



Education

Education is the cornerstone of economic growth. Texas' ability to remain competitive in a global economy will depend on growing a talented and educated work force.

Public Education

Roughly 3.8 percent of the state's public elementary and secondary students attend school in the Upper Rio Grande region, which contains 21 public school districts with 251 campuses as well as six charter districts with nine campuses. Upper Rio Grande schools provide early childhood through Grade 12 education for about 177,000 students.

Enrollment in the region rose by 7.1 percent between the 2001-02 and 2007-08 school years,

for a net gain of more than 11,700 students. School enrollment in the region, state and nation rose by 7.1 percent, 11.8 percent and 6.0 percent, respectively, over the same period.¹

In the 2007-08 school year, the region's largest independent school districts (ISDs) by enrollment were El Paso ISD in El Paso County, with almost 62,000 students; Ysleta ISD in El Paso County, with nearly 45,000 students; and Socorro ISD in El Paso County, with about 39,000 students. The smallest districts were San Vicente in Brewster County, with 26 students, and Valentine in Jeff Davis County, with 48 students.

The region's high concentration of Hispanics—accounting for 88.6 percent of enrollment in the 2007-08 school year—means that it is substantially less ethnically diverse than the state as a whole (**Exhibit 34**).



Spring 2008 Commencement at University of Texas at El Paso

PHOTO: University of Texas at El Paso, University Communications



Early College High Schools

Early College High Schools (ECHS) have been developed throughout the country with both private grants, from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others, and public funding from the federal and state governments.

Since 2002, more than 200 schools have been established as or converted into ECHSs. These schools work with nearby higher education institutions to develop their curricula and often offer dual-enrollment hours; students graduating from an ECHS also receive an associate degree, which allows them to enter a four-year college or university as a junior.²

The Upper Rio Grande region is home to two Early College High Schools. Canutillo Independent School District (ISD) in El Paso County recently opened the Northwest Early College High School for the 2008-09 school year. This school is a partnership between El Paso Community College and Canutillo ISD, providing dual-credit courses for its students. Up to 80 percent of its students accepted each year are from Canutillo ISD, with the remainder coming from surrounding districts.

Once accepted, all students must attend a summer work seminar to become acquainted with the Northwest ECHS. The school has no athletic programs, as its main focus is academics. It does, however, offer students many clubs and organizations as well as fine arts groups. The school also encourages participation in intramural and community leagues.³

Socorro Independent School District’s Mission Early College High School boasts small class sizes, with only 100 students admitted per year. Incoming high school students who reside in Socorro ISD and meet admission requirements are eligible to attend on a first-come, first-served basis. Socorro ISD partners with El Paso Community College to provide dual-credit courses for students who are primarily low-income, bilingual and first-generation college-bound. The school does not have a sports program but offers classes in all subjects of music, art and dance.⁴

The region has seen an increase in its number of economically disadvantaged students. Generally, economically disadvantaged students are defined as those students who are eligible for free or reduced price meals through the National School Lunch Program or other public assistance programs. In

2001-02, nearly 122,000 or 73.7 percent of those enrolled were identified as economically disadvantaged. In 2007-08, almost 133,000 or 75.2 percent of the region’s students were classified in this way. The statewide average is 55.3 percent of total enrollment.

Accountability

Exhibit 35 compares the accountability ratings for the region’s school districts to state averages for 2007-08. The Upper Rio Grande region exceeded the state average for Exemplary ratings by almost 4 percent.

As of August 2008, of the region’s 27 districts two were rated Exemplary; two were rated Recognized; 19 were rated Academically Acceptable; three were rated Academically Unacceptable; and one was listed as “Not Rated: Other.”

Exhibit 34

Ethnicity of Public School Students, Upper Rio Grande Region, 2001-02 vs. 2007-08 School Years

Ethnicity	2001-02	2007-08
White	10.0%	7.6%
Hispanic	86.2	88.6
Black	2.7	2.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.7	0.7
Native American	0.3	0.3

Note: Numbers may not total due to rounding.
Source: Texas Education Agency.



