affordability for students. One avenue for funding low-income college students was to increase funding for Texas Educational Opportunity Grants (TEOG) at 2-year institutions and TEXAS Grants at 4-year universities to establish a goal of serving at least 70% of qualified low-income college students, through increased state appropriations for TEOG in the coming biennium.

Another avenue for affordability for students is the Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) initiative. This program is funded by the Foundation School Program for participating colleges to cover tuition and fees for all economically disadvantaged students who enroll in dual credit courses. This initiative is administered by the THECB with support from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This initiative also incorporates a maximum tuition rate for dual credit courses set annually by the THECB.

## **2.3 Investments in College Capacity**

HB 8 authorized the THECB to establish an Institutional Collaboration Center to support implementation of the new finance system. The bill also required the THECB to give preference to applicants that partner with employers. To do so, the state budget included \$16.5 million in each year and seven FTEs to improve institutional innovation and collaboration, including grants to institutions to add capacity to meet regional workforce needs.

## 2.4 Three-Pay Schedule

In contrast to the Ten-Pay Schedule which the THECB utilized in Fiscal Year 2023 and prior, starting in Fiscal Year 2024, THECB transitioned to a three-pay schedule that consists of three lump-sum payments of formula funding as well as one lump-sum payment of non-formula support items. The following timeline delineates the payment schedule:

- September 25<sup>th</sup> – All “special items” (non-formula support) are to be fully paid to the institutions.
- October 15<sup>th</sup> – One half of all formula funding is distributed to the institutions.
- February 15<sup>th</sup> – One quarter of all formula funding is distributed to the institutions. Starting on Fiscal Year 2025, institutions whose previous Fiscal Year’s projections were surpassed will receive a dynamic adjustment.
- June 15<sup>th</sup> – The final quarter of all formula funding is distributed to the institutions.

## 2.5 Impact to the Alamo Colleges District in Fiscal Year 2026

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Alamo Colleges District received a total of \$83,162,059 from the State’s formula funding; this funding was based on performance projections for FY25 or three-year averages for FY23 outcomes and projections for FY24 and FY25. As part of the three-pay schedule and dynamic adjustments, the Alamo Colleges District received an additional \$4,230,986 as FY24 outcomes exceeded projections.

This increased the total formula funding received in FY25 to \$87,393,045.

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Alamo Colleges District received \$91,627,225 in state formula funding. As with FY25, performance outcomes were based on projected FY26 outcomes. FY26 funding reflects a 4.8% increase compared with FY25.

## **2.6 Standing Advisory Committee**

The standing advisory committee studies and provides counsel and recommendations regarding the formulas, administration, and other components of the Public Junior College Finance Program established by HB 8 and carry out other charges issued by the board of the THECB or the commissioner. Members serve three-year terms unless otherwise provided by the commissioner and are appointed by the THECB on the recommendation of the commissioner.

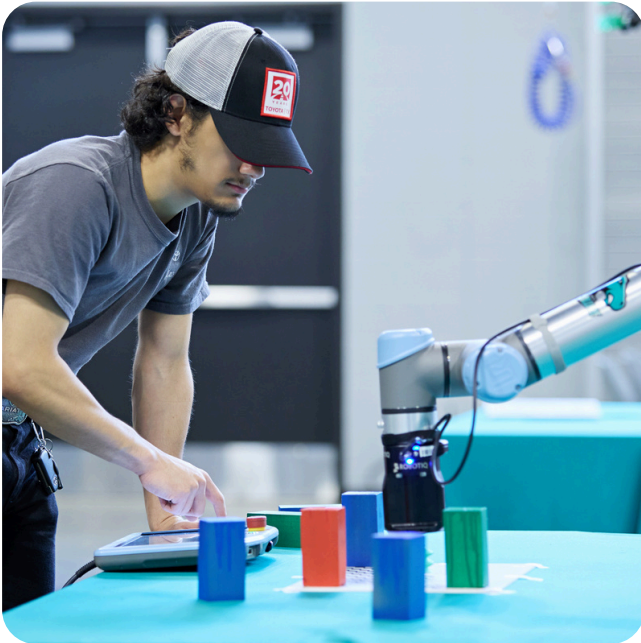
## **2.7 FY26-27 High-Demand Fields at Palo Alto College**

For Fiscal Years 2026-27, high-demand fields at Palo Alto College align with the THECB updated methodology, which identifies in-demand occupations based on state and regional workforce projections. The process prioritizes occupations requiring education beyond high school but below a bachelor's degree, using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Each college's high-demand fields are determined by combining the top statewide high-demand occupations with those specific to its economic region. Palo Alto College follows the designated regional list based on the Texas Comptroller's classification. Credentials awarded in the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 academic years will be considered for funding, with adjustments made as actual data becomes available.

Additionally, institutions may petition for essential occupations that are critical to their local economy, with a process set to open in Spring 2025. Importantly, the current codes relating to high-wage, high-demand fields are specific to the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 academic years. While unlikely to change entirely, these fields are expected to evolve annually. As such, it is important to continuously monitor CIP codes associated with additional funding opportunities.

Palo Alto College offers many degrees and certificates aligned with high-wage, high-demand occupations. PAC has long supported the Southside community by providing opportunities for upskilling and degree attainment while balancing affordability and post-graduation earnings potential.





# Population Growth and Demographic Shifts

## 3.1 Population Growth

According to the Congressional Budget Office estimates, the U.S. population will grow from approximately 349 million people in 2026 to roughly 364 million by 2056. While the U.S. is on the precipice of an aging population, with annual death rates expected to surpass annual birth rates by 2030, the overall population will continue to increase largely due to in-migration. The United States is expected to continue its pattern of slow growth, on average 0.3%, over the next decade (Congressional Budget Office 2026).

Already the most populous region, representing approximately 39% of U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2026), population growth is also greatest in the South. Across all states, Texas had the largest numerical increase in residents in 2025. The state population grew by 1.2% from July 1, 2024, to July 1, 2025, which is more than twice the national growth rate of 0.5%, but a slower rate of increase from recent years. This population gain comes from both domestic and international immigration as well as natural births, bringing the state population to 31.7 in 2025. Looking at San Antonio more closely, the city is projected to experience a 1.46% annual increase in population in 2026, ranking now as the 6<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States with 1,570,314 residents in San Antonio city limits.

### 3.2 Population Changes

Texas Demographic Center's 2024 projections show that Texas, like the nation, will continue to age over the next few decades with the 65+ group growing at the fastest rate and making up 22% of the Texas population by 2060. While the working-age population (comprised of individuals between 18-64 years of age) is expected to steadily grow between 2020 and 2026, there is expected slower growth, and eventual decline, for the group of individuals less than 18 years of age due to lower birth rates.

Growth in Texas is predicted to come from natural births plus in-migration, as it has in recent years, which will also continue to create a more varied population racially and ethnically. The Texas Demographic Center (2026) predicts that the state will experience continued growth among non-white populations through 2060. This change is expected to largely occur through a growth in the Hispanic population, though non-Hispanic Asians will experience the fastest rate of growth.

The population growth in Texas will be heavily concentrated in what is known as the Texas Triangle, composed of the areas between the Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Austin and San Antonio metropolitan regions. While 139 counties in Texas are projected to experience population loss, the population in Bexar County is projected to increase by 45.0%, from 2 million to over 2.9 million between 2020 and 2060 and remain highly diverse. Bexar County's population is projected to grow 45% by 2060, driven by a young, predominantly Hispanic population unlike the aging demographic trends seen nationally. These are PAC's future students.



***“English is not my first language, and although I still have moments where expressing myself is challenging, I am proud of the progress I’ve made and the confidence I’ve gained.”*** Eimy, Palo Alto College Student and AlamoPROMISE Student of the Month January 2026 ... Eimy credits PAC and the AlamoPROMISE program for fostering her academic and personal growth and for opening doors to new opportunities, proving that with support, perseverance, and courage, students can achieve more than they ever imagined.



# Education and Income

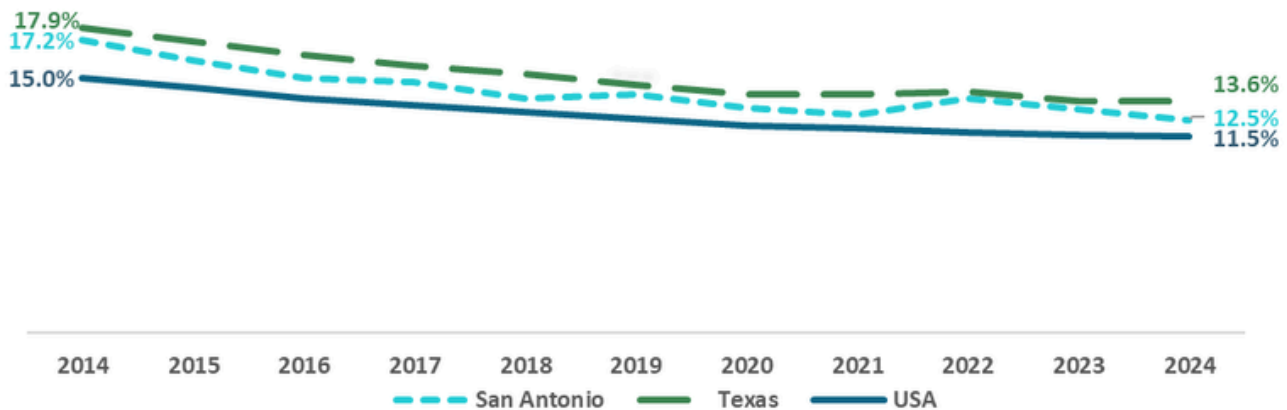
## 4.1 Educational Attainment in San Antonio

San Antonio's educational attainment rates lag behind the state and national rates generally when it comes to post-secondary education. Adults 25 years and older in San Antonio are less likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (29%) than in Texas (33.8%) or at the national level (35.7%). Approximately 21.4% of adults 25 years and older in San Antonio have completed some college but did not earn a degree (U.S. Census 2026). These are residents who have already taken the first step toward higher education. PAC exists, in part, to help them finish.

