

Environmental Scan

Good to Great 2026



ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT
St. Philip's College

P

POLITICAL

- Presidential Executive Orders: Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education, Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities, White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at HBCUs, Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking
- SB530 relates to the accreditation of certain postsecondary educational institutions or certain programs offered by those institutions
- SB37 relates to the governance of public institutions of higher education, includes the review of curriculum and certain degree and certificate programs, a faculty council or senate, training for members of the governing board, and the establishment, powers, and duties of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Office of the Ombudsman
- SB2972 relates to expressive activities at public institutions of higher education (Free Speech)
- HB149 provides a framework for the regulation of artificial intelligence systems in the state; it requires transparency from companies and government agencies.
- SB1786 states that community colleges will now receive funds when students transfer to a private institution, not just public ones; the definition of credentials of value is now aligned to wage related returns on investment for students and labor market needs.
- SB5615 restricts remote work for higher education employees with some exceptions.

E

ECONOMIC

- The poverty rate in San Antonio is 13%, a 4.5 percentage point reduction from 2024, however we are still above the national poverty rate of 12.1%. 17.5 percent (14.7 percent in Bexar County) which is significantly higher than the national rate of 12.5 percent. The median household income is \$66,176 below which is below the national median of \$83,730.
- In the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA, 12,100 jobs were added over the year at a 1.0% growth rate. Five major industries showed monthly gains in November 2025: Trade Transportation and Utilities, Government, Private Education and Health Services, Financial Activities, and the Information industry.
- In November 2025, job losses occurred in six major industries: Mining and Logging, Manufacturing, Professional and Business Services, Other Services and Construction. The largest loss occurred in the Leisure and Hospitality industry.
- Industries experiencing monthly job loss achieved positive annual job gains over the year except for the Leisure and Hospitality and Professional and Business Services industries.
- The San Antonio unemployment rate increased to 4.2 percent from 3.9 percent in 2024. The metropolitan unemployment rate is just below the U.S. rate of 4.3 percent and the 4.2 percent for Texas.
- Reduction in available federal grant funding and other budget cuts.

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SOCIAL

- UT-Austin's Texas Politics Project poll taken December 2025, 15% of Texans polled have a favorable opinion of universities and colleges, 28% have a somewhat favorable opinion.
- National six-year completion rate for community colleges is 44.1% (2019 cohort), a decrease of 0.1% from the previous year (NSC, 2025).
- The six-year completion rate for students in this cohort with prior dual enrollment experience was 57.1% while students without dual enrollment experience was 39.9%.
- At every income level, in every year, students from more affluent neighborhoods had sharply higher completion rates than those from lower income backgrounds. Half of the 2019 starters (50.1%) from the lowest neighborhood income quintile (bottom 20%) completed by year six versus 75.9% of those from the highest neighborhood income quintile (top 20%).
- Enrollment in certificate programs rose by 1.9%, while associate degrees grew by 2.2%, compared to just 0.9% growth in bachelor's programs. Community colleges have been a major driver of this trend, now enrolling 752,000 students in certificate programs, a remarkable 28.3% increase since fall 2021 after four consecutive years of growth.
- Growth in undergraduate enrollment was driven by a 3.0 percent increase in community college enrollment, compared to a 1.4 percent increase at public 4-year colleges.
- Fewer enrolled adults are considering stopping out, but nearly a third have still considered it, largely due to emotional stress, mental health and cost concerns

T

TECHNOLOGICAL

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) helps educational institutions progress with context-based decision-making. One example is intelligent tutoring systems that provide personalized feedback and guidance based on individual learning needs
- Georgia State University used predictive analytics to improve graduation rates for its students by identifying students who were at risk of dropping out and providing those students targeted intervention (advising, tutoring, financial assistance).
- Western Reserve University engages mixed reality to teach anatomy, this immersive learning approach allows students to visualize and interact with anatomical models.
- Arizona State University has implemented personalized learning programs that allow students to progress through courses at their own rate. The program combines adaptive learning technology, data analytics and competency-based curriculum.
- College cybersecurity challenges will require continual culture changes beyond multi-factor authentication as the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act (CIRCA) becomes connected for compliance with Dept of Defense grants and funding.
- Cyber attacks on higher education institutions are increasing.
- Digital divide due to a lack of digital literacy and lower income levels.

L

LEGAL

- Balancing Compliance with Existing Law: Institutions have ongoing legal and regulatory obligations to prohibit harassment and discrimination and provide a safe environment for employees and students (implications for Titles VI, VII, and IX of the Civil Rights Act).
- 8 U.S.C. § 1324 Harboring Liability implications for noncitizen students
- ICE Administrative Subpoenas - the kinds of records sought may implicate serious privacy interests of students or faculty & often obtain more information or assistance than is legally authorized.
- Recent state legislation and demands from the White House, prohibit professors from expressing scholarly viewpoints disfavored by the government, and regulate university educational decisions about curriculum, faculty appointments, and student admissions.
- Students at UT Austin and UT Dallas, filed a lawsuit against the university presidents, chancellors and the UT System Board of Regents over SB2972, which turns every public university into a speech-free zone starting at 10pm.
- The Sex/Gender Executive Order implications for Title IX; interpretations state that gender identity and sexual orientation do not apply to Title IX protections.
- There are state laws changing the legal landscape in the following areas in higher education across the nation: accreditation, free speech protections and limitation, legacy admission bans, regulating AI, LGBTQ+ restrictions, funding models and DEI. (SB 17, SB37, HB8).