The region also exceeded statewide averages in its number of campuses rated as Academically Acceptable (**Exhibit 36**).

Of the 267 campuses in the region, including charter schools, 17 were rated Exemplary; 89 were Recognized; 139 were Academically Acceptable; five were Academically Unacceptable; and 17 were listed as “Not Rated: Other” for 2007-08.

Of the region’s six charter districts, two were rated as Exemplary; two were Academically Acceptable; one was Academically Unacceptable; and one was listed as “Not Rated: Other.”

Of the region’s 10 charter campuses, three were rated as Exemplary; four were Academically Acceptable; two were Academically Unacceptable; and one was listed as “Not Rated: Other.”

Among the region’s districts that teach all grade levels, Alpine ISD in Brewster County had the highest percentage of students passing all Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests in 2007-08, at 75 percent. (An average for the Upper Rio Grande region is not available because TEA reports district data only as percentages.)

In Marfa ISD, 92.9 percent of graduating students took college entrance exams in the 2006-07 school year, significantly outpacing the statewide average of 68.2 percent. Of the 18 Upper Rio Grande districts for which data are available, 10 had shares above the state average and eight had lower shares.

El Paso ISD had the region’s highest percentage of students taking the tests that scored at or above the criterion score TEA uses to measure college readiness, at 18.3 percent; the district also had more than 70

percent of its students take at least one of the tests. Across the state, 27.1 percent of students who took at least one of the tests scored at or above the criterion score.

Outcomes

According to the 2000 Census, almost 66 percent of Upper Rio Grande residents above the age of 25 had a high school diploma, a GED or some higher education. The statewide average is 75.7 percent.⁶

In the 2006-07 school year, 9,383 students graduated from the region’s high schools,

Exhibit 35

2007-08 Accountability Ratings, Upper Rio Grande School Districts

Rating	Region	Statewide
Exemplary	7.4%	3.5%
Recognized	7.4	26.8
Academically Acceptable	70.4	66.6
Academically Unacceptable	11.1	2.6
Not Rated: Other	3.7	0.6

Note: “Not Rated: Other” includes campuses such as alternative education programs or early childhood education centers. These data include charter districts. Numbers may not total due to rounding.
Source: Texas Education Agency.

Exhibit 36

2007-08 Accountability Ratings, Upper Rio Grande School Campuses

Rating	Region	Statewide
Exemplary	6.4%	12.2%
Recognized	33.3	34.4
Academically Acceptable	52.1	42.8
Academically Unacceptable	1.9	2.5
Not Rated: Other	6.4	8.1

Note: “Not Rated: Other” includes campuses such as alternative education programs or early childhood education centers. These data include charter districts. Numbers may not total due to rounding.
Source: Texas Education Agency.



Museums, Performing Arts and Cultural Organizations

The Upper Rio Grande region is home to a number of museums, historic theatres and other cultural organizations.

Museums, Theatres and Cultural Organizations in the Upper Rio Grande Region

County	City	Museums and Performing Arts Organizations
Brewster	Alpine	Museum of the Big Bend; Center for Big Bend Studies; Archives of the Big Bend
Brewster	Northeast of Big Bend	Hallie Stillwell Hall of Fame and Museum
El Paso	El Paso	El Paso Centennial Museum; Wilderness Park Museum; Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo Cultural Center; El Paso Museum of Art; El Paso Museum of History; National Border Patrol Museum; Plaza Theatre; Hueco Tanks State Historical Site; El Paso Museum of Archeology; Chamizal Museum
Jeff Davis	Fort Davis	Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute and Visitor Center; Fort Davis National Historical Site; Overland Trail Museum; McDonald Observatory
Brewster	Marathon	Marathon Museum
Presidio	Marfa	Marfa and Presidio County Museum; The Chinati Foundation; Marfa Theatre; Fort Leaton State Historical Site
Hudspeth	Sierra Blanca	Railroad Depot Hudspeth County Museum
Culberson	Van Horn	Culberson County Historical Museum

Sources: Texas Almanac, 2008-2009 and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

The region’s rich history and culture is reflected in El Paso’s Plaza Theatre. The theater opened with seating for more than 2,400 in 1930. For most of the next 20 years, it served as a major stage and film performance center, with state-of-the-art technology for its day.

