



## **The Texas Public University Report Card**

Measuring University Engagement & Outcomes  
of First-Generation Low-Income Students

Published April 8, 2024

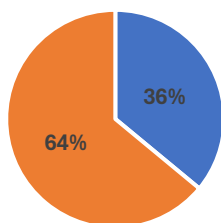
For more information or for the interactive Report Card, visit [www.scholarshot.org](http://www.scholarshot.org)

# The Texas Public University Report Card Highlights

## 2023

According to ScholarShot's annual Report Card, Texas public universities are making progress in engaging with first-generation, low-income students. However, some areas still require considerable improvement. The report identifies four key areas, highlighting significant room for improvement in orange.

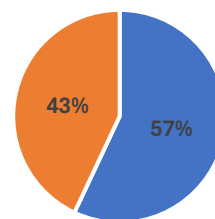
### Financial Gaps Tracked & Analyzed



■ Financial gaps tracked & analyzed ■ Room for improvement

**FGLI students need to know their total out of pocket expenses to attend university. Does your university track and analyze the financial gaps to cover the full cost of attendance? Only 29% track and analyze and 36% only track or neither track or analyze.**

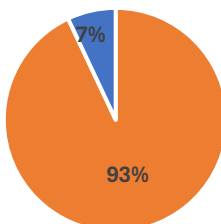
### Financial Literacy for All Students



■ Required ■ Room for improvement

**FGLI students are often trapped by high debt. Does your university require financial education for all students? Only 21% of universities require all students to have financial education and 43% require it only for students who have loans.**

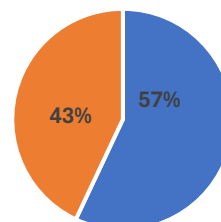
### Grade Return Time Limits



■ Room for improvement  
■ 3 weeks or less grade return

**FGLI students often don't see quiz or test grades for a month or more, leaving little time for improvement before final grades. Does your university have university-wide time limits for professors to return grades? Only 7% do. The remainder do not have a university-wide time limit or it is departmentalized.**

### Dropouts in Good Standing



■ Dropouts in good standing  
■ Room for improvement

**FGLI students have many reasons to drop out or pause their education. Does your university analyze the dropouts who are in good academic standing? Only 57% do.**

Texas institutions of higher education receive over \$751 million a year from taxpayer funds, not including \$650 million specifically to community colleges in 2023, but only 2 in 10 Texas high school graduates succeed in earning a degree or certificate. Texas universities must continue to develop and refine their support systems to improve outcomes for all students, but especially FGLI students, and help rebuild the Texas workforce. To learn more, visit [www.scholarshot.org](http://www.scholarshot.org)

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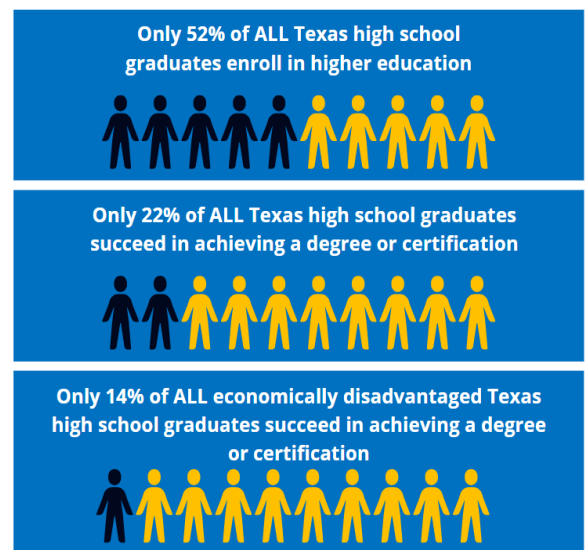
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## About the Authors and Texas FGLI University Students

ScholarShot is a nonprofit organization that aims to help at-risk students exit poverty by completing career-ready vocational, associate, or bachelor degrees. Scholars are provided academic, financial, and social support while participating in the program. This process begins during their senior year of high school when ScholarShot meets with hundreds of North Texas first-generation, low-income (FGLI) students each year, and the support continues through college graduation. The ScholarShot program has above a 90% graduation rate, and our Scholars graduate with less than 1/3rd of the average debt of peer graduates.

Over the ten-plus years of ScholarShot's work with FGLI students, a costly blind spot was exposed, ultimately leading to the creation of this Report Card. This blind spot is our state's poor performance in transferring our high school graduates from a diploma to a livable wage. Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that some postsecondary credentials are required – for example, a vocational, associate, or undergraduate degree – to be employable at a livable wage.<sup>1</sup> The most recent pool of data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) shows that the needle is moving in the wrong direction.

The graphic to the right shows two startling statistics. Firstly, only 52% of all Texas high school graduates enroll in a higher education institution. Secondly, the percentage of students achieving a postsecondary credential is 22%.<sup>2</sup> That's only 2 in 10 students succeeding in earning a postsecondary credential and for economically disadvantaged students the outcomes are even more grim. Only 14% of all economically disadvantaged students earn a postsecondary credential. Texas taxpayers invests more than \$160,000 in each K-12 education, which means the return for the \$70+ billion taxpayers have invested in the 78% not earning anything post-high school is a poverty wage or low employability.<sup>3</sup> These are not satisfactory outcomes for our students, communities, or state.



The purpose of the Texas University Report Card is to improve postsecondary outcomes for Texas students by sharing best practices used by the universities to engage better and support their FGLI students and challenge those universities making less effort toward the outcome of their students. We recognize that college readiness is primarily the responsibility of our K-12 systems; however, if our universities are willing to enroll FGLI students, take their grants, and extend them loans, they must also engage in a commitment to maximize their students' success.

Of the several hundred FGLI students ScholarShot advises each year, listed below are observations that ScholarShot finds are continued and prevailing practices in Texas:

<sup>1</sup> According to the USBLS, 99% of the jobs created since the 2009 recession require a postsecondary credential.

<sup>2</sup> THECB, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Statewide Summary Report, 2022

<sup>3</sup> General Appropriations Act for the 2022-2023 Biennium

1. High school college advisement focuses on class rank and GPA rather than national college readiness standards, like SAT or ACT scores. The effect is academic over-matching students to universities where they risk high debt and low success rates.
2. The support systems of our universities predominately rely on students taking the initiative to advocate and intervene for themselves. FGLI students, by and large, have not had the chance to learn or practice this skill and instead respond to challenging circumstances with a "fight, flight, or freeze" mentality.
3. Most FGLI students exhibit a high degree of grit and desire to prove themselves, making them vulnerable to poor advisement. Many enroll in universities without knowing the total attendance cost or understanding their financial gaps after grants and loans.
4. Many FGLI students are advised to "max out" their debt to afford a 4-year institution.
5. The majority of our state's FGLI students, by no fault of their own, are failing in the current state of our public universities.
6. Earning a career-ready postsecondary credential is a crucial step for students from the FGLI population to exit poverty and reach a sustainable wage. With just over 40% attempting postsecondary education, we should push these students to earn at least a vocational certificate.<sup>4</sup>

70% of all jobs over the next ten years will require a postsecondary certification, and who better to fill these jobs than Texas kids? Texas transplants hold nearly twice as many postsecondary degrees as native Texans.<sup>5</sup> If Texas students are to be competitive in tomorrow's workforce, we must provide the support they need. This is the primary objective of the Texas Public University Report Card – ensuring that our FGLI students are supported in achieving a postsecondary credential.

ScholarShot acknowledges that the number of FGLI students it advises is a fraction of the roughly 290,000 students graduating from high schools yearly in Texas. While ScholarShot believes its small sample of FGLI students represents the overall FGLI population, there are always exceptions. ScholarShot recognizes that this data does not include the approximately 13% of students who attend or succeed at a postsecondary institution out of state because the state of Texas does not track these students.<sup>6</sup> ScholarShot also acknowledges that the measures that comprise the Report Card represent only some of the interactions or outcomes at public universities. ScholarShot contends, however, that the Report Card represents a new standard to measure and assess how well our public universities engage our FGLI students with the intent of them succeeding in earning a degree.

