



Game Changers

Getting serious about improving completion rates.

TAB's President and CEO Bill Hammond and Complete College America's Stan Jones pushed for more steps to improve completion rates to start this year's TAB Higher Education Conference.

"There are five things the Legislature can do next session that will make an impact," said Hammond. "The fact is, we must take action to help students complete a higher education. Our future job market and economic health are riding on it."

Complete College America (CCA) has a list of five "game changers" that are designed to help students get degrees and certificates, and hold higher education accountable for better results.

"The Legislature took one step by approving limited outcomes based funding for community colleges last session," said Hammond. "We need the Legislature to expand that next session to include four-year universities."

Along with performance based funding, the other "game changers" include changing the definition of a full-time student from a student taking 12 hours per semester to a student taking 15 hours per semester. "That class load is what is needed to get a degree in two or four years at most colleges and community colleges," said Hammond.



Texas Business Leadership Council Executive Director Justin Yancy speaks to the TAB Higher Education Conference.

The plan also calls for better guidance for students seeking a degree. "By placing students on a so called 'guided pathway,' they will be able to focus on the credits they need and not end up taking a lot of meaningless classes that have nothing to do with the degree they are seeking," said Hammond.

The "game changers" include changing the way we remediate students who aren't quite ready for the next step. "CCA says that 62 percent of Texas students who

WORKFORCE Q&A

As an employer, what should I be doing to make sure my company's confidential and proprietary information is legally protected?

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UPCOMING EVENT

TAB Annual Conference
February 5-6, 2014

*Registration is now open for
TAB's Annual Conference*

*Sheraton Austin at the Capitol
701 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701*

Visit www.txbiz.org to register.

TAB MISSION

*To make the Texas
business climate the
best in the world.*

WORKFORCE Q&A



Jacqueline C. Johnson,
Littler Mendelson, P.C.

As an employer, what should I be doing to make sure my company's confidential and proprietary information is legally protected?

All too often, employers approach the issue of protecting confidential information by simply instituting a requirement that employees sign nondisclosure contracts. While a confidentiality agreement is very important, a contract, standing alone, is often insufficient protection. Employers should first make sure they have fully identified the information that is of importance to their business. Comprehensively identifying this information

may require interviewing individuals holding various positions within the company (operations, sales, human resources, legal, etc.) to make sure all angles are covered. Employers should also review their documents to ensure that confidential information is being defined both broadly and specifically enough to include the full scope of the company's confidential information. In this regard, offer letters, handbooks, separation documents, as well as confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements need to be reviewed for consistency. These documents should also be reviewed with an eye towards emerging legal issues, such as, for example, approved use of company computers and programs (for purposes of potentially setting up claims under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act) and the National Labor Relations Board's recent decisions (concerning employees' Section 7 rights under the National Labor Relations Act). Employers might also consider whether they need new policies to address modern trends in the workplace—such as social media policies and “BYOD” policies concerning employees' ability to bring their own electronic storage devices to work. Obviously, it is also important for companies to address physical and electronic safeguards. Are hard files kept under lock and key? Are sensitive files password protected? What becomes of hard copies of confidential documents once they are discarded—are they shredded or otherwise securely disposed of? Companies should examine the contents of employee training to determine whether the security of confidential information is adequately addressed. Finally, employees need to consider their practices when they hire and terminate employees to ensure confidential information is being protected at the front-end and back-end. New hire and termination checklists are useful in this regard, as are exit interviews.

Employment Relations questions?

***Don't forget to call TAB's Employment Relations Hotline
for your next HR Question
1.800.856.6721, ext. 164 or E-mail smcgee@txbiz.org***

TEXAS BUSINESS REPORT

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End of Year Report: 2013 Chair John Bass

Dear Fellow Texans,

I would like to thank every TAB member, our board, officers, and staff for the wonderful opportunity to serve as your chairman this past year.

We still remain one of the most effective business associations in this state or any other state. We are truly helping business be successful, doing business in Texas.

The financial health of our association remains strong, and our greatest asset, our membership, continues to grow each and every day.

We have set out to provide a clear blue print for continued growth. Key members and staff have been engaged for a number of months and are doing great work with the four active task forces. They are dealing with finance, affinity programs, membership and marketing, and technology and communications. We will be presenting those reports soon. That work, along with the strong TAB Strategic Plan, will provide a clear roadmap for our continued success.

2013 was also a legislative year, and TAB can look proudly on its accomplishments. The actions of this past legislative session and the fall amendment election success were good for business in the areas of lower taxes and water resource planning.

We also made progress in the special session on transportation funding and will work hard in 2014 to ensure passage of the ballot measure to provide a new funding source for our much needed transportation projects.

Washington D.C. remains one of our biggest challenges to overcome as we

strive toward the goal of continued success in our business activities in Texas and across the nation. TAB President and CEO Bill Hammond worked tirelessly with our Texas delegation in Washington to let them know the positions our Texas businesses have taken on major issues. There will always be much work to do in our nation's capital, but I believe TAB is a growing force to be reckoned with there.