The Plaza became known for its “night sky,” which would appear on the ceiling when the lights dimmed for the beginning of shows. Once the lights went down, tiny lights would twinkle above patrons while a cloud machine would create floating clouds. Beginning each show and accompanying some was the theater’s Mighty Wurlitzer Organ, which would rise from the orchestra pit playing music or using an advanced noise box to create the sounds of birds, horses’ hooves and the ocean.

In 1972, the organ was sold at auction, along with much of the original artwork associated with the theater. In 1986, the Plaza Theatre was set for demolition. The El Paso Community Foundation organized fundraisers to save and refurbish the historic venue. In 1998, the city reacquired the Mighty Wurlitzer Organ. In 2002, the city announced a partnership with public and private entities to restore the Plaza Theatre to its original splendor. Currently, the theatre hosts local and travelling shows.⁵

representing about 3.9 percent of the state-wide total that year. El Paso ISD had the largest number of graduates (3,251) while Valentine ISD had the smallest number, with just four graduates.

About 3.5 percent of the region’s students graduated under the state’s most stringent graduation plan, the Distinguished

Achievement plan; 87.3 percent under the Recommended plan, which is the required plan; and 9.2 percent under the Minimum plan, a less-stringent graduation plan that requires both parental and school approval, or under an individual education plan offered through Special Education. The share of Upper Rio Grande students who graduated



under the Distinguished Achievement and Recommended plans, at 90.8 percent, far exceeded the statewide average of 77.9 percent (**Exhibit 37**).

School Finance

In the 2006-07 school year, the Upper Rio Grande region’s total school spending per pupil, including debt service, averaged \$9,864. This was about 2.9 percent lower than the statewide average of \$10,162 for that year. Ten districts in the region were 20 percent or more above the statewide spending average; 11 districts, including charters, were below the statewide average.

Excluding charter districts, which do not receive funding from local tax revenue, the region’s lowest total tax rate in 2007 was in Valentine ISD, at 91.3 cents per \$100 of property value. Canutillo ISD levied the highest rate, at \$1.395. The statewide average was \$1.187; 13 districts in the Upper Rio Grande region had lower rates.

The region generated a much lower percentage of its school revenue from local taxes (23.8 percent) than the statewide average of 45.8 percent. Marathon ISD received the largest portion of its school funding from local taxes (50.2 percent), while San Elizario ISD had the lowest share (4.7 percent). The region’s percentage of revenue from other local sources, such as transfers and tuition payments, was a bit lower than the state average, at 4.5 percent versus 6.7 percent. San Vicente ISD gained 32.8 percent of its revenue from other local sources, the highest such share in the region; Valentine ISD received the lowest percentage for non-charter schools, at 1 percent.

San Elizario ISD had the lowest property wealth per pupil in 2007, at \$33,885, while Marathon ISD led the region with \$936,842 per pupil. The regional average was \$161,531, or 51.6 percent lower than the statewide average of \$333,420.

Texas law requires districts with relatively high property wealth per pupil to share it with less wealthy districts through a process called “equity transfers.” In 2006-07, no districts in the Upper Rio Grande region submitted an equity transfer to other districts. In that year, the statewide average for equity transfers was \$312 per pupil.