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<sup>4</sup> THECB, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Statewide Summary Report, 2022

<sup>5</sup> State of Readiness Report, March 2023, Texas2036, <https://texas2036.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-State-of-Readiness-Report-March-2023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Hanson, Melanie. "College Enrollment & Demographic Statistics", EducationData.org, January 10, 2024, <https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics>

# Introduction to the Texas Public University Report Card

The failure of our education system to transition First-Generation Low-Income (FGLI) students from high school to career is a costly blind spot for everyone involved, including students, tax-paying citizens, public school districts, and higher education institutions.

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) longitudinal study of 2022, 77% of students graduating from Texas public high schools identified as economically disadvantaged, and only 43% of those students enrolled in higher education. Sadly, only 14% achieved a degree or certification.<sup>7</sup> Successfully making this transition through postsecondary education means exiting poverty with the ability to earn at least a livable wage. Failing this transition, however, means we return most deserving students to a life of poverty or worse. The lack of transitional support for this population means that nearly 9 out of 10 FGLI students enrolling in postsecondary institutions in Texas drop out.

Nearly 70% of today's workforce requires some postsecondary credential to achieve a sustainable wage. That means that when this population drops out, we accept a poverty wage in return for our K–12 investment. And worse, we impede these students from reaching their potential. The high rate of FGLI dropouts works against our better interests and the better interest of statewide initiatives such as Talent Strong Texas, formerly Texas60x30, whose goal is to have 60% of Texas residents ages 25-64 with some postsecondary credentials by 2030.<sup>8</sup> This recently changed goal makes it easier to achieve, but it is far less impactful. We must continue to track the population of native Texans who are earning some postsecondary credentials rather than including Texas transplants. By tracking native Texans' credentials, we can hold our secondary and higher ed public schools accountable. Texas2036 reports our current population, ages 25-34, with an associate degree or higher, is 39.1%, down from 43.6% in 2021.<sup>9</sup> Recent reports also show that only 22% of our Texas high school graduates have earned postsecondary credentials.

Our failure to transfer deserving students from high school to sustainable wages occurs because of systemic failings in three key areas, each significantly impacting FGLI students. As always, there are exceptions, but in general:

1. **Our High Schools** – Our high schools tend to over-match FGLI students to universities where they are academically, socially, and/or financially unprepared. While this feels good and makes the high school system look good, it is not in the best interest of our students. Additionally, roughly half (only 55%) of our high school graduates attempt any postsecondary credential statewide. We should advise students to at least earn a vocational certificate that will double their high school wage and rebuild our depleted workforce.

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<sup>7</sup> THECB, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Cohort Statewide Summary Report, 2022

<sup>8</sup> Visit <https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/talent-strong-texas/> for more information

<sup>9</sup> Texas2036 Education and Workforce, <https://texas2036.org/education-workforce/>

2. **Our Universities** – Our universities lack sufficient resources and supports to engage FGLI students so that they are successful in earning degrees. Instead, the majority of FGLI students drop out. Our universities readily accept these students and their public funding, but too many FGLI students drop out with debt and no degree.
3. **Our Public Policy** – Many of our public policies for higher education are access-oriented, such as the Texas top 10% rule, which gives students in the top 10% of the high school class automatic entry into certain public universities. The top 25% rule is less known, which requires certain universities to accept the top 25% of students. While well-meaning, these rules assure a large number of students, including many who are FGLI, are enrolled in universities, not knowing they are unprepared, underfunded, or both.

Based on these failings, ScholarShot began working on the Texas University Report Card in the summer of 2019, first published in January 2020. Our methodology is to present quantitative data based on data from the U.S. Department of Education and qualitative data from our *Best Practices* survey. We have followed a similar model over the past three years, adjusting the survey questions to dig deeper into the schools' policies and programs for FGLI students.

In the survey, schools had the opportunity to explain their answers to each measure to gather more information about each school's best practices. While this information is not used for grading purposes due to the subjectivity of the responses, it has allowed us to expand our survey questions and share more specific best practices in the future. Each year, some survey questions are reconstructed to ensure that all relevant information is obtained from the universities and that the questions are straightforward for consistent interpretation.

The 2023 Report Card was created with three objectives in mind:

1. To encourage all Texas universities to share and improve their practices around supporting FGLI students. FGLI students make up approximately half of the students who enroll in universities, and the majority of the students receive public funding.<sup>10</sup> Both our workforce and our FGLI students desperately need these degrees.
2. To inform and encourage advisors, parents, and students to consider schools that are graded higher at engaging FGLI students to and through graduation and more carefully consider those that grade lower.
3. To motivate our state legislators, who fund over \$350 million yearly in the TEXAS Grant (over \$1 billion combined with the federal Pell Grant and loans), to alter their distribution model from school demand to school performance.<sup>11</sup>

This year, like last year, we encourage all universities to schedule a review with ScholarShot once the Report Card is published. This review will review how the school performed on the Report Card and offer specific recommendations that will enhance graduation performance for their FGLI students.

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<sup>10</sup> Office of Financial Aid Report, THECB, 60x30TX, September 2020

<sup>11</sup> Office of Financial Aid Report, THECB, 60x30TX, September 2020



If Texas high schools and public universities heed the Report Card, we could see tremendous results for FGLI students and Texas. On this note, the BAIN Inspire Group shows the 6-year graduation rate for recipients of the TEXAS Grant (public university grant) at 54%, which returns a negative eight (-8%) ROI. If we can improve the graduation rate to 65%, the TEXAS Grant returns a positive ROI of 12% (+12%), which is a respectable return.<sup>12</sup> For many reasons, our state legislators and taxpayers should particularly want to improve the degree completion rate and deliver a positive return on this public investment.

The Report Card lists the public universities in Texas that have performed in the A-B range on engaging and supporting FGLI students through graduation. There are two pages to the Report Card: A Summary page and a Category Detail page. Online users can sort by column, region, or grade or select one or more universities to compare [here](#). Most users will want to focus on the Category Detail page to select and compare schools based on one or more Categories. In the Best Practices section, we highlight specific practices Texas universities implement to achieve better outcomes for our FGLI students.

Whether you are a student, parent, counselor, or interested stakeholder, we hope you find the Texas Public University Report Card informative and valuable.

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<sup>12</sup> BAIN Inspire study for ScholarShot produced December 17, 2018.

## Methodology

The report card includes five categories: Student Outcomes, Community Supports, Academic Engagement, Financial Management, and Student Services & Interventions. Each category is weighted equally at 20% of the final score.

The measures are based on ScholarShot "Best Practices," a collaborative effort derived from our 90+% degree completion rate working with FGLI students, extensive research in the field, and valuable input from our higher education partners. These measures encapsulate many of the supports universities should use to assist their FGLI students. The first category of Student Outcomes is quantitative, focusing on the performance of universities' FGLI students through and post-graduation. The remaining categories are qualitative, based on the survey completed by each university.

Following discussions with our esteemed higher education partners, we have chosen to publish the Report Card only for universities that have achieved an A or B final score. This decision is driven by our desire to spotlight the positive ways universities engage FGLI students while inspiring all to strive for continuous improvement in their practices and outcomes. Individual reviews are offered to all universities that participated in the survey, and we strongly encourage them to use this opportunity to enhance their students' outcomes. As with similar surveys, we have chosen to curve our scores.

## Categories

The Student Outcomes category is quantitative, using measures solely from the Department of Education. These range from cost of attendance to post-graduation salary, but ultimately, all measure how well FGLI students fare after graduating from the universities.

The remainder of the categories are qualitative measures surveyed directly from the universities. While there is a margin of error in the accuracy of the universities' self-reporting, ScholarShot found no abnormalities or questionable responses and believes the universities answered the survey questions accurately.