### 4.1.1 Population with Less than a High School Degree

The rates for those between the ages of 18 and 24 who have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent is 12.5% for the city of San Antonio, compared with 13.6% for the state population in that age range. This means that there is a slightly higher high-school graduation rate among San Antonio young residents compared with the state rates, with 87.5% of the population having finished high school or obtained an equivalent education. However, the national high-school graduation rate among 18- to 24-year-olds exceeds San Antonio at 88.5%. *Figure 2* displays trend lines for the U.S., Texas, and San Antonio between 2014 and 2024 for adults between 18 and 24 who have not obtained a high school degree or equivalent.

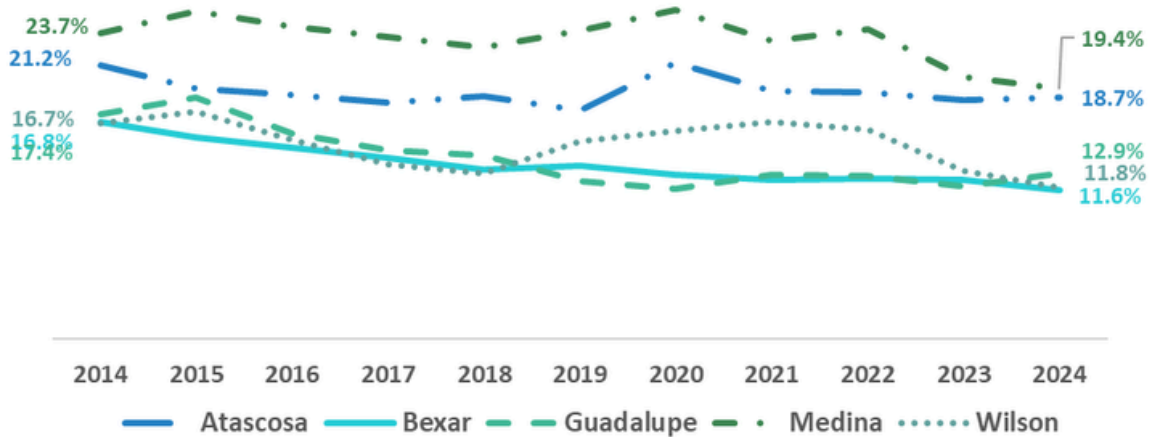
**Figure 2. Population 18-24 Years Old with Less Than a High School Credential, State, Nation, and City Trends 2014-2024, Percent**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

Students at Palo Alto College do not come exclusively from the San Antonio metro area but primarily from across Bexar and four adjacent counties. *Figure 3* displays the same time variables as *Figure 2*: the percentage of adults aged 18-24 who have not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent in these feeder counties.

**Figure 3. Adults 18-24 Years Old with Less Than a High School Credential, Regional Trends 2014-2024, Percent**

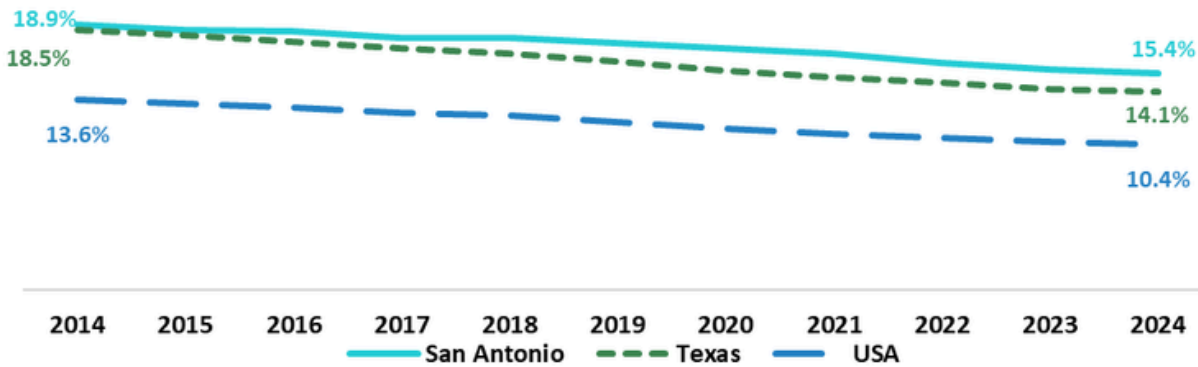


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

Overall, the region has experienced declining rates of less than high school education among 18- to 24-year-olds. This means that young adults are obtaining a high school education at greater rates than in the past. Medina County has the highest percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who have not obtained a high school diploma at 19.4% but this is a large drop from 2022 ACS 5-year estimates which placed this group at 24.0%. Following Medina, Atascosa, Guadalupe, Wilson, and Bexar counties respectively have lower rates of 18- to 24-year-olds who have not completed a high school education. Bexar County has the lowest proportion of adults 18-24 who do not have a high school credential: 11.6%.

Between 2014 and 2024, rates of adults 25 and older without a high school diploma have also been in decline, meaning a greater proportion of the population has at least a high school diploma or equivalence than in the past. This is presented in Figure 4, which compares the 10-year trends for adults 25 years and older who have less than a high school degree or equivalent for the nation, state, and the city of San Antonio.

**Figure 4. Population 25 and Older with Less Than a High School Credential, State, Nation, and City Trends 2014-2024, Percent**



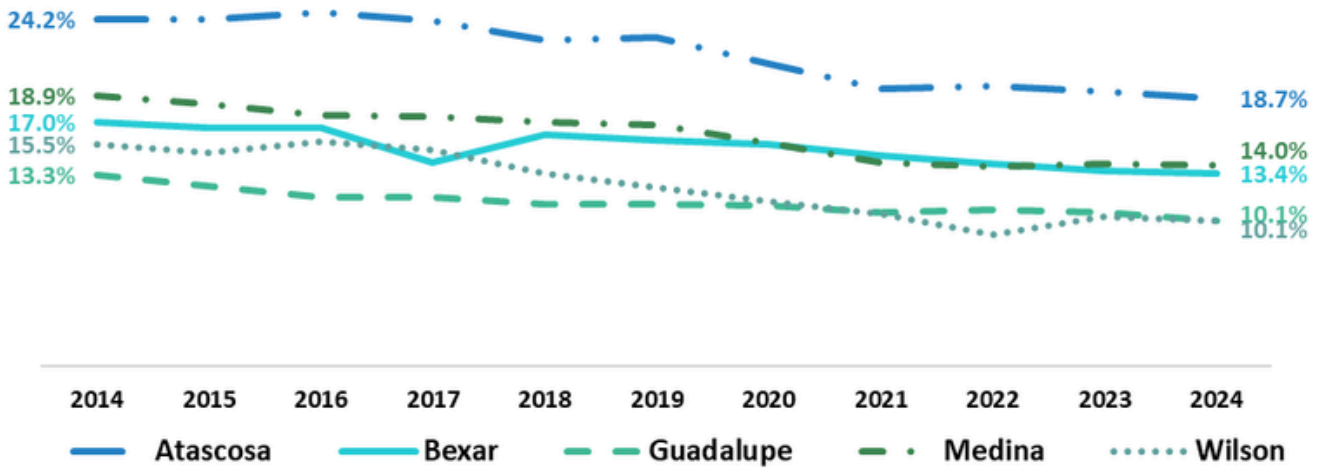
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

Although approximately 90% of adults over the age of 25 around the country have completed a high school education or greater, Texas and the city of San Antonio lag behind the national rates despite overall increases in educational attainment.

In 2024, 10.4% of U.S. adults 25 years and older had not completed a high school education, down from 10.6% in 2023 according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates (U.S. Census 2026). Similarly, across Texas and in San Antonio, the rate of adults 25 years and older who had not completed high school or greater dropped by 0.2% for the state and 0.3% locally. Nationally, this equates to roughly two and half a million additional adults over 25 years of age who have completed high school or higher.

Regional trends mimic city, state, and national trends, with high school attainment or greater increasing over the past decade. Wilson and Guadalupe counties boast the lowest rate of adults 25 years or older without a high school education, meaning they have the greatest educational attainment of the five counties. Wilson and Guadalupe are followed then by Bexar, Medina, and Atascosa counties. *Figure 5* displays these trends between 2014 and 2024 across all of PAC’s feeder counties.