San Elizario ISD received more than 74 percent of its revenue from the state in 2007, the highest share among the region’s districts that also received some part of their revenue from local taxes. Culberson County-Allamore ISD received the smallest state share, at 15.8 percent. The regional average for 2007 was 57.7 percent, significantly higher than the statewide average of 37.8 percent. The region also received a larger share of federal funds than the statewide average, at 14 percent versus 9.8 percent.⁷

Exhibit 37

2007 High School Graduates, Upper Rio Grande Region vs. Statewide

Graduation Plan	Region	Statewide
Distinguished Achievement	3.5%	10.8%
Recommended	87.3	67.0
Minimum/IEP*	9.2	22.1
Distinguished Achievement & Recommended as Percent of Total	90.8%	77.9%

Source: Texas Education Agency.



Teachers

In the 2007-08 school year, the average Upper Rio Grande teacher salary was \$46,803, 1.4 percent above the statewide average of \$46,178. Ysleta ISD had the highest average salary at \$48,818. (It should be noted, however, that a district's average salary can vary due to the length of teacher tenure as well as wage levels. In other words, District A may have a higher average salary than District B because it has a higher percentage of experienced teachers, even though its wage levels for various years of experience may be lower than District B's.)

Average teacher salaries in the region rose by 19.4 percent from 2002-03 to 2007-08, compared to a statewide average rise of 15.5

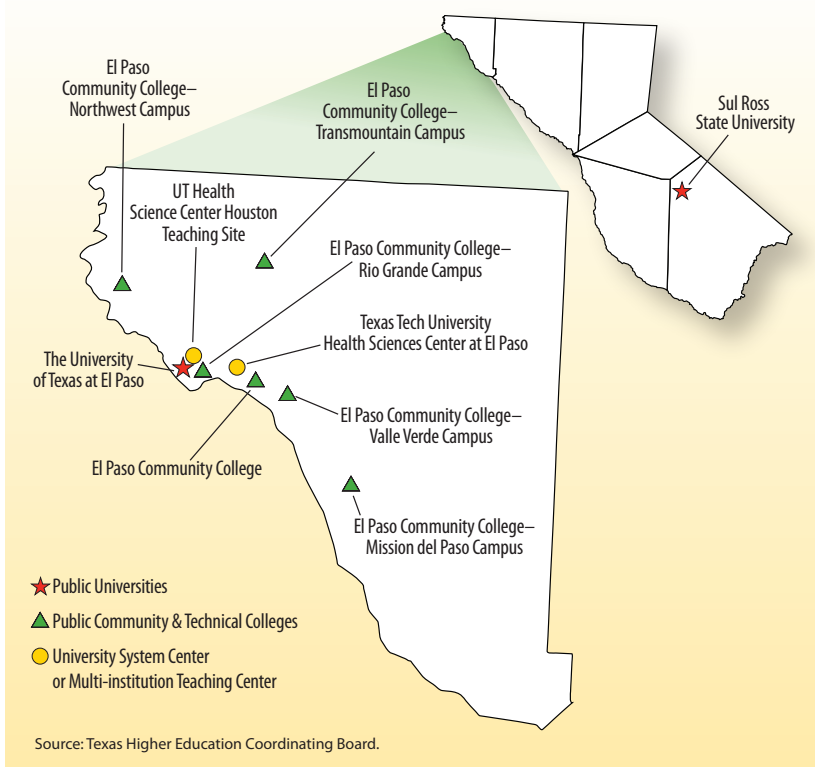
percent. Burnham Wood Charter School District had the highest percentage increase over this period, at more than 58 percent. The region's teacher salaries accounted for 28 percent of total district expenditures from all funds in the 2006-07 school year, slightly below the statewide average of 30.1 percent. El Paso Academy had the highest percentage of teacher salaries to total expenditures, at 39.3 percent. In all, seven of the region's districts devoted a higher percentage of expenditures to teacher salaries than the statewide average, while 18 had lower percentages.

In 2006-07, the region's average number of students per teacher matched the statewide average, at 14.7. San Vicente ISD had the lowest number of students per teacher, at 4.2.⁸

Average teacher salaries in the region rose by 19.4 percent from 2002-03 to 2007-08.