Each category contains the measures that are most relevant to that category. Below, you can see how the categories and measures are organized and how we define each measure:

## Student Outcomes



LOAN REPAYMENT RATE	The percentage of first-generation students who are on track to pay off their loans 5 years after completing
MEDIAN DEBT	The median debt for students who have completed
TOTAL COST	The total cost of attendance for in-state students (average of on and off campus living)
GRADUATION	The percentage of first-generation students who completed within 6 years at their original institution
MEDIAN EARNINGS	The median earnings of students working and not enrolled 10 years after entry

## Community Supports



SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM	Whether the school has a summer bridge program, the cost for students, and how many FGLI students can participate
LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY	Whether the school has FGLI and/or racial/ethnic based living-learning communities that support the students both academically and socially
STUDENT COMMUNICATION	Does the school utilize all communication modalities to alert parents and students about important information
MENTOR PROGRAM	Does the school have a mentor program for FGLI students, and the percent of freshman being mentored

## Academic Engagement



STUDENTS PER ACADEMIC ADVISER	Ratio of students per academic adviser at each university
EARLY ALERT SYSTEM	Whether the school has a university-wide Early Alert System that automatically alerts student and advisor when there is a problem with the student's alert factors i.e., failed test, unpaid tuition, etc.
RESPONSE TO EARLY ALERT	Whether the advisor, student, or both are required to respond to early alerts and how they are required to respond
TIME LIMIT FOR PROFESSORS	Do the universities have a mandatory time limit in place for professors to return grades and if so, what is that time limit

## Financial Management



DEBT/FINANCIAL EDUCATION	Whether universities have a debt/financial educational program and whether it is required for all students
MEET WITH FINANCIAL AID	Whether all students, students taking out loans, or no students are required to meet with a financial aid advisor
EMERGENCY FUNDING	Do the universities have non-loan emergency funding available for students due to a temporary or unexpected hardship and what percentage of requests are accepted
FINANCIAL GAP	Do the schools track and analyze each incoming student's financial gap and if so, what is the average annual financial gap

## Student Services and Interventions



PROBATION INTERVENTIONS	Does the university have a universal response when a student is placed on probation and if so, what is that response
DROPOUTS IN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING	Do the universities track students who drop out but are in good academic standing and if so, what percent of students dropping out are in good academic standing
MENTAL HEALTH WAIT TIME	The average amount of time a student waits to see a mental health professional
MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS & VISITS	How many visits, on average, a student makes to on-campus mental health services before being referred to an outside provider

## Comparing Other University Reporting Methods

Numerous organizations also report on how colleges compare, most notably the US News and World Report and the Chetty Report on student economic mobility. These reports collect a range of historical data to develop their rankings. The Texas Public University Report Card is similar in that our Graduate Outcomes category (20% of the total grade) uses historical data on university performance. The other four categories, however (Community Supports, Academic Engagement, Financial Management, and Interventions), are unique from other reports because they come directly from our experiences working with FGLI students at ScholarShot. The data for these qualitative categories was acquired through a survey completed by the participating universities. These categories and the measures within them assess practices and policies at each university that directly affect FGLI students and their chances to succeed. Measuring success at the universities in these categories makes our report distinctive from all other reports. See our Best Practices section for more discussion of these measures.

## University Participation

During our research, we requested that all thirty-six public university campuses in Texas participate in our survey. For various reasons, only fourteen were able to participate this year.

We are extremely grateful for each of these universities' willingness to participate and help create a better future for all students in Texas. We are disappointed, however, that more universities did not choose to participate. This is an opportunity for growth and the sharing of best practices for universities, and it would benefit all schools.

The schools that did not participate will have the opportunity to participate in future years so that Texas students, parents, and high school counselors can see what they have to offer FGLI students.

## Best Practices

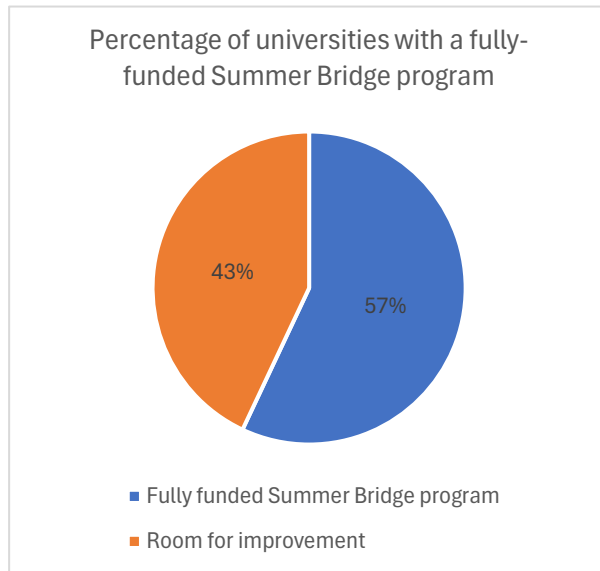
ScholarShot believes that the following Best Practices should be implemented at all universities to improve the engagement and outcomes for FGLI students. Below, we highlight the universities exhibiting Best Practices identified by the Report Card survey. It is important to note that many schools have recently begun utilizing these best practices, and the best practices may still need to affect the school's outcomes. Similarly, while most schools use the best practices correctly, certain practices are likely not used correctly or at total capacity. This could explain a gap between the best practices and the universities' outcomes. Each university has different strengths and weaknesses, but we are focusing on the strengths that help contribute to better outcomes for FGLI students.

## Community Supports

The following universities scored best overall in the Community Supports Category:

- Midwestern State University
- Texas A&M University
- University of North Texas
- University of Texas – Dallas
- Sam Houston State University
- University of North Texas – Dallas
- Tarleton State University

## Summer Bridge Program



A **fully funded** Summer Bridge Program that takes place during the summer before college entry and prepares at-risk students for a smooth academic and social transition from high school to college can be an invaluable experience for FGLI students. Since First-Generation students often do not have an adult close to them with college experience, a Summer Bridge Program can ease the stress of starting an entirely new lifestyle. Summer Bridge Programs amongst universities can vary including some that charge a fee, but below are quotes about some supports that the programs can provide:

“The Navigate Summer Bridge Academy is a residential program offered during the Summer II semester. Students are required to reside on campus during the

program. This 5-week summer bridge aimed at facilitating the transition to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi by introducing students to college-level academic concepts and coursework. The benefits of participating include: • earning 3-4 credits toward your degree prior to the start of the fall semester, • the cultivation of one-on-one mentorship with TAMU-CC faculty and peer coaches, • early access to TAMU-CC support culture, • guided academic and financial advisement, • practice with learning experiences and habits, and • the opportunity to achieve College Ready status in Mathematics.” – Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

“We offered a pilot summer bridge program targeted students who were FGLI and NCR in both Math and English on the TSI. We offered them a no-cost ENGL 1301 and INRW 0014 (co-requisite) support course via Live Online instruction to maximize student accessibility and minimize costs to students and the institution. We piloted the program with ~25 students Summer 2023 and will be expanding to 40 students for Summer 2024.” – Sam Houston State University

These universities offered a fully funded Summer Bridge Program in 2023 for FGLI students:

Midwestern State University  
Sam Houston State University  
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi  
Texas A&M International University  
University of North Texas  
University of North Texas – Dallas  
University of Texas - Dallas  
University of Texas – Permian Basin

## Living Learning Communities

Living-Learning Communities are residential communities that introduce and integrate academic and social learning through faculty/staff involvement and holistic education. These communities can benefit any student who lives in them, but they significantly benefit FGLI and minority students. Living-learning communities can allow First-Generation students and students of color to build a community with peers and receive extra support for their unique challenges. We asked the universities whether they have First-Generation or Race/Ethnic affiliated Living-Learning Communities and, if so, to describe the supportive programming they supply to students. Here are some quotes about the supportive programming students receive in Living-Learning Communities:

“Generation Jacks (GenJacks) is an extended learning community for First-Generation college students providing a unique academic learning experience and excellent support network. Each GenJack takes 7 hours of linked courses their first semester with other GenJacks students. They also receive a Success Coach (Faculty or Staff Mentor on-campus) and a GenJacks Counselor (upperclassman mentor). Through this program, we host socials gatherings, service-learning, and professional development opportunities. We also offer living in the Residential Learning Community (RLC), where students can live on the same residence hall floor and participate in events with other GenJacks. Space is limited in the GenJacks Program and we accept 100 new freshmen each fall semester!” – Stephen F. Austin State University

“First-Generation LLC: This community is for students whose parents/guardians did not complete a bachelor’s degree in the United States. Students engaged in this community will receive targeted support to acclimate to university life, engage in the campus community, and develop necessary academic skills. A guidebook has been created for First Gen students and their families. For your convenience, we have both English and Spanish (pdf) versions of the guidebook. Students take UNIV 2V96 – First Generation Student Success in Fall and the First-Generation UNIV 2V96– Journey to Brain Health together in Spring.” – University of Texas – Dallas

“In collaboration with Residence Life, the Routh First-Generation Center in the Office for Student Success provides programming for students participating in this LLC. Both offices coordinate recruitment and communication efforts such as FAQ’s through Navigate Student Application, students’ Texas A&M email, and postcards. Sending a postcard was a new strategy we implemented this past spring semester to increase the awareness of the LLC and gain support of families who received the mail to encourage their student to participate in. We also have students complete an in-take survey to gain insights of students understanding of an LLC; additional assessments are currently being developed. Focus group interviews will be conducted in spring 2024 to assess student outcomes.” – Texas A&M University

The universities who offer Living Learning Communities with supportive programming for these underserved student populations are:

Angelo State University  
Midwestern State University

Stephen F. Austin State University  
Texas A&M University  
University of North Texas  
University of North Texas – Dallas  
University of Texas - Dallas

## Student Communication

While young people now utilize text messaging to communicate more than ever, universities must also use text messaging and all modalities to communicate with students. Text messages are the best way to get a short, important message across to most young people, and it is quick and easy for universities to operate; however, communicating through snail mail, email, and phone calls ensures multiple points of contact with the student. **All** participating schools utilize text messaging and other communication methods, including student third-party approval for family members, which have improved over previous years. Here are some ways that schools are using this essential means of communication:

“Family members can connect to their student via the Family Portal. The family member initiates the nudge, and the student gives them access to their student information (i.e. bill, grades, etc). The family portal sends important information to family members as students receive that information.” – Texas State University

“Communication is not centralized to one area. We have multiple departments collaborating together to avoid over-communication on certain initiatives.” – Texas A&M University-San Antonio

“In addition to current communication plans for all student administered through our communication systems, the Center is working with College/Unit representatives to finalize first-gen communication plan that will be administered in Navigate. Communication plan will include important academic deadlines, breakdown resources, and highlight additional opportunities dedicated to first-generation students.” – Texas A&M University

## Mentor Programs

Mentor programs, where successful first-generation upper-level or graduate students mentor first-year students, first-generation students, have become much more common among universities. Mentor programs benefit first-generation students because they allow them to see a student like themselves successfully managing college and gain insight from their mentor in various areas. The more first-generation students who can have a mentor, the better. 100% of the universities surveyed this year have FGLI mentoring programs.

“We had a pilot of 17 students in Fall 2022 and 70+ students in Spring 2023. We have grown that to over 120 students for Fall 2023. All students in our mentoring program receive both a Faculty/Staff mentor



AND peer mentor. We host monthly social events for building those relationships and use our Campus Connect platform to reach out proactively to our mentor students related to academic success, events, engagement opportunities, scholarship opportunities, etc.” – Sam Houston State University

“The peer mentoring program is designed to help any student new to Tarleton through their first year here. The mentors are prepared to work with students on time management, goal setting, and other basic level skills needed to succeed in higher education. The mentors have a very active role in supporting students by connecting them to other resources on campus such as tutoring, counseling, advising, and financial aid. They are also trained by the Counseling Center on how to respond in crisis. The mentors offer a social component as well by just being a friendly face on campus. They often spend meetings listening to students vent and answering random questions that students don't know who to ask.” – Tarleton State University

## **Academic Engagement**

The following universities scored best overall in the Academic Engagement Category:

Angelo State University  
Texas A&M International University

## **Advisor to Student Ratio**

Limiting the number of students per academic advisor is essential in ensuring that FGLI students receive the support they need to finish their degree. We asked the schools the number of academic advisors they have and compared that to the number of students enrolled at their university, which estimates their student-to-advisor ratio. The ratios ranged from 41 to 448 students per academic advisor, averaging 319:1. This discrepancy leads to students at some schools getting much more academic support than others. Experts such as the National Academic Advising Association recommends a ratio no higher than 300:1. The universities use a variety of models for academic advising, but the most common is a shared model where students are advised by professional academic advisors for the first and second year and then passed on to a faculty advisor within the department of their major.

Universities that maintain a ratio under 300:1 are:

Angelo State University  
Midwestern State University  
Sam Houston State University  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Texas A&M International University  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi University of Texas-Permian Basin

## Early Alert System

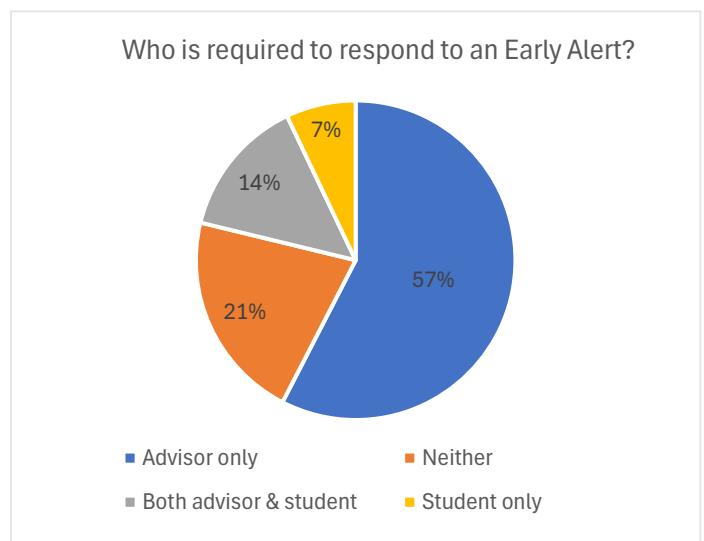
Early Alert Systems are automated systems within a university that automatically alert both the student and academic advisor if there is a problem with one of the student's Alert Factors. Alert Factors predict that a student is underperforming toward graduating on time, educational or otherwise. The system notifies the advisor and student when events like a failed test, unpaid tuition, unpaid parking tickets, or a failed course occur. University-Wide Early Alert Systems have been proven to raise graduation rates. They are essential for FGLI students because, often, FGLI students have not been taught how to advocate for themselves proactively. We asked the universities whether they have a university-wide early alert system with advisors trained in the system. Thankfully, all universities participating in the Report Card have adopted an Early Alert System of some kind. Below are examples of ways that universities are using Early Alert Systems:

"Advisors attempt to contact the student through their campus email, text and phone calls. If contact cannot be made, then the early alert team attempts to visit the student in person at their on-campus dorm, or by going to the student's classes. These cases are tracked and details such as "was the student contacted" and "what actions will the student be taking" are documented. Graduate students are hired and work exclusively on contacting students that advisors are having difficulty contacting." – Angelo State University

"Faculty submit early grades (Initial Academic Feedback) during Week 5 of the semester. For students who are failing one course, they receive a text nudge to the appropriate academic service. For first-year students failing 2 or more courses, first-year advising contacts each student. After 2 weeks, first-year students who have not made an advising appointment are contacted by their residence hall director. For non-first-year students, who are failing 2 or more courses, they are contacted by a Success Coach." – Texas State University

## Response to Early Alerts

When an alert is sent out, the advisor or related department must respond to the student promptly. This requirement ensures that students get personalized reminders from a familiar source and are held accountable for whatever issue they face. Ideally, both the student and the advisor are required to respond to ensure that the student is held accountable.