**Figure 5. Population 25 and Older with Less Than a High School Credential, Regional Trends 2014-2024, Percent**



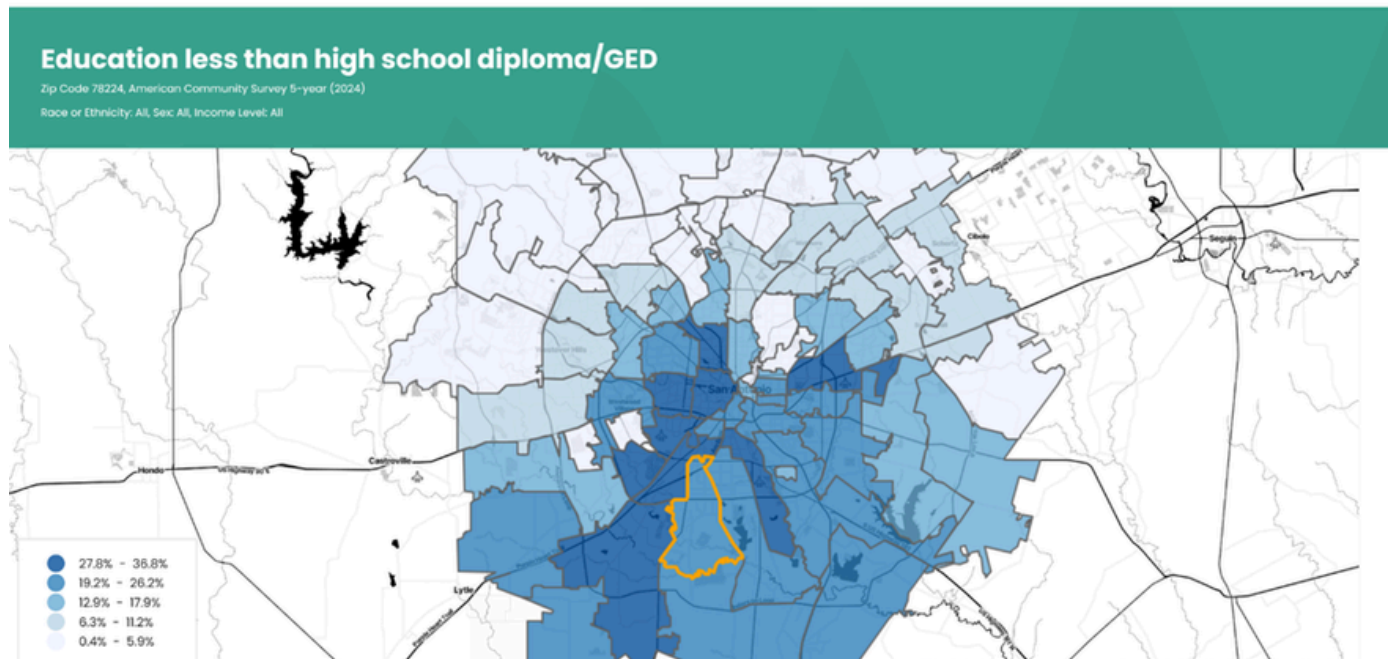
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

Although sometimes small in percentage, this overall downward trend results in thousands of more individuals over the years obtaining a high school credential or higher in the region. On average, high school or greater educational attainment has increased by 4.5% across PAC’s feeder counties over the last decade. Young people are therefore completing high school in greater numbers and proportions than before and are primed to continue their education at institutions like PAC.

A deeper examination of high school credential attainment across Bexar County reveals a pronounced geographic divide in educational outcomes. The South and West sides of San Antonio have the highest concentrations of adults without a high school diploma or GED. Several zip codes in these areas, particularly 78207, 78224, 78073, and surrounding communities, exceed 25%, with some reaching nearly 37% of adults lacking a high school credential. In contrast, northern and suburban areas consistently report much lower rates, often below 10%. Notably, in zip code 78231 on the North Central side of San Antonio, fewer than one percent of adults age 25 and older lack a high school credential. This stark contrast reflects broader patterns of educational inequity, where communities with historically limited access to educational opportunities continue to experience lower levels of attainment.

These disparities are illustrated in *Figure 6*, sourced from Community Information Now (CIN) Bexar Data Dive, with PAC's located area (78224) highlighted. As shown, the community surrounding PAC on the Southside is represented by some of the darkest shading, indicating among the highest need. For PAC, this underscores a critical role in serving a population with substantial foundational education needs, including adult basic education, GED completion, and developmental coursework. The college is uniquely positioned to serve as a gateway to educational attainment and workforce entry, making its outreach, support services, and flexible program offerings essential to advancing long-term economic mobility in the region.

**Figure 6. Population 25 and Older with Less Than a High School Credential by ZIP Code-Bexar County, Percent**

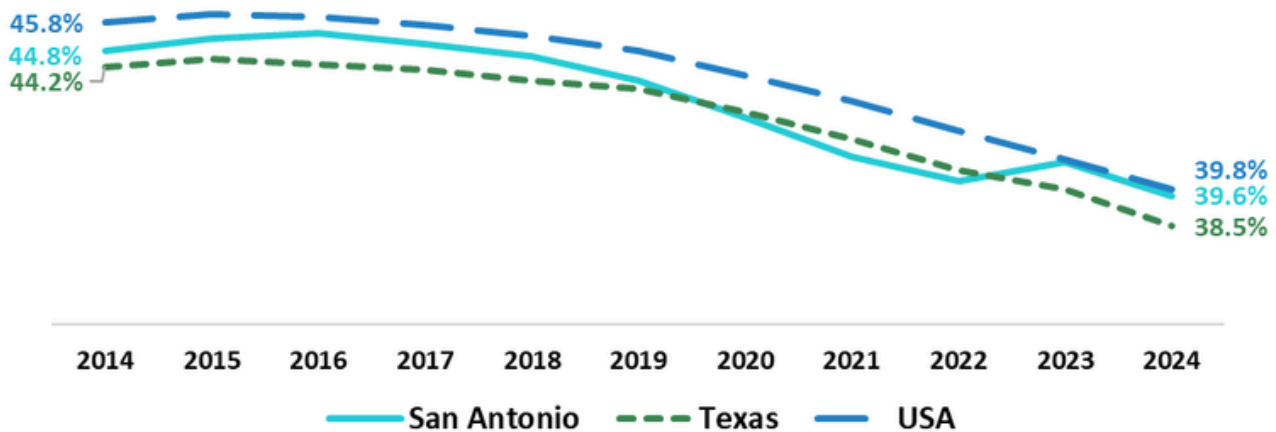


Source: Community Information Now, Bexar Data Dive using U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

### 4.1.2 Population with Some College Education or an Associate Degree

Nearly 40% of young adults across the United States between the ages of 18 and 24 have completed some college education or an associate degree. According to the 2024 ACS 5-year estimates, 18- to 24-year-olds in San Antonio achieve this level of educational attainment at just 0.2% lower than young adults nationally. In contrast, at the state level young people generally fall slightly further behind the nation at 38.5%, as displayed in *Figure 7*.

**Figure 7. Population 18-24 with Some College or an Associate Degree, State, City, and Nation 2014-2024, Percent**



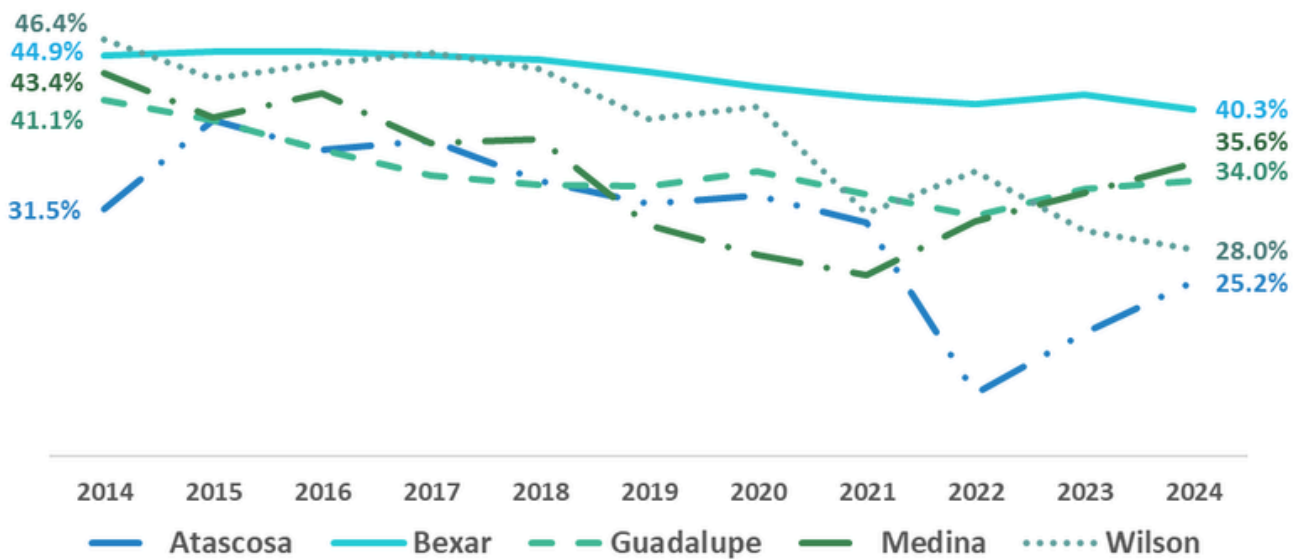
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

The trend over the past decade has been an overall decline in the rates of 18- to 24-year-olds who are just obtaining some college or associate degree educational attainment. At the national level, the decrease has been 6% from 2014 to 2024 (US Census 2026). This decrease reflects the trend in overall educational attainment that more adults are continuing their education and obtaining higher level degrees than in the past.

Understanding education trends among those 25 and older in the region is important to understanding what is happening and the future for 2-year institutions that primarily provide degrees below the baccalaureate level.

