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E³ Alliance Launches Community Engagement Effort To Develop Blueprint For Central Texas Education System

E³ Alliance Receives Funding from Opportunity Austin

AUSTIN, TEXAS—The E³ Alliance is a collaborative effort of the Austin Community College District (ACC), the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO), the University of Texas and others to initiate a regional effort to increase global competitiveness, economic vitality and overall quality of life in Central Texas by aligning the region's education systems. In September, the E³ Alliance launched a public process to gather input from parents, educators, major employers, elected officials, and community and thought leaders in order to create a blueprint for the future of education in Central Texas.

"Central Texas faces a steady loss in household income, reaching \$2.4 billion annually by the year 2040, unless we align all the components of our regional education system to better fulfill the potential of every student," Susan Dawson, executive director of the E³ Alliance, said. "A vision for education in Central Texas that establishes a direct link between education and workforce development is critical to the region's economic vitality."

E³ Alliance staff and activities are funded by grants and donations. The latest grant awarded in September from Opportunity Austin—a Central Texas initiative to create 72,000 jobs in five years—is the largest, to date. The grant will support a critical part of the blueprint: providing longitudinal data evaluation and research to identify key educational indicators, trends and leverage points in the Central Texas region.

"Opportunity Austin supports initiatives that allow Central Texas to be competitive in the environment of economic development," said Gary Farmer, chair, Greater Austin Economic Development Corporation. "The E³ Alliance is one of those initiatives. It will allow us to build upon this region's greatest competitive advantage—a highly educated workforce."

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The community engagement process began with focus groups on September 20 and 21. Concentrating on the economic viability of Central Texas, attendees discussed the three things they would most like to change about the region's education system.

On November 8, the E³ Alliance will host a thought leaders' summit including leaders of education, business and community. Attendees will participate in facilitated discussion and idea sharing to help shape the E³ Alliance blueprint, and will cast votes to determine the top three most critical questions that must be addressed in the blueprint. The event will conclude with a "call to action" to build a more prepared workforce and citizenry.

The goal of the E³ Alliance is to break down barriers and build better alignment across the education continuum to strengthen access and student success—and ultimately, the competitiveness of the region. Specifically, the group will seek to:

- Share lessons and best practices across education providers at all levels;
- Align regional resources and investments in education and education-related services to use our dollars more efficiently;
- Support efforts to improve P-12 curriculum to increase the number of "college-ready" high school graduates, thereby reducing the need for remedial coursework in higher education;
- Promote Early College Start opportunities for high school students and increase the number of high school graduates who enroll into higher education;
- Increase early childhood education and literacy;
- Promote the alignment of curriculum objectives from P-16+ levels to enhance college-readiness skills and student success, and prepare students for rewarding careers;
- Improve high school graduation rates, and
- Change policy and practice to increase meaningful regional collaboration.

The E³ Alliance is housed at ACC's Highland Business Center and guided by a steering committee composed of representatives of the founding partners and Texas State University, Region XIII Education Service Center, the United Way, and business and foundation leaders. All seven college presidents in the region, along with superintendents of Central Texas school districts, and community and non-profit leaders from across the region have provided strong support for the work of the E³ Alliance.

For more information, please visit www.e3alliance.org