TAB 2013 Chairman John Bass

Finally, I would like to thank our President, Bill Hammond, for his help and support of me and our association. He continues to do amazing work for all of you, and our Texas businesses are better because of that work.

Have a safe and blessed Christmas season. I will see all of you in Austin in February at the TAB Annual Conference.

John Bass
2013 TAB Chairman

Game Changers *continued from page one*

start in remediation will end up dropping out of college,” said Hammond. The idea is to mix remediation with college level coursework. For example, that would mean a student could take a remedial math course, and a college algebra course at the same time, using what they learn in the remedial course they aren't getting credit for, in a course where they will get credit.

Finally, we must do something to help students working their way through school. “We can use block scheduling to allow students to get all of their classes finished in the morning, allowing them to work in the afternoon and still leave time to study,” said Hammond.

“When it comes to addressing college completion throughout the country, and right here in Texas, we must make a commitment to the types of reforms that lead to two, three, and four times the results for our students,” said Stan Jones, president of Complete College America. “The Game Changers are strategies that have been proven to do just that – strategies that will empower students, strengthen the workforce, and keep Texas competitive.”

Jones went on to say, “Business leaders in Texas recognize that tackling the college completion crisis is about securing the economic future of this state. We are thrilled to have the support of the Texas Association of Business as we work to increase the number of Texans with a college degree, or credential of value, and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations.”

MEMBER PROFILE

Cox Logistics, LLC – A Productive Powerhouse in the Pipe Industry

Cox Logistics, LLC only began trucking operations under its own authority in March of 2010; however, their experience and history go back to the early 1950s when Calvin Cox moved from the oil fields of West Texas to the forests and hills of North East Texas to open a pipe yard and oil field trucking terminal for E.L. Farmer Company. Mitchell Cox, the oldest of Calvin's three sons, followed in his footsteps and took over the pipe yard and trucking operations in the late 80s. After working in transportation and logistics for another company, Jason Cox joined the team in 2006. Before going to work with his father, Jason graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1999 and was fortunate enough to have worn the burnt orange for the baseball team in the 1998 and 1999 seasons. After college, Jason coached for a short time then moved into a career in logistics. In 2006, Cox Logistics was an agent contractor for a larger trucking company but soon realized that going out on their own was the next step for success. After overseeing this transition from 2010 to 2012, Mitchell retired and Jason stepped in to run the operation.

Headquartered in Lone Star, Cox Logistics now manages 53 company trucks, 20 independent contractors and a brokerage division that services the oil and gas tubular products (pipe) industry. In an effort to diversify, a refrigerated division was started in 2011 and operates a fleet of 22 trucks. The two divisions and the office staff are made up of 95 employees plus independent contractors. Keeping with the family atmosphere, Calvin Cox's other two sons work in the safety department, and their cousin, Casey Cox, works in operations. The success of the company up to this point lies in the relationships the employees have with the customers, many of whom they have known for decades.

Since Jason took over in 2012, a message of efficiency has been encouraged by the management staff. So far, the biggest achievement along those lines has been a complete turnover of the fleet to all new trucks. The safety, technology and fuel efficiency have enabled Cox

Logistics to really measure performance and return some of the savings back to the employees. This, in turn, has helped reduce driver turnover.

Jason shares how he keeps his team prepared and always moving forward: "Safety, honesty, timeliness of deliveries, and timeliness of communication are what we try to instill in our operations folks. We have a great team here, from the safety department to the accounting department. We try to empower our employees with the information and the tools they need to keep us heading in the right direction. I feel that TAB is one of those tools. It gives us a louder voice on the issues that affect our business and gives access to information that we wouldn't otherwise get."

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*- Jason Cox,
COO, Cox Logistics, LLC*

Like any industry, the transportation industry can see its share of ups and downs. Seasonal fluctuations, regulatory issues, and the overall economy are concerns for Cox Logistics to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Jason feels, "My role, along with partner Keith Strickland, as owners and managers, is to figure out operational and financial solutions that will let us flatten out those ups and downs while still being successful and providing our employees with a great place to work."



Cox Logistics, LLC Lone Star, Texas

PAVE'ing the Way for Veterans

Paving Access to Veterans Employment (PAVE) is a program from the Paralyzed Veterans of America to find jobs for veterans and make the transition from military to civilian life smoother.

The program is being supported by TAB member, UnitedHealth Group, which is paying for a national television and radio ad campaign to inform the country of the work the PAVE program is doing.

“As an organization led by people who use wheelchairs, we understand how misperceptions take root. Helping to build awareness that veterans are really everywhere in communities doing their share and more, is particularly important to a group like ours,” said Bill Lawson, national President of Paralyzed Veterans of America. “We’re working to help address one of the most critical parts of the veteran transition experience - how veterans feel about themselves and how the rest of the nation - their peers, employers, colleagues and neighbors - perceive them.”