As shown in *Figure 8*, there is similar downward trend in some college or associate degree attainment across PAC’s feeder counties, mirroring the decline at national, state, and city levels. The lowest percentage change occurred in Bexar County with educational attainment at this level declining by 4.6% from 2014 to 2024. There are larger declines in the proportion of young adults with some college or associate degree attainment in the other four feeder counties, with the greatest change of -18.4% over the last decade occurring in Wilson County. The decrease in proportion of the population with some college or associate degree is due to increases in educational attainment at higher levels across the region.

**Figure 8. Population 18-24 with Some College or an Associate Degree, Regional Trends 2014-2024, Percent**

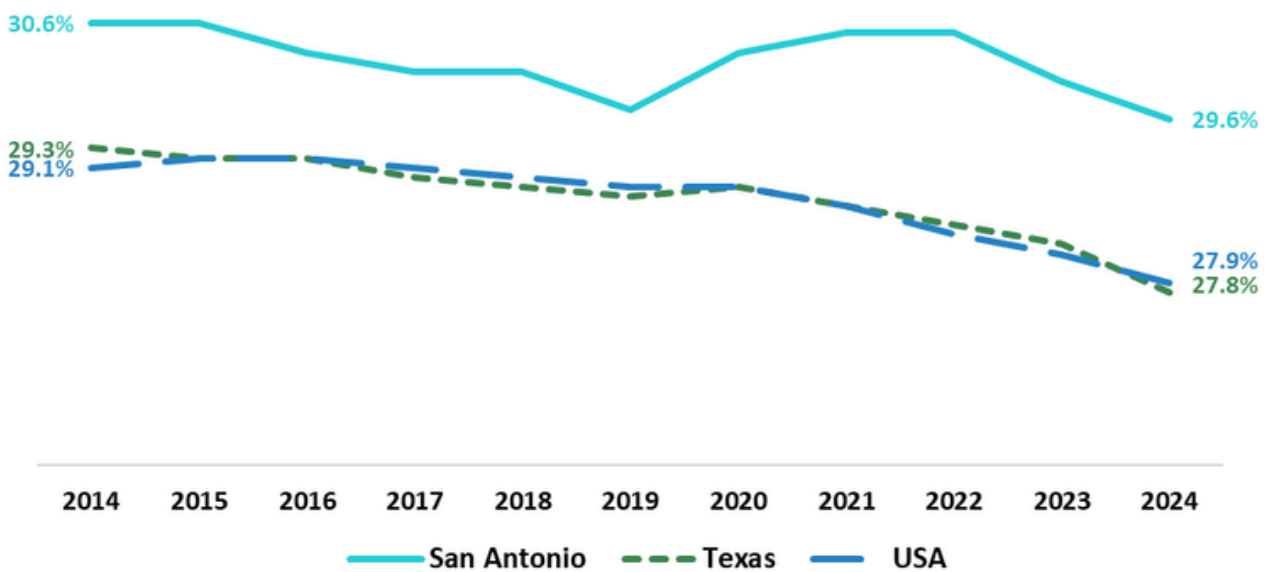


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

The steep changes reflected in *Figure 8* are likely due to population changes over time, from migration in and out of the counties. It is important to note that all but Bexar County have populations less than 175,000 people, which means relatively small changes in the population of the county could impact these percentages significantly. In contrast, a population of over 2 million in Bexar County reduces the impact of smaller population shifts on overall trends.

Among those 25 years of age and older, within the city of San Antonio there is a higher percent of the adults with some college education or an associate degree than in the state or the country, by a small but not insignificant percent. According to 2024 ACS 5-year estimates, 29.6% of the adult population 25 years or older has some college or an associate degree in San Antonio, compared to 27.8% and 27.9% in the state and country, respectively. As seen in *Figure 9*, the proportion of adults over the age of 25 with some college or associate degree attainment is lower than that among 18 to 24-year-olds as they have had more time to complete higher levels of educational attainment.

**Figure 9. Population 25 and Older with Some College or an Associate Degree, Nation, State, and City 2014-2024, percent**



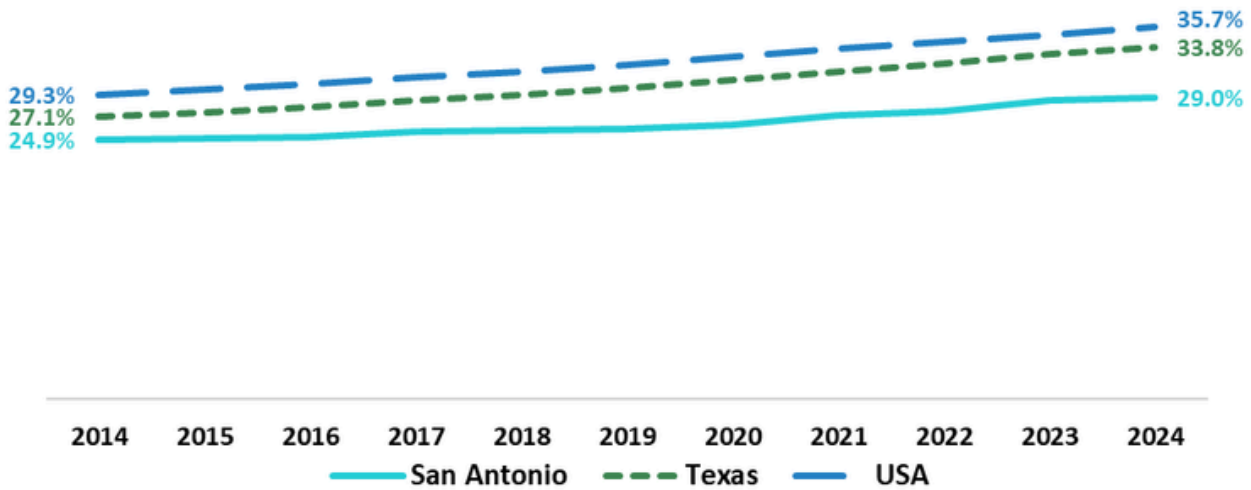
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

### 4.1.3 Population with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher

The proportion of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher has continued to increase over the last decade. Currently 29% of adults 25 years of age in San Antonio hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, an increase of 4.1% from 2014 to 2024.

The same trend is seen across the state and nation, although with more significant rates of increase at the national and state levels. At the national level, bachelor’s degree attainment or greater increased 6.4% from 29.3% in 2014 to 35.7% in 2024. The percentage increase was even greater for the state of Texas at 6.7%, or from 27.1% in 2014 to 33.8% in 2024 in Texas (US Census 2026). These trends are displayed in *Figure 10*.

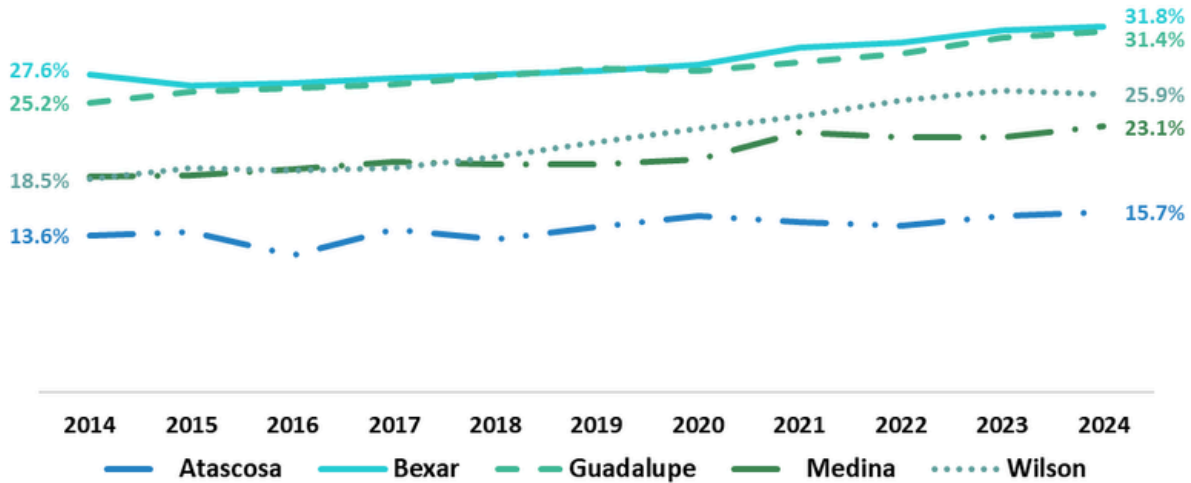
**Figure 10. Population 25 and Older with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher, Nation, State, and City 2014-2024, Percent**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

The five counties that make up the majority of Palo Alto College’s student body have experienced similar increases in bachelor’s degree attainment. Although varying in the degree to which bachelor’s degree attainment has increased, each county has seen increases since 2014. Bexar County, from which the majority of Palo Alto students come, boasts the highest level of bachelor’s degree attainment, at 31.8%, followed closely by Guadalupe County with 31.4%. These two are followed then by Wilson, Medina, and Atascosa. These trends are displayed in *Figure 11*.