The schools that require students and advisors to respond are:

Texas A&M International University  
University of Texas-Permian Basin

### Mandatory Grade Return Time Limits for Professors

Imagine, as an FGLI student, taking a quiz or test in early September and seeing your grade in late October or November. Many ScholarShot students have notified their Academic Managers that this is common at their universities. Students must know their grades to take timely corrective action in their classes or risk performing poorly on subsequent assignments, tests, and quizzes. Of the schools surveyed, only **Texas A&M International University** has a mandatory time limit for professors to return grades. Their time limit is less than two weeks, allowing students to take the corrective action needed to succeed in their classes.

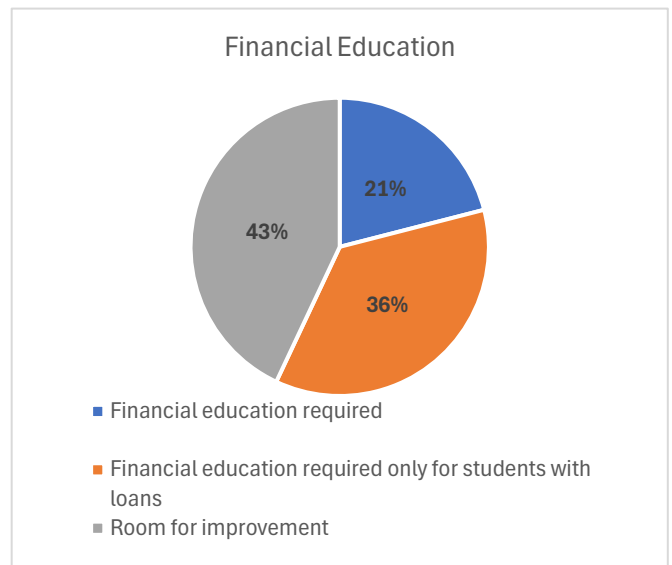
## Financial Management

The following universities scored best overall in the Financial Management Category:

Angelo State University  
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi  
Texas A&M University – San Antonio  
University of North Texas  
University of Texas – Dallas

### Financial Education

Most universities have elective debt and financial support available to students. Many students, however, never utilize these programs and are left to figure out how to finance school and the cost of living independently. Students accept their university financial offers online and in a matter of seconds. An 18- or 19-year-old can sign off on thousands of dollars in debt, not knowing how much debt they already have, if the amount is enough to cover the next semester, or their payment and when. For students' financial well-being, all universities should make a debt and financial education program mandatory for at least



students taking out loans. This issue particularly affects FGLI students since it is most likely to affect them in the long run because they must take out more loans and have fewer resources to pay them back. Having programs at the university to educate students on how their debt can affect them helps students make wise decisions regarding their financing options.

In the survey, we asked whether they had a mandatory debt management program for all students, only students taking out loans, or no students. While most of the schools have an optional or no debt education program, five schools have mandatory programs for students taking out loans and only three require it of all students, including:

- Sam Houston State University
- Texas A&M International University
- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
- Texas A&M University-San Antonio
- Texas State University
- University of North Texas
- University of Texas-Dallas
- University of Texas-Permian Basin

### **Required Financial Aid Meetings**

As noted above, students taking out loans often need help understanding their future responsibilities when they choose to take on debt. Additionally, students are frequently unaware of the grants and scholarships available to them, so they do not take advantage of them. Many students do not accept their Federal or State grants when they would automatically be given funding because they are unaware they exist. Requiring students to meet with a Financial Aid Advisor to plan out their financial path through college would remediate many of these issues, especially for first-generation students who do not have parents who went to college before them. If students had a better plan for their finances throughout college, there would be fewer dropouts and fewer students struggling to repay their loans after graduation. Currently, the only schools that require all students to meet with a financial advisor before beginning school are:

- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
- Texas A&M University-San Antonio

While many universities are not yet mandating financial education and advisement, there are many positive things happening when it comes to students and their finances. Some examples are:

“The FA Office works with UGST first year courses and the Career Center to provide student loan and debt workshops. Also, we contract with a third-party vendor to provide additional student loan history letters as well as grace-period and default management counseling. Additionally, while we do not have a formal stand-alone course; each new borrower at UNT Dallas is required to complete federal loan

counseling. All returning federal loan borrowers are provided with their borrowing history and repayment information in their student portal.” – University of North Texas-Dallas

“In their FYS class students are required to complete two modules, Understanding the Basics of Budgeting and Paying for College. The Paying for College module focus on teaching students about debt management and loans. However, this is only required for FTIC. We also do a Smart Borrowing campaign to teach about student loans post-graduation, however this is optional for students and not all participate. We have a Financial Education Center that provides events and one-on-one coaching for students. We do debt management programming, but other than the required FYS modules, participation is optional.” – Tarleton State University

## Emergency Funding

During their college career, many FGLI students face a temporary or unexpected hardship that is outside of their control, which often causes FGLI students to lose focus or drop out. This year, 93% of the surveyed universities provide non-loan emergency funds at some level to students due to temporary or unexpected hardships. This is encouraging because all universities should adopt an emergency fund to support their students in times of need. The schools that fund these emergency requests at a rate of **at least 75%** are:

Angelo State University  
Texas A&M International University  
Texas A&M University  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  
University of North Texas  
University of Texas-Dallas  
University of Texas-Permian Basin

“The Student Emergency Grant supplies current TAMIU students, unable to meet vital expenses as a result of unforeseen hardship, with limited emergency financial support. Award is only granted once or upon review by grant committee. Applications are reviewed and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. Students are required to meet with the Case Manager to access the application and discuss the need for the grant. Upon approval, the student is required to complete a financial literacy course and submit a certificate of completion.” – Texas A&M International University

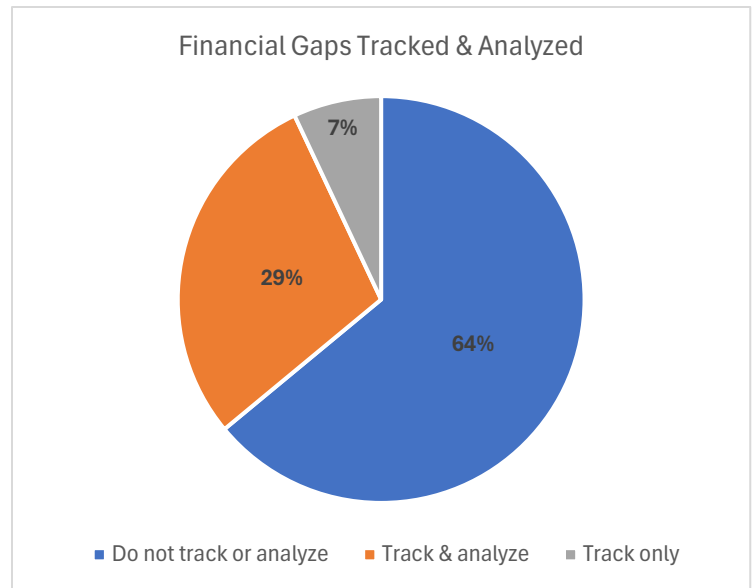
“UNT provides funds to students from a limited amount of funds reserved for assisting students with prior-term balances. UNT refers to this award as the Prior-Term Balance award. The Prior-Term Balance award is specifically offered to students with outstanding balances which would jeopardize their enrollment. Students are able to receive assistance from this fund one time during their academic career, up to \$2,000. As part of identifying students who would be potentially eligible for the award, UNT determines if they have ever received assistance from this fund in past. Students who have previously received the maximum award from the fund are identified as not eligible for the award, and thereby not sent an additional application.” – University of North Texas