Exhibit 38

Higher Education Campuses, Upper Rio Grande Region



Higher Education

The Upper Rio Grande region has five institutions of higher education, all but one of which are located in or near the city of El Paso. The University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College operate in the city, as do two health-related educational centers affiliated with Texas Tech University and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Sul Ross State University is in Alpine. El Paso Community College has five campuses in the region (**Exhibit 38**).⁹

Enrollment

In fall 2008, 45,776 students were enrolled in Upper Rio Grande colleges and undergraduate universities. Universities accounted for 48.7 percent of the total, while the remaining 51.3 percent were enrolled at El Paso Community College.



Exhibit 39

Upper Rio Grande Region, Fall Headcount Enrollment 2000 and 2008

Public Institutions	Fall 2000 Enrollment	Fall 2008 Enrollment	Enrollment Change	Percent Change
University of Texas at El Paso	15,224	20,458	5,234	34.4%
Sul Ross State University	2,010	1,841	-169	-8.4%
Regional Total – Public Universities	17,234	22,299	5,065	29.4%
Statewide Total – Public Universities	414,626	509,136	94,510	22.8%
El Paso Community College	17,747	23,477	5,730	32.3%
Regional Total – Two-year Public Colleges	17,747	23,477	5,730	32.3%
Statewide Total – Two-year Public Colleges	431,934	597,146	165,212	38.2%
Regional Total Higher Education	34,981	45,776	10,795	30.9%

Note: Regional data do not include enrollment for branch campuses of health-related institutions in Upper Rio Grande since enrollment is not reported separately to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
 Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) had 20,458 students enrolled in fall 2008, with Sul Ross adding 1,841 to the four-year institution total. UTEP’s enrollment has risen by 34.4 percent since fall 2000, while Sul Ross enrollment fell by 8.4 percent over the same period. Statewide four-year enrollment rose by 22.8 percent in those years. Two-year higher education enrollment in the region rose from 17,747 in 2000 to 23,477 in 2008, a 32.3 percent increase. That pace was somewhat slower than the statewide two-year enrollment growth rate of 38.2 percent (**Exhibit 39**).¹⁰

Accessibility

The region’s universities accepted an average of 98.0 percent of first-time undergraduate applicants for the fall 2008 semester, well above the statewide average of 74.4 percent. The University of Texas at El Paso accepted 98.6 percent, while Sul Ross State University accepted 97.3 percent of its applicants.

About 14.6 percent of the 5,467 applicants accepted at UTEP and 6.1 percent of the

727 successful applicants at Sul Ross were accepted because they were in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class, compared to 21.8 percent of accepted applicants statewide.¹¹

Outcomes

Because some degrees require more than four years of study, and because some students may need more time to graduate, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) compares four-year and six-year graduation rates to measure university outcomes. Graduation rates improved significantly between fiscal 1999 and fiscal 2007 at the University of Texas at El Paso, with the four-year rate doubling and the six-year rate increasing by 21 percent over that time period. Sul Ross also saw an increase in four-year graduation rates but a slight decrease in the six-year rate (**Exhibit 40**).

Because many community college students go on to a university to obtain a four-year degree, THECB also compares three-year and six-year graduation rates to measure



University of Texas at El Paso

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the westernmost branch of the University of Texas System, was founded in 1914 as the state’s first school of mines. The school still has a mine tunnel on campus, located behind its Computer Sciences building.¹²

At its inception, UTEP was called the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy and had 27 students. UTEP now has more than 20,000 students from dozens of countries, and more than 70 percent of its student population is Hispanic.

UTEP features a wide variety of programs and services and more than 170 registered campus organizations. Students can choose from more than 80 bachelor’s degree programs, more than 70 master’s programs and 14 doctorate programs in the areas of Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Liberal Arts, Science and Nursing.¹³

The university is one of El Paso’s largest employers, with about 4,500 workers.¹⁴ It pays more than \$125 million in annual salaries and contributes roughly \$343 million to local residents’ personal income and \$375 million in area business activity. It also ranks among Texas’ top schools in terms of research spending, with nearly \$46 million in fiscal 2006 alone.¹⁵ The school is hugely popular with Hispanics seeking undergraduate degrees in engineering.