**Figure 11. Population 25 and Older with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher, Regional Comparisons 2014-2024, Percent**

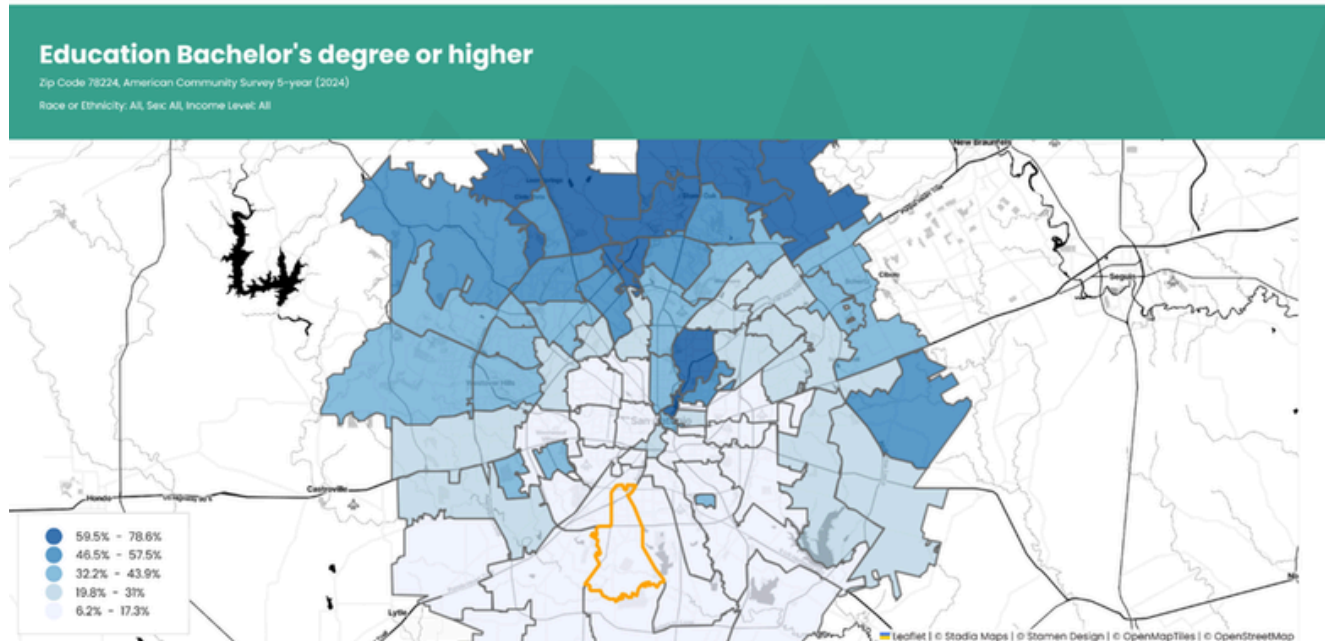


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

Figure 12, a heat map of percent of adult population with a bachelor’s degree or higher, reveals a clear inverse pattern shown in Figure 6. Figure 12 shows that the highest concentrations of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher are in the northern and northwestern parts of the city, where many ZIP codes exceed 45% and, in some cases, approach nearly 80% attainment. In contrast, the South and West sides show significantly lower rates, often below 20%. This stark geographic divide highlights persistent inequities in access to higher education and reflects broader socioeconomic patterns tied to income, school quality, and generational educational attainment.



**Figure 12. Population 25 and Older with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher by ZIP Code- Bexar County, Percent**



Source: Community Information Now, Bexar Data Drive using U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

For PAC, these trends underscore both a critical responsibility and a strategic opportunity to expand pathways to higher education. Serving a region with comparatively low bachelor’s degree attainment means many learners are first-generation college students or enter with limited academic preparation, positioning PAC as a vital gateway to upward mobility. The College plays a central role in strengthening academic foundations, building seamless transfer pipelines, and providing clear, supported pathways to four-year degrees. Additionally, as PAC has recently launched its first bachelor’s degree program, the institution is well-positioned for continued enrollment growth while significantly advancing bachelor’s degree attainment and long-term economic mobility across the Southside community.

## 4.2 Income and the Impact of Educational Attainment in San Antonio

Education continues to be one of the most reliable mechanisms for upward social mobility, with community colleges offering the most affordable programs that help launch individuals directly into careers or prepare them to transfer and further their educational career. Educational attainment continues to be the most significant predictor of income, with a positive correlation between educational attainment level and earnings. In San Antonio, the difference between a high school diploma and a college credential is not just a matter of opportunity; it is, statistically, the difference between poverty and stability. Adults without a high school degree face a 29% poverty rate while those with an associate degree or some college face less than half that.

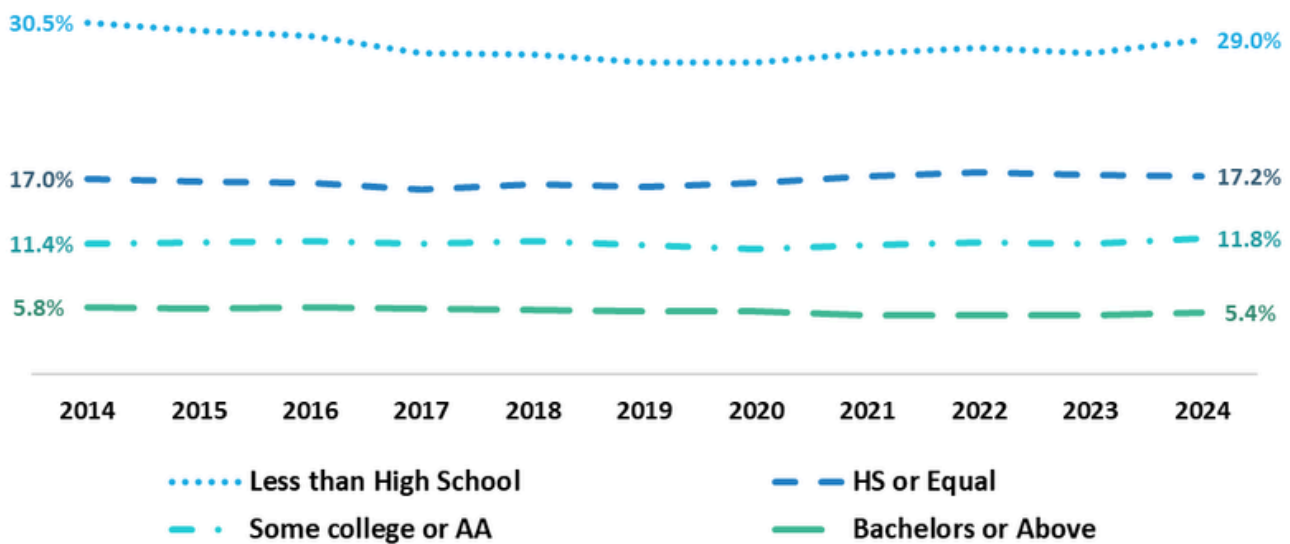
### 4.2.1 Poverty Rate for Population 25 Years and Older by Educational Attainment Level

Poverty in San Antonio is conditioned by educational attainment. Lower educational attainment is negatively correlated with poverty rates. Essentially, the less schooling completed, the more likely the individual is to be living below the poverty line.

*Figure 13* displays poverty trends by educational attainment in San Antonio over the past decade.

***"I am graduating with my Associate of Applied Science in Logistics and Supply Chain Management. I currently work in a warehouse, and ever since I started this program, I've been promoted. I went from making \$18 an hour to \$28 an hour. I hope to be a manager of my own warehouse one day."*** - Eric, Spring 2025 Palo Alto College Graduate

**Figure 13. Poverty by Educational Attainment in San Antonio, 2014-2024, Percent**



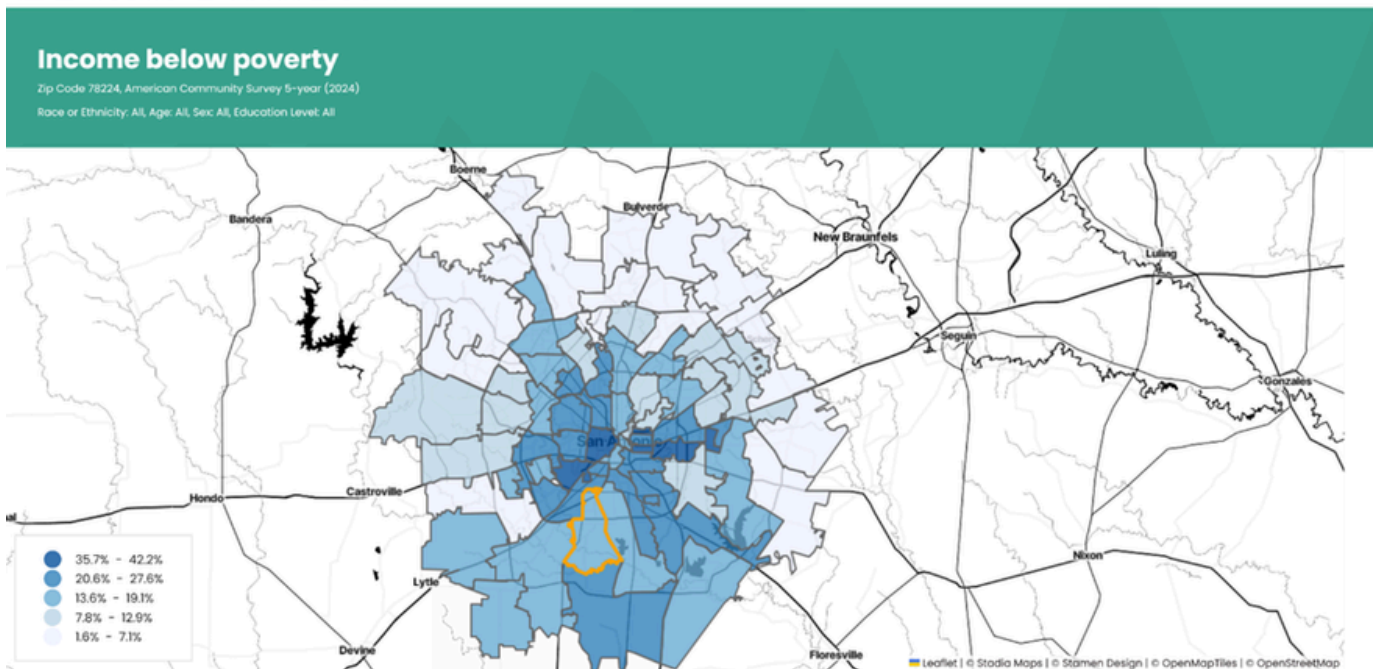
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

As displayed in *Figure 13*, those who have not completed high school are more than four times more likely to be in poverty than those who have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. As of 2024, just completing high school reduces the percentage of the population in poverty by more than 11.8%, from 29% to 17.2%. Those with some college or an associate degree drop another 5.4% to just 11.8% of that population in poverty; whereas, only 5.4% of those with a bachelor’s or advanced degree are living below the poverty level in San Antonio. Higher educational attainment results in higher median earnings, as discussed in the next section.