“This campaign will help people understand the commitment to excellence that veterans bring to everything they do,” said Ellen Wilson, Executive Vice President, Human Capital for UnitedHealth Group. “Veterans bring their sense of

mission every day to their workplaces and their communities.”

The TV and radio spots convey veterans providing value through their jobs and volunteer service, showcasing several vignettes with veterans working hard as business owners and industrious employees, as caring clinicians, teachers, coaches and community members.

Operation PAVE is open to all veterans, with or without disabilities, who are seeking jobs and education opportunities. Creating public awareness of veterans as workplace and community leaders was one of the most urgent priorities that Paralyzed Veterans identified through conversations with thought leaders, employers, and veterans themselves. Advertising is a key vehicle for generating visibility, stirring conversations, and shaping perceptions.

TAB members who have job openings for these veterans also can play a big role in the success of the program. Employers interested in finding out more about PAVE’s free job placement services, vocational counseling, and help with VA benefits, please visit www.PVA.org/PAVE. Veterans who are looking for a job should also visit that website to find out more about the PAVE program and what it has to offer.

THE ALGEBRA DEBATE

TAB President and CEO Bill Hammond testified this month before the State Board of Education on the importance of keeping Algebra II as a requirement for graduating high school in Texas.

The board voted not to keep Algebra II as a requirement for graduation, with the exception of students who take the plan with a STEM endorsement, but that doesn’t tell the whole story.

“While Algebra II isn’t a requirement we feel that most students will still have to take the course,” said Hammond. “There are enough courses that students will opt to take that have Algebra II as a prerequisite that many students will still have to take the course.”

The bottom line is students who want to continue their education in college will still have to take Algebra II and many students who have decided to go to a technical school or get some other kind of job training after high school will still have to take Algebra II as a prerequisite to another course.

QUOTES

“Texas has benefited greatly from exports. When capital investment comes here, it brings good jobs, good wages, and good economic growth. The Obama administration needs to get its act together and approve more permits to export LNG.”

– TAB President Bill Hammond in the *Oil and Gas Journal*

“We can do all of these things while still protecting the safety net for low income Americans, which is critical.”

– TAB President Bill Hammond in the *Weatherford Democrat* speaking on entitlement reform.

“You have a vocal minority within the Republican Party primary voters, they have a big microphone, but they’re very vocal.”

– TAB President Bill Hammond in the *Dallas Morning News* speaking on immigration reform.



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Talk **About** Business

Just Attending College Is Not Enough



John Bass, TAB Board Chair

Texas has made great strides in terms of getting more students of all backgrounds beginning the path to a higher education in our community colleges and four-year institutions. We are seeing record enrollment year in and year out, and that is something to be proud of.

The other end of the higher education story is far more disheartening. While we are getting more and more students in, we are not doing enough to get them out with a degree or certificate.

Try as we might, we simply are not seeing an increase in college completion rates. That is unacceptable for a student to put their time, money, and effort into an education and then not walk across the stage with a meaningful degree at the end of the process.

This lack of higher education completion could be deadly to our economy. Today, only around 30 percent of Texas 25-to-35-year-olds have some kind of degree or certificate. That is 10 percent lower than the national average. Listen to this statistic. According to the Higher Education Coordinating Board, out of 100 8th graders, only 12 will have a college degree or post-secondary certificate in 10 years.

We must make changes that will help students navigate through college at a price both they and their parents can afford and in a time frame that will put them into the workforce. Complete College America calls these ideas “game changers.” I call them common sense.

Our Legislature this session put part of one of the recommendations in place, tying 10 percent of community college funding to increasing completion rates. We support expanding that to every state funded college and university. Money is a great motivator for getting change and results.

There are many students who want to go to college but simply aren't ready academically. At the community college level about 10 percent of the students would be better off in adult basic education, and at the four-year schools, some students should get remediation from a community college before entering the four-year university setting. We must also consider changing remediation so students can use those skills immediately to pass courses that count toward graduation. For instance, allowing them to take a remedial algebra course at the same time they

take college algebra. When a student enters a situation that they are not ready for, more times than not that leads to failure.

Students are not finishing college on time. I believe we need to redefine what it means to be a full-time student. For many degrees it takes 15 credit hours per semester to get a degree in four years. Currently, to be considered a full-time student it only takes 12 credit hours per semester. Do you see the problem? The number of hours it takes to earn a degree should be what we consider full time.

More scheduling flexibility would help students who work be able to group their classes into a time block, and group their work into another time block, and ensure they would have some time left to study and rest. That would be great to help students, who are working their way through school to maintain a full-time class load. Keeping students on a so-called “guided pathway,” setting out a clear roadmap with clear goals that end in a degree, will also mean more success.

If Texas is to maintain a competitive workforce in the 21st century, we simply must do better. I know we can.