In 2006 and 2007, *Hispanic Business* magazine selected UTEP’s College of Engineering as the nation’s top engineering school for Hispanics.¹⁶ The college consistently ranks as one of the nation’s top five schools in bachelor’s degrees awarded to Hispanics, and has been named a “Model Institution for Excellence” by the National Science Foundation.

In 2008, *Hispanic Business* magazine also ranked UTEP’s Master of Business Administration (MBA) program sixth among the nation’s Top 10 business graduate programs for Hispanics.¹⁷

community college outcomes. El Paso Community College’s three-year and six-year graduation rate from fiscal 2000 to fiscal 2007 improved dramatically; the three-year rate doubled and the six-year rate increased by 84

percent. These graduation rates, however, still lag behind the statewide averages (**Exhibit 41**).

From fiscal 2000 to fiscal 2008, the increase in the number of degrees awarded by UTEP far exceeded the statewide increase of

Exhibit 40

Four- and Six-Year Graduation Rates, (First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking Students), Upper Rio Grande Public Universities vs. Statewide Average Fiscal 1999 and 2007

Institution	Fiscal 1999 4-year	Fiscal 1999 6-year	Fiscal 2007 4-year	Fiscal 2007 6-year
University of Texas at El Paso	2.6%	26.4%	5.3%	31.9%
Sul Ross State University	8.9	25.2	9.7	24.6
Statewide Average	18.0%	49.2%	25.3%	56.3%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.



35 percent, while Sul Ross' number of degrees remained essentially static (Exhibit 42).

Over the same period, El Paso Community College significantly increased its awards of degrees and certificates, at a higher rate than the statewide increase (Exhibit 43).¹⁸

Affordability

From 2002-03 to 2008-09, estimated resident tuition and fees at both public universities in Upper Rio Grande were below the

statewide average. The region's tuition and fees rose sharply over this period, however, as they did throughout the state (Exhibit 44).

From 2002-03 to 2008-09, resident tuition and fees at community colleges statewide rose by an average of \$675 or about 60.3 percent; El Paso Community College's increase was significantly smaller, at 13.1 percent.²¹

The total cost of attending the university or community college in El Paso, including

From fiscal 2000 to fiscal 2008, El Paso Community College significantly increased its awards of degrees and certificates.

(text continued on Page 91)

Exhibit 41

Three- and Six-Year Graduation Rates (First-time, Full-time, Credential-Seeking Students) Upper Rio Grande Community Colleges

Institution	Fiscal 2000 3-year	Fiscal 2000 6-year	Fiscal 2007 3-year	Fiscal 2007 6-year
El Paso Community College	3.2%	11.3%	6.5%	20.8%
Statewide Average	10.8%	25.7%	11.1%	30.8%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Exhibit 42

Degrees Awarded, Public Universities, Upper Rio Grande Region vs. State, Fiscal 2000 and 2008

Institution	Fiscal 2000	Fiscal 2008	Change	% Change
University of Texas at El Paso	2,131	3,529	1,398	65.6%
Sul Ross State University	378	375	-3	-0.8
Statewide Total	78,954	106,582	27,628	35.0%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Exhibit 43

Degrees and Certificates Awarded, Upper Rio Grande Region Two-Year Colleges, Fiscal 2000 vs. 2008

Institution	Fiscal 2000	Fiscal 2008	Change	% Change
El Paso Community College	1,188	2,174	986	83.0%
Statewide	37,395	55,809	18,414	49.2%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.