The Bexar Data Dive heat map (*Figure 14*) shows a clear geographic concentration of poverty in the San Antonio area, with the highest rates clustered in and around the urban core and extending strongly into the Southside. Several census tracts in these areas exhibit poverty rates exceeding 35%, with a broader surrounding band falling in the 20–30% range. In contrast, outlying suburban and northern areas display substantially lower poverty levels, often below 15%. This pattern highlights a pronounced spatial inequity, where economic hardship is not evenly distributed but instead concentrated in historically underserved communities, particularly south of downtown.

For PAC, this means serving a student population that is more likely to face significant financial barriers, including lower household income, higher need for financial aid, and competing life obligations. As a result, the college’s role in access, affordability, workforce alignment, and wraparound support services becomes even more critical to advancing economic mobility in the region.

**Figure 14. Percent in Poverty by ZIP Code in Bexar County, 2024**



Source: Community Information Now, Bexar Data Drive using U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Census Bureau, S1701Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

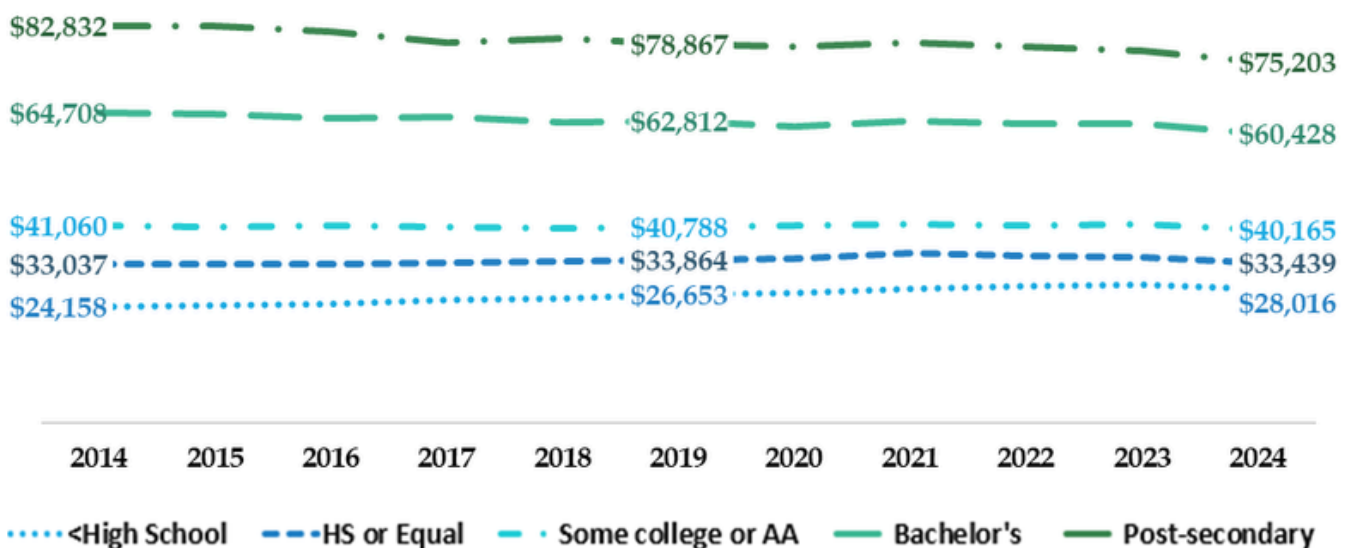
#### 4.2.2 Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months for Population 25 Years and Older by Educational Attainment

Figure 15 shows the median annual earnings for the population 25 years and older disaggregated by educational attainment level. To make the earnings more comparable considering inflation over the last decade, the U.S. Census ACS inflation-adjustment method was replicated for the 5-year estimated earnings from 2014 to 2023 to rebase all years to 2024 dollars.

Based on the standard Consumer Price Index inflation adjustment formula \$1 in 2014 is equivalent to approximately \$1.33 in 2024 dollars, meaning prices have increased by about 33% over that time. Another way to think about the impact of inflation is to consider consumer purchasing power, where a 2014 income of \$30,000 would have about the same purchasing power as \$40,000 in 2024.

Using the 2024 inflation-adjusted dollars, it becomes apparent that there is a negative correlation between educational attainment and loss of purchasing power. The median income for individuals with post-secondary degrees shows the greatest decrease of 9%, or \$7,629, followed by the median earning for those with a bachelor’s degree with a decrease of 7%, and then those with some college or an associate degree with a 2% decrease. Median earnings increased for those with a high school diploma or equivalent by 1% and for those with less than a high school diploma by 16% over the decade.

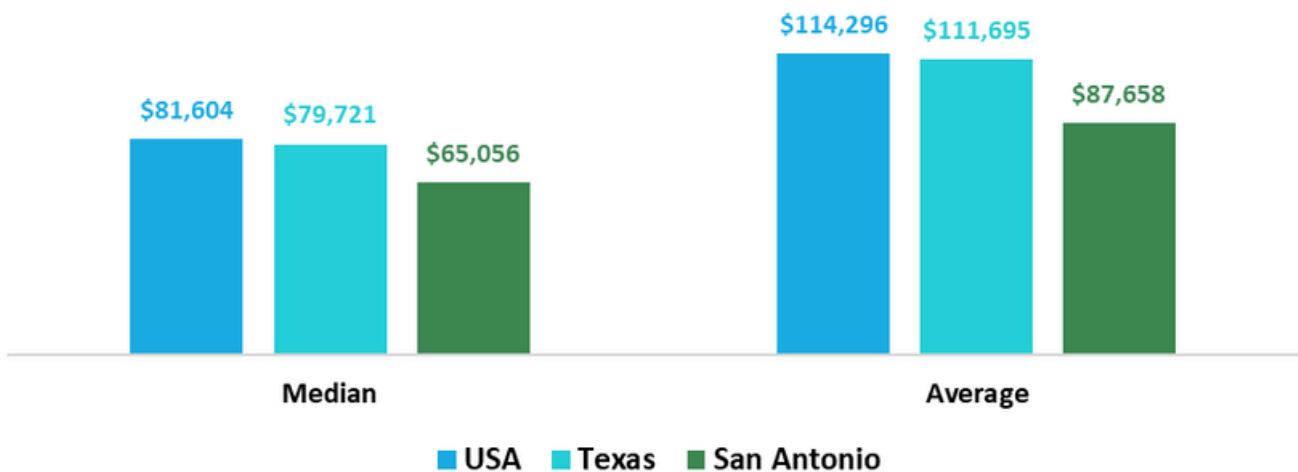
**Figure 15. Median Income by Educational Attainment in San Antonio, 2014-2024 (In 2024 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1501 Educational Attainment 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

The 2024 inflation-adjusted median earnings shown above in *Figure 15* also demonstrates the gap in median earnings based on educational attainment levels, with those with a bachelor's degree earning more than two times the amount of those with less than a high school diploma. Furthermore, the data shows that the most significant jump in median earnings occurring between the group with some college or associate degree and those with a bachelor's degree, a difference of slightly more than \$20,000 annually.

**Figure 16. Household Earnings in San Antonio, Texas, and USA 2024**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, S1901 Income in the Past 12 Months 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2026)

Median household earnings in San Antonio reached \$65,056 in 2024, according to U.S. Census ACS 5-year estimates, shown in *Figure 16*. This is more than \$16,500 below the national median household earnings, and \$14,500 below state median household earnings. The average household income, a measure more influenced by those who out-earn others by significant amounts, raises up to \$87,658 in San Antonio but is more than \$20,000 less than the state and national averages (U.S. Census Bureau 2026).

### **4.3 College Enrollment and College Readiness**

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2025), 41% of Texas high school graduates enroll in higher education for the following fall compared to approximately 61% at the national level. Furthermore, only 57% of high school graduates enrolled in institutions of Higher Education across Texas are meeting Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standards in all areas for college readiness. Institutions like Palo Alto College have long sought to help bridge this performance gap by providing developmental education courses and additional TSI testing.

