



News Release

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U.S. Chamber Recognizes Austin Chamber for Successfully Increasing College Readiness and Enrollment

June 8, 2011, AUSTIN — This week, the [Austin Chamber of Commerce](http://www.austinchamber.com) was recognized for its leadership in regional education initiatives by the [US Chamber of Commerce](http://www.uschamber.com) in its Institute for a Competitive Workforce report, [“Partnership Is a Two-Way Street: What It Takes for Business to Help Drive School Reform.”](#)

The Austin Chamber was recognized for successfully surpassing its “20,010 by 2010” goal to increase Metro Austin’s college enrollment rate by 20,010 students by the year 2010 while high school graduates completing and submitting the Texas Common Application for college entrance increased nearly 20% from 2006 and 2009.

The Austin Chamber was also recognized for its adoption of an innovative approach to education reform – moving beyond the traditional advocacy model to one that emphasized tracking measurable, outcomes-based performance. In a challenging budgetary climate, Austin area business financial executives met regularly with the Austin Independent School District (Austin ISD) CFO to help set milestones and track progress using proven corporate planning methodologies.

Through the Austin Chamber’s [Opportunity Austin](#) initiative, business partners helped local school districts collect and manage data on students who had applied for college, from which the Chamber published biweekly progress reports that ranked each school and district based on its performance. Austin ISD superintendent Meria Carstarphen explained the impact of accessible, quality data, “There’s a sharing of information that wouldn’t happen on its own... When I came in, the group that had the highest quality information was the Chamber. The trend data they have, and using it to help target schools that were off track, was extremely valuable.”

Once the data and reporting procedure was put into practice, the Chamber helped Austin ISD implement a performance pay system for its college enrollment managers based on this reporting. After ensuring that a measurable plan was in place, the Chamber helped Austin ISD secure a \$62.3 million grant – the largest Teacher Incentive Fund grant in the nation – from the U.S. Department of Education to help Austin scale up its performance pay system.

“The recognition the Austin Chamber has received from the US Chamber is a testament to the importance Austin business leaders place on improving the region’s talent pipeline,” stated Drew

Scheberle, the Chamber's Senior Vice President of Education/Talent Development. "The Austin Chamber is fortunate that so many business executives have given of their time and resources as critical supporters of public and higher education. Area CEOs like Gene Austin, Charles Barnett, Norman Chenven, Ellen Wood, Barry Mayer, Darrell Pierce, Bobby Jenkins and Tony Befi, and many other business executives not only invested their time but moved beyond talk to take specific action to support education leadership; campaign for necessary public investment; create effective interventions to drive college enrollment; and engage in defining desirable outcomes for K12 and higher education."

Additional markers of success that were considered by the US Chamber:

- The Austin Chamber worked with 15 school districts in the region, which serve 93% of 250,000 public school students in metropolitan Austin.
- The Chamber created a college readiness program partnering with Austin Partners in Education (APIE) –a program that connects more than a thousand volunteer "coaches" to Austin students who scored within 10% of the State's 'college-ready' score to avoid remediation courses.
- The Chamber through its efforts to assist two-thirds of Austin ISD's students who are economically disadvantaged, was able to boost Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications by 85% since 2006, ultimately generating an additional \$43 million in financial aid to the regional students.

"The Austin Chamber is committed to creating a strong, educated talent pool that can meet the future workforce needs of the Central Texas business community. Our business leaders are working to make a difference by supporting educational opportunities that will help our regional economy prosper," said Mike Rollins, President of the Austin Chamber.

About the Chamber

The mission of the Austin Chamber of Commerce is to provide leadership that facilitates the creation of a prosperous regional economy and effective advocacy for its members. For more information about the Austin Chamber of Commerce visit austinchamber.com.

About Opportunity Austin

Opportunity Austin is the Austin Chamber of Commerce's five-year economic development initiative to foster sustainable growth through the creation of new jobs and increased payroll in the Central Texas region. For more information visit opportunityaustin.com.

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