Exhibit 44

Upper Rio Grande Region College Costs

Public Universities

Institution	Resident Tuition and Fees 2002-03	Resident Tuition and Fees 2008-09	Dollar Change 2002-03 to 2008-09	Percent Change 2002-03 to 2008-09	Resident Total Costs 2002-03	Resident Total Costs 2008-09	Percent Change 2002-03 to 2008-09
University of Texas at El Paso	\$3,195	\$5,926	\$2,731	85.5%	\$14,077	\$20,348	44.5%
Sul Ross State University	2,962	5,058	2,096	70.8	9,721	15,981	64.4
Statewide Average	\$3,441	\$6,193	\$2,752	80.0%	\$13,047	\$18,389	40.9%

Public Community Colleges

Institution	Resident Tuition and Fees 2002-03	Resident Tuition and Fees 2008-09	Dollar Change 2002-03 to 2008-09	Percent Change 2002-03 to 2008-09	Resident Total Costs 2002-03	Resident Total Costs 2008-09	Percent Change 2002-03 to 2008-09
El Paso Community College	\$1,503	\$1,700	\$197	13.1%	\$11,413	\$13,442	17.8%
Statewide Average	\$1,120	\$1,795	\$675	60.3%	\$9,248	\$12,510	35.3%

Note: Resident total costs include tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation and personal expenses. Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Sul Ross State University

Alpine’s Sul Ross University was chartered in 1917 as a state college with an emphasis on teacher training. Operations officially began in June 1920, under the direction of school President Thomas J. Fletcher. By 1933, the university’s graduate school was awarding master’s degrees.

Sul Ross University was accepted into the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and grew steadily from 1923 to 1945. With the onset of World War II, the school added a Navy pilot training program and a Woman’s Army Corp Training School.

Sul Ross University has continued to grow through the years, adding programs in Fine Arts, Language Arts, Science, Social Science, Teacher Education and Vocations. The Legislature officially changed its name to Sul Ross State University in 1969.

Sul Ross University is now part of the Texas State University System. In Fall 2008, 1,834 students attended the school, with a student-teacher ratio of about 16:1 . It has 48 undergraduate degree programs and 27 graduate programs. In the 2007-08 school year, the university awarded 570 total undergraduate and graduate degrees.¹⁹

Sul Ross is home to the Museum of the Big Bend, which highlights the region’s culture and history. Visitors can learn about the area through interactive exhibits that are periodically updated to ensure their relevance. The collection contains artifacts and art pertaining to the region’s four distinct cultures, Native Americans, the Spanish, Mexicans and Anglo-Americans. The school also hosts the Archives of the Big Bend, which include art and artifacts, manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, books and maps from the region.²⁰



tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, transportation and personal expenses, was and is higher than the state-wide average, while the total cost at Sul Ross remains lower than average.²²

Funding

Texas public universities' total revenue, including tuition and fees, general revenue appropriations, federal funds and institutional funds, rose by 15.6 percent from fiscal 2006

to fiscal 2008. In the Upper Rio Grande region, UTEP's increase was four-fifths of that, at 12.5 percent. Sul Ross' revenues grew more slowly, rising by 1.6 percent during the time period (**Exhibit 45**).²³

Total state appropriations for community colleges declined in the 2004-2005 two-year budget period, as they did for El Paso Community College. By the 2008-09 biennium, however, appropriations had recovered. But the college had a smaller percentage gain in

Exhibit 45

Public Universities Total Revenue Sources, Upper Rio Grande Region and Statewide, Fiscal 2006 and Fiscal 2008

University of Texas at El Paso

Revenue Source	Fiscal 2006	Fiscal 2008	% Increase
Tuition and fees	\$58,201,300	\$71,018,233	22.0%
State appropriations	90,915,012	104,596,701	15.0
Federal funds	62,611,976	65,093,233	4.0
Institutional funds	28,456,364	29,440,734	3.5
Total Revenue	\$240,184,652	\$270,148,901	12.5%

Sul Ross State University

Revenue Source	Fiscal 2006	Fiscal 2008	% Increase
Tuition and fees	\$6,308,595	\$6,713,483	6.4%
State appropriations	25,229,520	25,813,869	2.3
Federal funds	8,317,431	7,927,088	-4.7
Institutional funds	4,170,579	4,290,844	2.9
Total Revenue	\$44,026,125	\$44,745,284	1.6%