Community colleges operate in the space between 4-year institutions and high schools and are particularly accessible to those who may need developmental courses, who may have been out of the education system for some time, or who simply need a more affordable option to get themselves started. Community colleges provide hands-on workforce training and transfer pathways that ultimately increase earning potential and future stability for students and their families.

#### **4.3.1 College Enrollment**

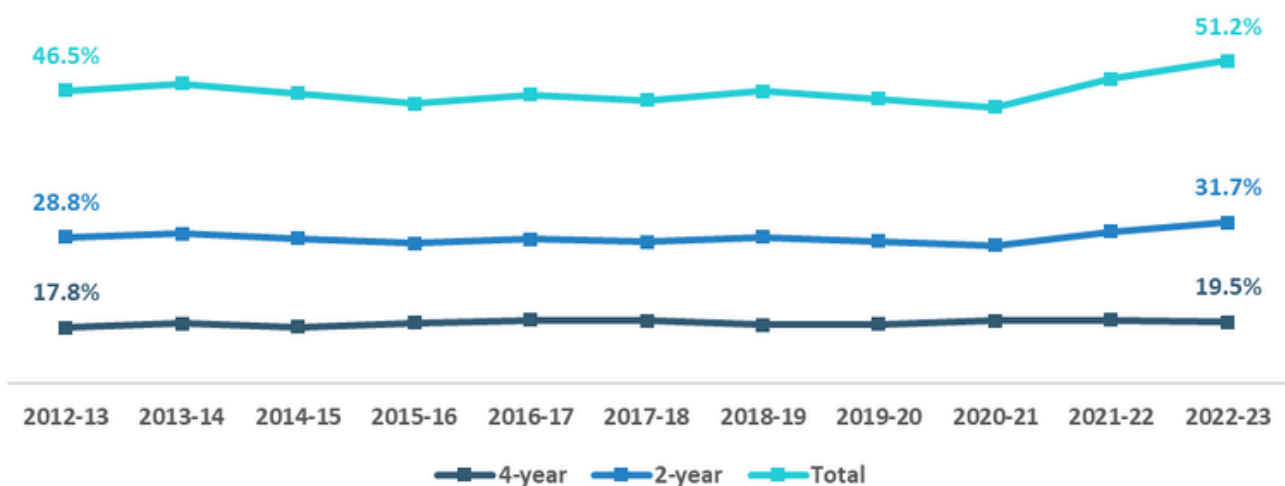
In Fall 2025, there were over 19.4 million students enrolled in higher education across the United States, 16.2 million undergraduate and 3.2 million graduate students, which was a 1.0% increase from fall 2024. Growth in undergraduate enrollment was primarily driven by a 3.0% increase in community college enrollment, compared with a 1.4 percent increase at public 4-year colleges. The South was the only region where institutions continued to experience large increases (3.1%) in enrollment (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center 2026).

At the state level, Texas 2-year public institutions have experienced an overall 6.1% increase in enrollment from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 and now serve over 740,000 students statewide (THECB 2026). Locally, regional higher educational leaders convened through the Greater SATX Regional Economic Partnership to establish educational attainment goal of 45% for the city by 2030 as part of the MOMENTUM:2030 plan. This would be equivalent to approximately 100,000 more residents over 25 years of age earning an associate degree or higher over the next five years (Greater:SATX 2026).

The Alamo Colleges District has set internal goals that support the regional alignment of efforts, such as serving 100,000 learners by 2030, nearly a 14% increase from the record-breaking enrollment of 87,757 learners in Fall 2025. Palo Alto College also experienced significant increases in enrollment, growing 22.8% between Fall 2024 and Fall 2025 and reaching a record enrollment of 15,223 students.

While the state has a target set of 60% of high school graduates enrolling in college the following fall semester, only 41% of high school graduates from the class of 2023 across Texas enrolled in an institution of higher education and it has been several years since the state has reached the 50% mark. However, for the first time over the last decade at least the college-going rate for Bexar County high school graduates surpassed 50% in 2023 (TPEIR 2026). High school graduate enrollment trends in Bexar County at 4-year and 2-year institutions are displayed in *Figure 17*. However, these rates still fall short of the San Antonio Area Foundation’s adopted target rate of 70% college-going enrollment.

**Figure 17. Bexar County High School Graduates Enrolled in Higher Education by Institution Type, 2013-2014 to 2022-2023, Percent**



Source: Texas Public Education Information Source (TPEIR) 2026 – High School Graduates Enrolled in Higher Education – by High School County

All the growth in Bexar County high school graduate enrollment was at 2-year institutions for the Class of 2023. While high school graduate enrollment at 4-year institutions declined by 0.6% from 2022 to 2023, there was a 3.4% increase in high school graduate enrollment at 2-year institutions (TPEIR 2026).

#### **4.3.2 College Readiness**

The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) is a program designed to determine the college readiness of high school graduates that offers an alternative to the SAT, ACT, STAAR English III and Algebra II EOCs for Texas students. Though 57% of Texas high school graduates met the TSI standards for college readiness in 2023, outcomes are conditioned by ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Just fifty percent (50%) of Hispanic high school graduates met all TSI standards in 2023, and only 40% of Hispanic high school graduates enrolled in higher education. Among economically disadvantaged students, the gaps are even more pronounced: only 46% of students eligible for free lunch met all TSI standards, and just 36% enrolled in higher education following graduation. In comparison, 67% of students who did not qualify for free or reduced lunch met all TSI standards, and 46% enrolled in college (THECB 2026). These disparities highlight a persistent equity gap in both college readiness and postsecondary access, where race/ethnicity and income remain strong predictors of opportunity. The data makes clear that large portions of the Southside population are being left behind at critical transition points between high school and college.

PAC actively addresses these disparities through a comprehensive set of student-centered supports designed to improve readiness, access, and success. This includes robust developmental education pathways and TSI preparation support to help students meet readiness standards, as well as programs like AlamoPROMISE that remove financial barriers by covering tuition and fees for eligible students. In addition, PAC provides wraparound services, including advising, tutoring, and basic needs support, to ensure students can persist and complete. Together, these efforts position PAC as a critical bridge between high school and higher education, transforming inequities in preparation into opportunities for success and upward mobility.



# Economic Competitiveness and Workforce

## 5.1 Employment in Targeted Industries

Education makes individuals attractive candidates for hire but of course, only when their education aligns with the career and industry they are applying for. Palo Alto College provides valuable educational training and workforce advancement opportunities for the Southside and greater San Antonio area. This section examines the economic and labor market that PAC students are entering after completing their education.

*"It's a field with so many applications. No matter what your goals are, whether you want to run a business, lead a nonprofit, or become a leader in any field, you'll use these skills."- Kayla, PAC Bachelor of Applied Technology -*

*Management Student*

PAC provides education and training across a wide variety of industries and potential careers. Major employers in San Antonio fall into many different industries as well. Not including Joint Base San Antonio military careers, which employ more than 82,000 people directly, the three largest employers in San Antonio are H-E-B, USAA, and Methodist Healthcare System, all of which employ more than ten-thousand individuals (Greater:SATX 2026).

### **5.1.1 Employment by Sector**

The San Antonio-New Braunfels metropolitan area has experienced a 1.1% increase across non-farm employment sectors between December 2024 and December 2025, a slower rate of growth than the 2% increase experienced between December 2023 and December 2024 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2026).

There was modest employment growth across the areas of private education and health services (5.3%), trade, transportation, & utilities (3.8%) mining, logging, & construction (1.1%), and manufacturing (1.0%), while other services (0.7%) and financial activities (0.6%) saw some increases at a lower rate. The other four areas saw decreases in employment, with the government sector experiencing the largest decrease (-1.8%) and the information sector decreasing another -1.0% in 2025 over the -1.2% loss in 2024. The employment changes between December 2024 and December 2025 are organized by the total number of employed people in 2025 in *Table 7*.

**Table 1. Major Employment Sectors in San Antonio-New Braunfels Metro Area**

Sector	Dec 2024	Dec 2025*	% Change
Total Nonfarm	1,201,900	1,215,000	1.1%
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	215,800	224,100	3.8%
Government	193,700	190,200	-1.8%
Private Education & Health Services	182,400	192,100	5.3%
Professional & Business Services	160,400	158,300	-1.3%
Leisure & Hospitality	146,700	145,300	-1.0%
Financial Activities	102,000	102,600	0.6%
Mining, Logging, & Construction	76,100	76,900	1.1%
Manufacturing	63,000	63,600	1.0%
Other Services	42,000	42,300	0.7%
Information	19,800	19,600	-1.0%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX Metropolitan Area Data Tables

\*Preliminary values

Unemployment in the San Antonio-New Braunfels metropolitan area has held steady in recent years, ending 2025 at 3.7% and below the national unemployment rate of 4.1% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2026). While these employment trends across industries fluctuate and shift over time, growth in general for the region seems likely, as San Antonio and Texas continue to grow, and more services are needed to support this growing population.

### 5.1.2 Employment by Industry

The Census Bureau's American Community Survey 5-year estimates report industry data slightly differently than in the previous section. The major areas of employment for the city of San Antonio identified are education, health, and business services which makes up 34.8% of those employed, followed by sales (20.6%), and other services and supports (17.8%). Palo Alto provides education across all industries and options for certificates and associate degrees that align to those largest sectors, making PAC an excellent choice for individuals in the region. *Table 2* presents the 2024 ACS 5-year estimates for civilian employment for the population sixteen years and older by industry and occupation in San Antonio.