## Financial Gap

A financial gap for a student entering college is the total cost of the university minus Expected Family Contribution and scholarship and grants awarded. The smaller the annual financial gap for a student, the more likely they will graduate with a manageable debt. A sizeable financial gap lends itself to students needing more support during college, dropping out, or graduating with a large debt that will hurt their credit and take decades to pay off. All colleges should be tracking and analyzing this gap and doing whatever they can to minimize it for the benefit of the students. We asked the universities whether they track and analyze

their students' financial gaps and, if so, what the average financial gap is for students. This year, only four schools track and analyze their students' financial gap and have an annual financial gap of less than \$4,000 per year, allowing their students a better chance of graduating and with less debt. These universities are:

Angelo State University  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  
University of North Texas  
University of Texas-Dallas



## Student Services and Interventions

The following universities scored best overall in the Student Services and Interventions category:

University of North Texas  
University of North Texas – Dallas  
Sam Houston State University  
Midwestern State University  
Tarleton State University  
University of Texas – Dallas  
Angelo State University  
Texas A&M International University

## Probation Interventions

Once a student is on probation, their chance of getting off probation or graduating plummets. To avoid students dropping out once placed on probation, universities must intervene to give every student the best opportunity to remedy the situation. Universities should have a universal response when students are on probation so that no student slips through the cracks. The ideal response is for their academic advisor to immediately and personally contact the student to set up a meeting where they will create a plan for the student. These plans will differ depending on the student's situation, but likely include:

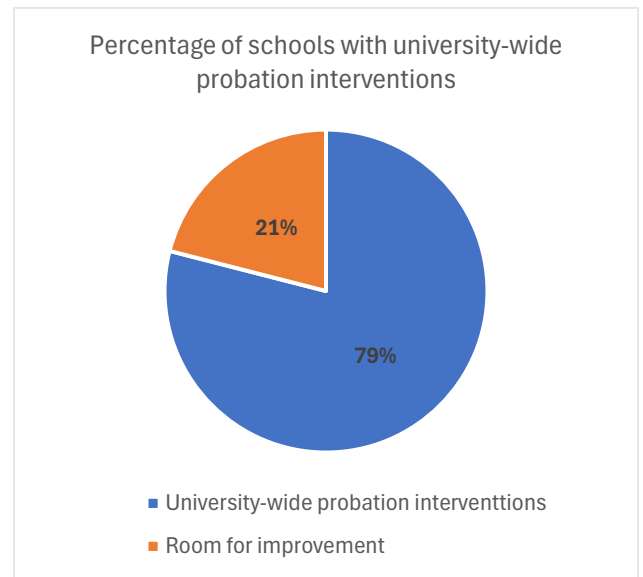
- Taking fewer hours.
- Setting up tutoring or other additional help the student may need.
- Ensuring that the student can succeed in their chosen classes and the major they have selected.

Following this meeting, academic advisors should frequently stay in touch with these students to ensure the plan is going well and suggest any adjustments. Many participating schools already follow this protocol, which helps students get off probation and on the road to academic success. The universities were asked if they have a universal response for a student placed on probation and how they respond. Here are some of the ways that universities proactively respond to students on probation:

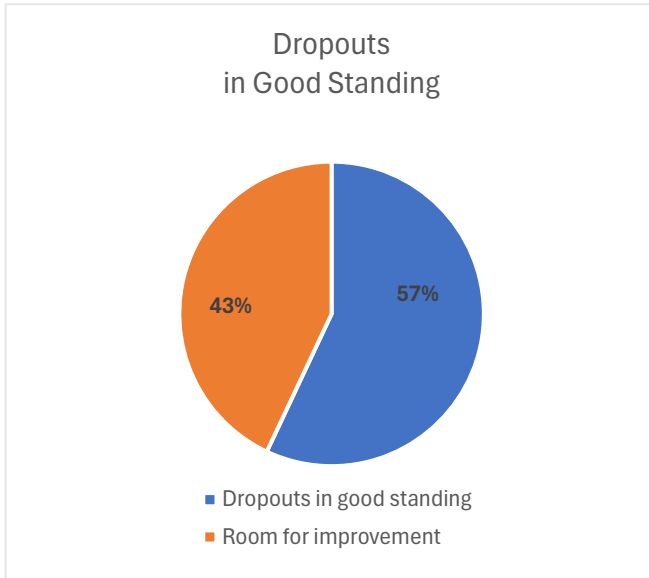
“All students are sent a personalized communication with information about our academic recovery program. Students are required to participate in our program in the subsequent semester. They meet with an academic coach and create an academic plan that is designed to help them identify barriers.” – Texas A&M University – San Antonio

“Students not in good academic standing – academic probation, academic warning, or readmitted from suspension – are required to meet with a SOAR advisor and follow a prescribed advising plan. The individualized plan will be designed to help each student improve their academic standing by addressing their specific needs, including but not limited to: identifying academic challenges, improving study skills, time management skills, addressing personal issues and appropriate campus office referrals. The goal is to help students recover and reach their academic goals.” – University of Texas - Dallas

The schools with a university-wide probation intervention response **and** a requirement for the advisor to meet with the student are:



### Dropouts in Good Academic Standing



Students drop out of college for a variety of reasons. In recent years, some universities have started tracking the percentage of students who did not return or dropped out but were otherwise in good academic standing. In other words, these students performed well in school but were still forced to drop out for different reasons. In Texas, our Report Card survey showed that as many as 74% of a university’s dropouts were in good academic standing. The survey also revealed that only 57% of our universities track this statistic. Tracking why students drop out should be required for all public universities as an FGLI best practice. By tracking whether the student is in good academic standing at the time of dropping out, universities can potentially counsel the student back

into school to finish their degree. It is also important to note the top reasons students drop out of school outside of their academic performance, which, according to our survey, are financial reasons, family and personal issues, and not feeling sufficiently prepared for college by their high school.

Schools were asked if they track the percentage of students who drop out in good academic standing and, if so, what the percentage of students who drop out in good academic standing is. The schools that track their dropouts in good academic standing and have less than 20% of their dropouts in good academic standing are:

- University of North Texas
- University of North Texas-Dallas

### Mental Health Access & Visits

An American College Health Association study showed that nearly 77% of college students experience psychological distress of some kind, either moderate or severe.<sup>13</sup> Having access to quality mental healthcare is critical for FGLI students throughout college. Focusing on school proves easier if a student is

<sup>13</sup> American College Health Association Executive Summary 2022, [https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA-III\\_SPRING\\_2022\\_UNDERGRAD\\_REFERENCE\\_GROUP\\_EXECUTIVE\\_SUMMARY.pdf](https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA-III_SPRING_2022_UNDERGRAD_REFERENCE_GROUP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY.pdf)



not mentally or emotionally stressed. All the surveyed schools offer students free mental health services, but the convenience and availability of these services vary. Some schools have lengthy wait times of up to 30+ minutes. The schools with an average wait time of less than 10 minutes are:

- Angelo State University
- Midwestern State University
- Sam Houston State University
- Stephen F. Austin State University
- Tarleton State University
- Texas A&M International University
- Texas State University
- University of North Texas-Dallas
- University of Texas-Dallas

Another challenge for FGLI students is that many schools limit the number of visits to on-campus mental health resources to as few as 1-2 visits before referring students to off-campus mental health professionals. Because many FGLI students lack the financial resources to afford an off-campus mental health professional, students are often no longer able to see a mental health professional, leaving them alone to deal with their mental health challenges. The participating universities that, on average, allow students 10+ visits to on-campus student mental health before they are referred to off-campus are:

- Angelo State University
- Midwestern State University
- Sam Houston State University
- Tarleton State University
- University of North Texas

Texas universities are improving access to mental health services for their students in a variety of ways. Here is an example:

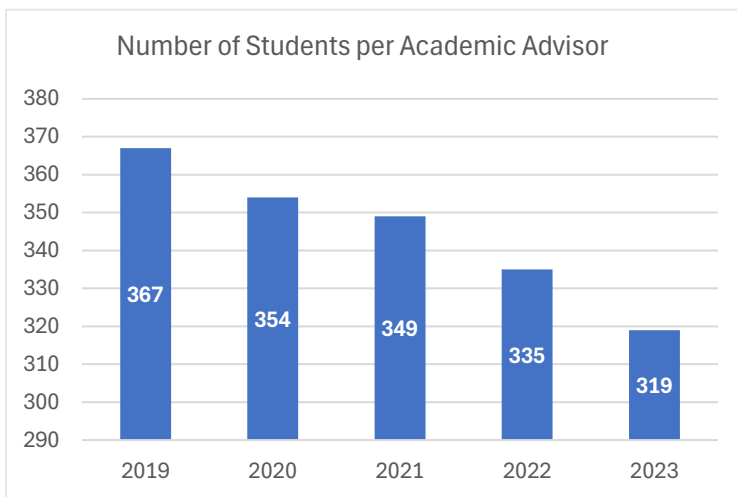
“Therapy Assistance Online (TAO). TAO is a multilevel online therapy tool. TAO can be used in the context of therapy or self-help. It has help videos and self-help material to aid in one's journey of personal growth. It also has mood surveys so you can see how you are feeling from week to week. BetterMynd services feature free, online, 50-minute live-video therapy sessions with a professional counselor specializing in college student mental health that will be private and confidential. Students may receive help from the convenience of a laptop or smartphone. By partnering with BetterMynd, MSU Texas can increase the number of clinical hours available, including after-hours counseling, and increase the availability of culturally diverse Licensed Professional Counselors available to our students.” – Midwestern State University

## Comparing the Results by Year: 2019 – 2023

While our questions have changed and adapted over the years, there are a few measures that have remained constant. We have been tracking the aggregate changes of these measures since we published the 2019 Report Card. Below are the how these measures have progressed or digressed over the last five years.

### Academic Engagement

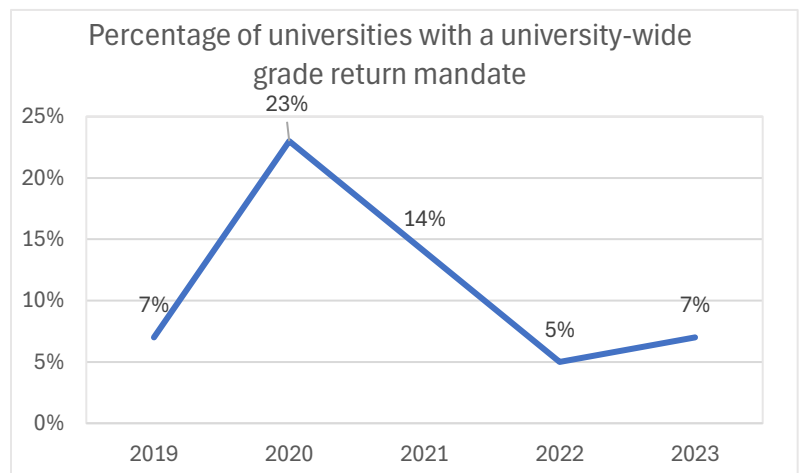
#### Student to Academic Advisor Ratios



The graph on the left shows the average number of students per academic advisor for all participating universities each year. As we can see, there has been a downward trend in this ratio over time, which is a positive development. This indicates that students are getting more access to their academic advisors, as a lower ratio means that each advisor is responsible for fewer students.

#### Mandatory Grade Return Time Limits for Professors

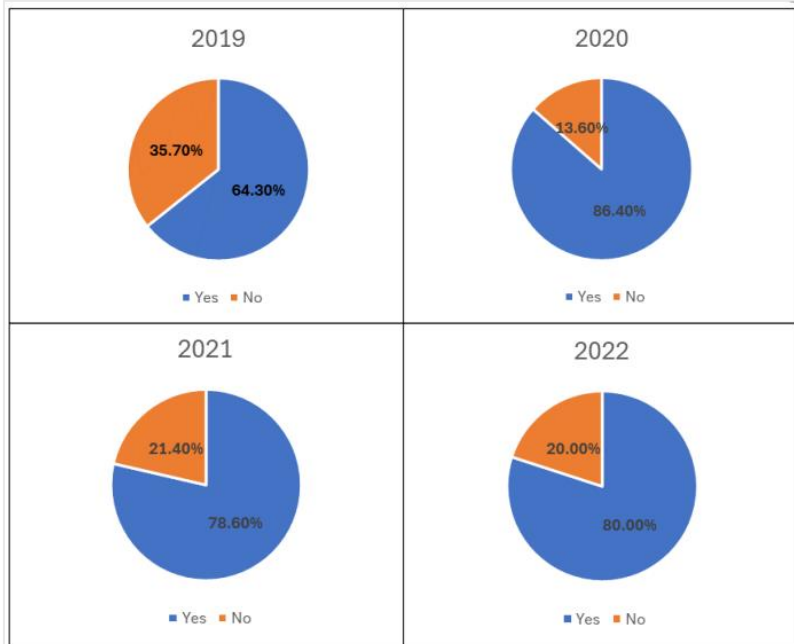
The graph to the right illustrates the percentage of universities mandating a grade-return time limit policy for professors, either university-wide or departmentalized. As observed, this measure initially increased from 2019 to 2020 but decreased in 2021 and 2022. There are two reasons for the decrease: different schools responded each year to the survey, and schools attempted to have time limits for professors in 2020 and decided not to maintain the policy.



The downward trend from 2020 to 2022 is disheartening because mandating time limits for professors to return grades provides students more opportunities to improve or even drop a class if necessary.

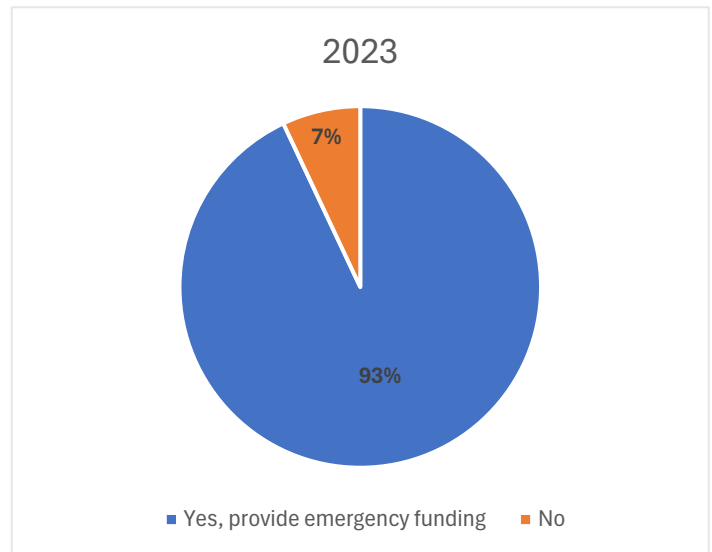
# Financial Management

## Emergency Funds



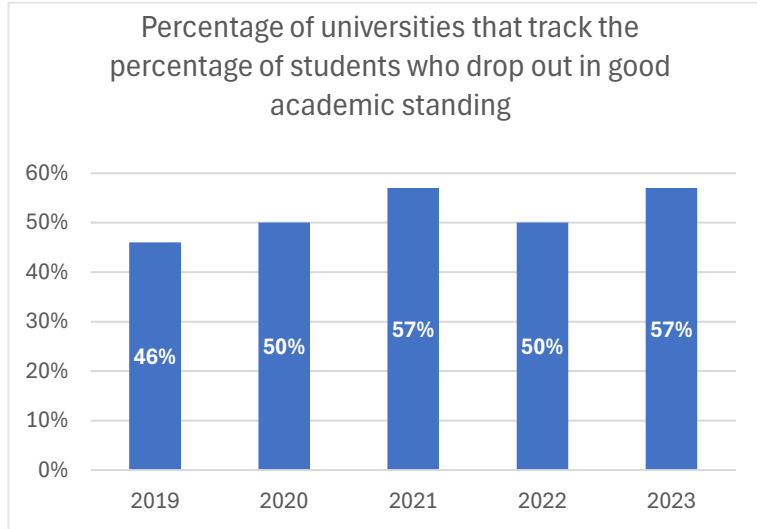
The charts to the left show the percentage of universities that have provided emergency funds available to students each year. In 2020, we saw a significant increase in the rate of schools with emergency funds available; however, in 2021, we saw that number drop slightly. Some schools had funds available specifically in 2020 due to Covid-19, and it is also possible that the variance in schools surveyed by year was a partial cause of the increase and then a decrease the following year.