Statewide

Revenue Source	Fiscal 2006	Fiscal 2008	% Increase
Tuition and fees	\$2,000,693,293	\$2,400,749,604	20.0%
State appropriations	2,599,091,546	2,949,486,914	13.5
Federal funds	1,161,122,338	1,260,930,090	8.6
Institutional funds	1,375,219,819	1,638,009,659	19.1
Total Revenue	\$7,136,126,996	\$8,249,176,267	15.6%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.



appropriations between 2002-03 and 2008-09 than did total state community college appropriations (**Exhibit 46**).²⁴

Contact hours — the time a professor actually spends in the classroom with students — for community, state and

technical colleges rose by 25.5 percent statewide from fall 2000 to fall 2008. In the Upper Rio Grande region, contact hours increased even more at El Paso Community College, with a 27.8 percent growth rate (**Exhibit 47**).²⁶

Exhibit 46

General Revenue Appropriations, Public Community and Technical Colleges, Upper Rio Grande Region and Statewide, Fiscal 2002-2009

Institution	2002-03 Biennium	2004-05 Biennium	2006-07 Biennium	2008-09 Biennium	% Change 2002-03 to 2008-09
El Paso Community College	\$64,523,858	\$58,158,531	\$63,284,766	\$66,712,421	3.4%
Public Community & Technical College Statewide Total	\$1,709,158,821	\$1,622,914,188	\$1,763,151,222	\$1,845,292,200	8.0%

Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

McDonald Observatory

The University of Texas’ McDonald Observatory, with facilities located on top of Mount Locke and Mount Fowlkes, is one of the world’s leading astronomical research centers. The observatory is a partnership between the University of Texas, Penn State University, Stanford University and two German universities, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. The main campus of the University of Texas at Austin houses the facility’s administrative offices. The observatory itself hosts astronomers, students, teachers and curious visitors year-round.

The McDonald Observatory’s Hobby-Eberly Telescope, dedicated in 1997, searches for black holes, stars, planets and other heavenly bodies. The Harlan J. Smith Telescope, completed in 1968, was the third-largest of its kind when built. The observatory’s oldest telescope, however, is the Otto Struve. When built between 1933 and 1939, this reflecting telescope contained the second-largest mirror in the world. McDonald Observatory also operates a 30-inch telescope and a laser system to assist in astrological education.

Researchers at the facility work on numerous projects. They hope to discover the root of “dark energy,” a mysterious force thought to be driving the ongoing expansion of the universe. Scientists are also studying how galaxies form and interact with one another.

Visitors to McDonald Observatory can participate in a wide range of astronomy-related activities. The grounds house an exhibit hall and theater that are open daily, along with tours that last roughly 90 minutes with experienced guides.

The facility also hosts “Star Parties,” which offer a unique way to learn more about the night sky. Star Parties allow visitors to view stars, constellations and planets through the observatories’ telescopes. The McDonald Observatory also hosts school and civic groups as well as online visitors and provides a one-of-kind learning experience that is fun and informative.²⁵



Exhibit 47

**Community, State and Technical Colleges, Contact Hours
Fall 2000 vs. Fall 2008, Upper Rio Grande Region**

Institution	Fall 2000	Fall 2008	% Change 2000 to 2008
El Paso Community College	3,255,072	4,161,312	27.8%
Public Community & Technical College Statewide Total	73,370,630	92,048,303	25.5%

Note: Contact hours include only those with a full or part-time faculty instructing by lecture, lab or practicum. Classes taught at an inter-institutional location are excluded.
Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

The growth in educational achievement will play a vital and positive role in the region’s economic future. The positive upswing in enrollment in Upper Rio Grande colleges and universities will, however, place new demands on the region’s higher educational infrastructure, requiring more instructors to keep pace with the demand for services.

Endnotes

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