**Table 2. Employment by Industry and Occupation in San Antonio 2024**

Sector	Employment	Percent
<b>Management, business, and financial occupations</b>	<b>102,241</b>	<b>14.5%</b>
Management occupations	63,957	9.0%
Business and financial operations occupations	38,284	5.5%
Computer, engineering, and science occupations	40,219	5.7%
<b>Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations</b>	<b>71,681</b>	<b>10.1%</b>
Community and social service occupations	10,736	1.5%
Legal occupations	7,219	1.0%
Educational instruction, and library occupations	41,066	5.8%
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	12,660	1.8%
<b>Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations</b>	<b>41,854</b>	<b>5.9%</b>
Health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations	27,058	3.8%
Health technologists and technicians	14,796	2.1%
<b>Sales and office occupations</b>	<b>161,512</b>	<b>22.8%</b>
Sales and related occupations	69,276	9.8%
Office and administrative support occupations	92,236	13.0%
<b>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations</b>	<b>70,809</b>	<b>10.0%</b>
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,129	0.2%
Construction and extraction occupations	47,053	6.7%
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	22,627	3.2%

**Table 2. Employment by Industry and Occupation in San Antonio 2024 (cont.)**

Sector	Employment	Percent
<b>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations</b>	<b>83,166</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
Production occupations	28,628	4.0%
Transportation occupations	27,963	4.0%
Material moving occupations	26,575	3.8%
<b>Other Services and Supports</b>	<b>135,613</b>	<b>19.2%</b>
Healthcare support occupations	26,598	3.8%
Protective service occupations	12,815	1.8%
Food preparation and serving related occupations	51,636	7.3%
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	29,039	4.1%
Personal care and service occupations	15,525	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>707,095</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 5-Year Estimates Table S2401

### 5.1.3 Wages by Industry

As reviewed in Section 4, median income is lower in San Antonio than across Texas and the nation overall. This trend remains stable across sectors and most occupations, where the median income of San Antonio workers falls below state and national comparisons. This data is presented in *Table 3*.

**Table 3. Individual Median Income by Occupation, Nation, State, and Metropolitan Area 2024**

Sector	USA	Texas	San Antonio
<b>Management, business, and financial occupations</b>	<b>\$ 84,561</b>	<b>\$ 82,599</b>	<b>\$ 67,597</b>
Management occupations	\$ 88,250	\$ 86,470	\$ 71,061
Business and financial operations occupations	\$ 78,814	\$ 76,607	\$ 64,765
Computer, engineering, and science occupations	\$ 96,223	\$ 97,535	\$ 79,638
<b>Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations</b>	<b>\$ 53,871</b>	<b>\$ 55,522</b>	<b>\$ 51,675</b>
Community and social service occupations	\$ 52,313	\$ 51,280	\$ 47,991
Legal occupations	\$ 101,229	\$ 93,603	\$ 73,814
Educational instruction, and library occupations	\$ 50,837	\$ 55,145	\$ 54,388
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	\$ 50,709	\$ 47,390	\$ 41,434
<b>Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations</b>	<b>\$ 73,373</b>	<b>\$ 72,497</b>	<b>\$ 66,585</b>
Health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations	\$ 86,270	\$ 85,644	\$ 83,356
Health technologists and technicians	\$ 48,319	\$ 47,360	\$ 46,888
<b>Sales and office occupations</b>	<b>\$ 40,476</b>	<b>\$ 38,181</b>	<b>\$ 35,038</b>
Sales and related occupations	\$ 39,579	\$ 37,217	\$ 32,384
Office and administrative support occupations	\$ 40,829	\$ 38,679	\$ 35,934

**Table 3. Individual Median Income by Occupation, Nation, State, and Metropolitan Area 2024 (cont.)**

Sector	USA	Texas	San Antonio
<b>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations</b>	<b>\$ 49,199</b>	<b>\$ 44,534</b>	<b>\$ 39,961</b>
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	\$ 30,339	\$ 30,687	\$ 24,556
Construction and extraction occupations	\$ 47,910	\$ 42,009	\$ 36,414
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	\$ 55,352	\$ 51,331	\$ 47,212
<b>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations</b>	<b>\$ 39,989</b>	<b>\$ 39,157</b>	<b>\$ 36,222</b>
Production occupations	\$ 44,046	\$ 43,022	\$ 39,408
Transportation occupations	\$ 46,119	\$ 48,274	\$ 41,268
Material moving occupations	\$ 30,930	\$ 29,982	\$ 29,574
<b>Other Services and Supports</b>	<b>\$ 26,804</b>	<b>\$ 24,174</b>	<b>\$ 23,217</b>
Healthcare support occupations	\$ 30,535	\$ 25,920	\$ 24,519
Protective service occupations	\$ 57,612	\$ 54,230	\$ 47,619
Food preparation and serving related occupations	\$ 19,259	\$ 18,188	\$ 20,190
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	\$ 28,232	\$ 24,561	\$ 23,886
Personal care and service occupations	\$ 22,748	\$ 22,569	\$ 20,691
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 49,666</b>	<b>\$ 47,575</b>	<b>\$ 40,315</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024 5-Year Estimates Table S2411

San Antonio workers split the middle, out-earning national workers but earning below state workers, in educational instruction, and library occupations with locals earning a median income of \$54,388 compared with the national median of \$50,837. San Antonio workers also slightly out-earn those in the state and the nation when it comes to food preparation and serving related occupations. In all other areas, San Antonio workers earn less than those across the nation and state, to varying degrees.

## 5.2 Workforce

Despite lower than state and national earnings in the metropolitan area, San Antonio has and has maintained a growing labor market. In Greater SATX Regional Economic Partnership's 2023 report, they indicate they have contributed to over 6,800 work-based learning opportunities which provide students with hands-on (also called experiential learning), a focus of the Alamo Colleges as well.

### 5.2.1 Employment and Unemployment Rates

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2026) Texas' unemployment rate in December 2025 was at 4.3%, slightly lower than the national rate of 4.4%. The San Antonio-New Braunfels area has maintained a relatively stable unemployment rate since a high of 12.6% in April 2020. After dropping steadily between April 2020 and August 2021, the regional unemployment rate has hovered between a low of 3.3% and a high of 4.4%. *Table 4* displays the San Antonio area unemployment rates from 2016 to 2026.

**Table 4. Employment and Unemployment Counts and Rates for the San Antonio-New Braunfels Metro Area, 2016-2026**

Year	Total Civilian Labor Force	Percent Growth	Number of People Employed	Number of People Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2026	1,374,000	2.7%	1,323,800	52,000	3.7%
2025	1,337,426	3.4%	1,291,929	45,497	3.4%
2024	1,293,836	2.0%	1,245,321	48,515	3.7%
2023	1,268,493	3.6%	1,218,797	49,696	3.9%
2022	1,223,971	2.9%	1,186,860	46,111	3.7%
2021	1,208,907	2.2%	1,146,120	62,787	5.2%
2020	1,183,338	-0.4%	1,096,750	86,588	7.3%
2019	1,188,077	1.0%	1,150,958	37,119	3.1%
2018	1,176,738	1.5%	1,137,334	39,404	3.3%
2017	1,159,970	1.5%	1,118,736	41,234	3.5%
2016	1,143,008	3.3%	1,099,891	43,117	3.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2026), Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Not counting the COVID-19 period between 2020 and 2021, unemployment in the San Antonio-New Braunfels area has remained stable. At the same time, there has been consistent growth in the labor force. Since the pandemic period, the area has experienced growth in the labor force of over 2% annually. As unemployment remains stable, the area's workforce and employment opportunities have continued to grow and trend in a positive direction.



# Legislation Update

The state legislation update section of the Environmental Scan contains legislation updates from the State of Texas 89th Legislative Sessions that potentially affect education and/or community colleges specifically. For a full list of legislative updates please go to <https://capitol.texas.gov/>.

## **H.R.983: -Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserves Tuition Fairness Act (2025-2026): (Became Law) Goes into effect August 1, 2026**

Passed, Goes into effect August 1, 2026

This bill requires public colleges and universities to charge in-state tuition rates to members of the Selected Reserve (a component of the U.S. military Reserve forces) who use their Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve education benefits, regardless of their state of residence.

**H.R.899: -To Terminate the DOE (2025-2026): (Introduced)**

This bill that terminates the U.S. Department. It offers no transition plan or replacement structure, simply ending the federal agency outright. Supporters argue that education oversight should return fully to states and local communities.

**H.R.4767: -Community College Educational Exchange Act (2025-2026): (Introduced)**

This bill promotes international educational exchanges by encouraging the State Department and USAID to expand partnerships between foreign scholars and U.S. community colleges and postsecondary vocational institutions. It also establishes new scholarship and capacity-building programs to help international students study in the U.S. and to help community colleges grow study-abroad and hybrid exchange opportunities. Within one year of enactment, the State Department must report to Congress on progress, priority countries, and expanded institutional partnerships.

**H.R.5531: -Career and Technical Education Access Act (2025-2026): (Introduced)**

This bill creates a federal grant program to help states establish, expand, or improve career and technical education (CTE) programs, including CTE high schools, regional career centers, and online or hybrid options. The bill aims to address rising demand for skilled workers by requiring strong industry partnerships, work-based learning opportunities, and regular workforce-needs assessments to ensure programs align with local labor markets. It prioritizes underserved and rural communities and integrates dual-enrollment pathways so students can earn college credit while completing CTE coursework.

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