The chart to the right shows a significant increase in the percentage of schools providing emergency funding to students in need. It is encouraging that the number of schools with emergency funding for students is increasing because it will result in more students being able to focus on their studies.



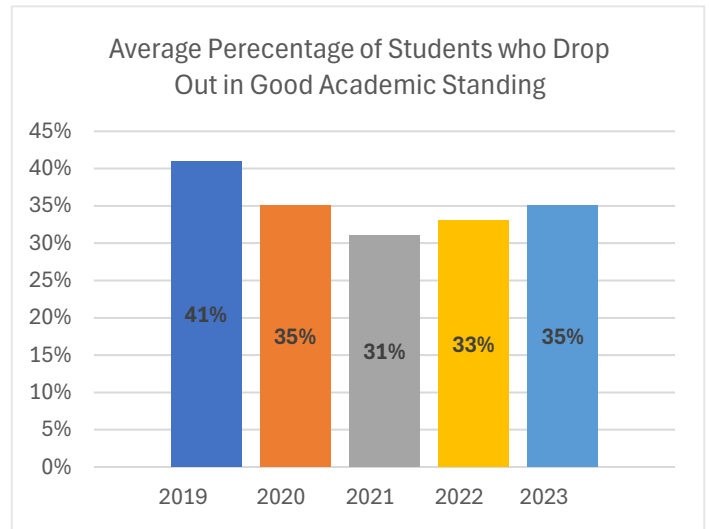
# Student Services & Interventions

## Tracking Students who Dropout in Good Academic Standing



The graph to the left shows the percentage of participating universities tracking whether a student who drops out is in good academic standing. The upward progression of schools tracking students dropping out in good standing from 2019 to 2021 was positive. The slight dip in 2022 is probably due to the school variance from year to year. In 2023, Texas schools begin another upward trend which we hope is due to recognition of FGLI best practices and continues. Tracking why students drop out of their universities allows a school to identify why and better counsel students to continue their education.

The graph to the right displays the cumulative percentage of students dropping out in good standing throughout the years surveyed. The downward trend of students dropping out in good academic standing from 2019 to 2021 is excellent because fewer students drop out when they have the proper support to succeed. The slight increases in 2022 and 2023 could be due to school variance or because the schools are not yet fully realizing the results of their reenrollment campaigns.



The online Report Card allows viewers to sort by columns or select results by university, region, or grade.

## 2023 Report Card Overview

Welcome to the A-B list of the Texas Public University Report Card. Select any column heading to sort in ascending or descending order. Select any name, slicer or color to see only the data for that selection. Hold the Ctrl key down to select multiple items. Click again to see all data. Go to the Category Detail tab below to see more detail by university.

To view Category Details for the 2023 Report Card and both the Overview and Category Details for the 2019, 2020 and 2021, 2022 Report Cards, please use the arrows (<>) at the bottom of the screen.

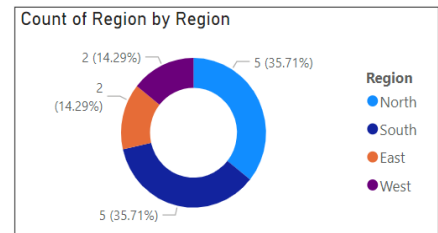
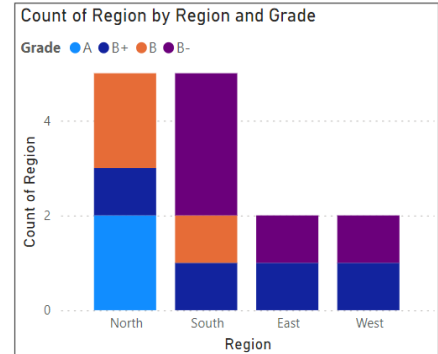
Name of University	Grade	Overall Grade
University of North Texas	A	93%
University of Texas - Dallas	A	90%
Angelo State University	B+	88%
Midwestern State University	B+	89%
Sam Houston State University	B+	88%
Texas A&M University - International	B+	88%
Tarleton State University	B	84%
Texas A&M University	B	84%
University of North Texas - Dallas	B	86%
Stephen F. Austin State University	B-	80%
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi	B-	83%

**Region**

- Select all
- East
- North
- South
- West

**Grade**

- Select all
- A
- B+
- B
- B-



## 2023 Report Card Category Detail

Name of University	Student Outcomes	Community Support	Academic Engagement	Financial Management	Student Services & Interventions	Overall Grade
University of North Texas	90%	95%	85%	95%	98%	93%
University of North Texas - Dallas	96%	90%	85%	60%	98%	86%
Sam Houston State University	94%	90%	85%	75%	96%	88%
Midwestern State University	90%	100%	85%	75%	94%	89%
Tarleton State University	90%	87%	75%	75%	94%	84%
University of Texas - Dallas	98%	95%	70%	95%	90%	90%
Angelo State University	80%	85%	90%	95%	88%	88%
Texas A&M University - International	90%	80%	100%	85%	86%	88%
Texas State University	84%	85%	80%	65%	85%	80%
Stephen F. Austin State University	78%	85%	80%	75%	80%	80%
Texas A&M University	94%	95%	70%	80%	80%	84%
University of Texas - Permian Basin	78%	80%	85%	75%	80%	80%
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi	74%	85%	85%	95%	78%	83%
Texas A&M University - San Antonio	90%	75%	80%	95%	70%	82%

**Name of Univer...**

- Select all
- Angelo State University
- Midwestern State Univ...
- Sam Houston State U...
- Stephen F. Austin Stat...

**Grade**

- Select all
- A
- B+
- B

**Region**

- Select all
- East
- North
- South
- West

## Conclusion and Call to Action

As stated in the introduction, the Report Card has three primary goals to improve outcomes for FGLI and their postsecondary success:

- To encourage all Texas universities to share and improve their practices around supporting FGLI students;
- To inform and encourage advisors, parents, and students to consider schools that are graded higher at engaging FGLI students to and through graduation;
- To motivate our state legislators to alter their distribution model from school demand to school performance.

Since the 2022 Report Card, some of the best practice measures have improved while others have worsened. Texans must embrace these best practices while holding public universities and policymakers accountable.

While ScholarShot will continue to publish the Report Card annually with the intent that all public universities participate to maximize the impact of the Report Card and improve outcomes for FGLI students, ScholarShot recommends the following:

- Share the 2023 Texas Public University Report Card with your local high school counselors or districts so they can effectively advise FGLI students in their postsecondary journey and success. There is a substantial incentive for schools and districts to do this.<sup>14</sup>
- As a graduate of a Texas public university, your voice is powerful. Take the initiative to meet with your alma mater and advocate for changes based on the findings of this report. Alumni like you significantly influence the programming of their alma maters.
- Don't underestimate the impact of your voice. Advocate for postsecondary policy change by reaching out to your representatives in the Texas State Legislature. This direct action can shape the future of FGLI students in Texas public universities.

The Report Card author, ScholarShot, can significantly enhance its efforts with the support of the Texas public. Through these actions, our joint effort can create a better future for our FGLI students and our public welfare throughout Texas. This is the intent of the Texas University Report Card, and we ask for your help to effect change in the lives of so many students.

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<sup>14</sup> In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed HB-3, which provides measures and bonuses for high schools' improvement of career, college, or military readiness (CCMR). Larger districts, such as Houston, Dallas, or Austin, can earn \$19 - \$53 million annually by improving their CCMR outcomes.