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In this quarter's TACT newsletter...

p. 2

TACT President Elizabeth Lewandowski: Each one, reach one!

p. 4

Executive Director Chuck Hempstead reports on School Finance in Texas...

p. 5

Guest Editorial writer Laurie Born: Standardized Tests for Colleges?

p. 10

Higher Education Commissioner Dr. Raymund Paredes' Report to the Board...



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# The TACT Quarterly eBulletin

Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

---

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## President's Column

by Elizabeth Lewandowski  
TACT President

### A United Voice

A professional art gallery director who is teaching college classes for the first time. A retired public high school teacher who teaches speech as an adjunct faculty member. A professional librarian with the ink still wet on her PhD. A soon-to-retire English professor who still has the energy to come to class dressed as a character from the book under discussion in class. The university president who scrimps and saves from steadily decreasing state funds in order to give the faculty a cost of living raise. The mid-career theatre professor who spends 20-30 hours each week working with students in an applied learning theatre lab.

Who are these people? These are the faces of TACT. These are the educational professionals who believe that there is an important organization that serves them as their representative in Austin.

In the fall, TACT began a new membership campaign, "Each one, reach one", designed to build our membership. The campaign has not been as successful as the members of the board had hoped. Why is our size important? The political reality is that an organization that represents 5,000 receives more attention than an organization that represents 500. When our lobbyist and members of the board visit with members of the legislature we carry with us information about TACT. As we ask the legislature to pay attention to our issues, we are competing for their attention and the state's dollars with other organizations that represent community colleges and public schools (both primary and secondary). We are competing with ranchers, taxidermists, doctors, etc. In other words, we are competing with groups representing all walks of life. Part of the equation is the size of the group being represented.

As individuals, we are besieged on every side by requests for money. We are besieged on every side by news coverage about the value and cost of higher education. We are besieged on every side by reports about both state and federal government decisions that affect our careers in higher education.

If we believe that we in higher education have something of value to give to the world, we must put our money and our energy where our mouths are. We talk to each other about our frustrations with lack of state funding, the misconception the public has regarding our work, our desire to make a better world by being teachers. Talking to each other doesn't help solve the problem.

Thank you Sponsors!



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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

---

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## President's Column

by Elizabeth Lewandowski  
TACT President

### A United Voice

(continued from previous page)

In order to solve the problems we face, we must talk to those who can make a difference – our legislature. In order for the legislature to respond positively, we have to have a loud enough voice to get their attention. In order to have that voice, enough of us must care enough to join our voices together – to become members of TACT.

Why am I talking to you about this? If you are reading this, you are probably already a member of TACT. If you want TACT to continue to speak for you and to have a voice loud enough to be heard, more voices must be added to yours and mine. If each member of TACT can get one new member, we can double our size and make our united voice a lot harder to ignore. How much do you want to make higher education better in Texas? Enough to help us grow and speak louder? Each one, reach one!

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

---

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

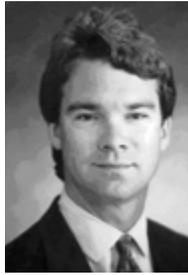
Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## Executive Director's Report

by Chuck Hempstead  
TACT Executive Director

### School Finance and Taxes: The Legislative Two-Headed Monster

O.K., you math professors, what was the theory I've forgotten from graduate school that permits one to solve a problem which has two apparently contradictory goals – was it "Mini-Max?"

In any event, that is what the Texas Legislature is struggling with by trying to lower property taxes while providing sufficient and equitable funding to the schools. After a virtually dedicated regular session, a Supreme Court ruling and a couple of special sessions, we're where we were. Word is that the Governor will call another special session after the March primaries, which may be particularly interesting considering the number of incumbents indicating that they may not run.

As with many big issues, it dwarfs consideration of other issues, including ours. Usually in this space at this time of the cycle we're talking about interim committee hearings, but those are on the slow road this time as efforts are concentrated on schools. And legislators are loath to make enemies on other issues when it will take all the goodwill they can muster to solve schools.

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## Guest Editorial

by Laurie Born

TACT Office Manager

## Higher Education Commission Explores Standard Test for Colleges

In September, U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced the formation of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education. The commission is charged with developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education that will meet the needs of America's diverse population and also address the economic and workforce needs of the country's future. Charles Miller, former chair of the UT regents, chairs the commission.

The New York Times (Arenson, K. "Panel Explores Standard Tests for Colleges) reported that the commission is examining whether standardized testing should be expanded into universities and colleges to prove that students are learning and to allow easier comparisons on quality. In a memo to the 18 other members of the commission, Charles Miller went on record that "What is clearly lacking is a nationwide system for comparative performance purposes, using standard formats for measuring student learning."

While Miller has said that he is not envisioning a higher education version of the No Child Left Behind Act, he is advocating for public reporting of collegiate learning as measured through testing.

"It would be a shame for the academy to say, 'We can't tell you what it [learning] is; you have to trust us.' - Charles Miller

It is not clear whether the commission would recommend that funding be used as an incentive for testing or else withheld from colleges that refuse to use standardized testing.

Miller, a friend of President Bush's, advised Bush while he was governor of Texas, and was something of a mentor to Spellings when she served as the governor's education policy person.

Spellings said the commission will engage students and families, policymakers, business leaders, and the academic community in a national dialogue about key issues in higher education. Public hearings will be held nationwide, and a final report will be delivered to Spellings by August 2006.

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



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TACT Office Manager

## Higher Education Commission Explores Standard Test for Colleges

(continued from previous page)

Miller has said that he will focus the on such themes as affordability, access, accountability, global competitiveness and quality of teaching and research. An article in the Austin American-Statesman quoted UT Systems Chancellor Mark Yudof as saying that "Charles will bring up the deepest issues on federal policy, whether it's tax credits or the role of the federal government in research." Miller says he considers higher education among the best investments the public sector makes, but stresses that he has made no assumptions about whether more or less spending is needed.

He also said it's too early to speculate on what sort of legislation, if any, might emerge from the panel's review. But he said there's little doubt that parents, students and taxpayers need more information to assess the performance of the nation's public and private colleges and universities. For instance, it's virtually impossible to know how much use a particular building on a campus gets because that sort of information is not routinely tracked. Yet it speaks to economic efficiency, Miller said.

Texas has adopted a higher education accountability program that is heavy on information concerning graduation rates, but light on consequences for poor performance. Miller helped shape the Texas program and reportedly won't be satisfied with simply suggesting minor tweaks in education policy.

In May 2003, Miller testified before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. His testimony focused on accountability practices in higher education and noted that various associations, accrediting bodies, research centers, and federal and state governments all promote higher education accountability. He went on to say that accountability systems are characterized by fragmentation, frustration, and lack of utility. He proposed a national accountability model for higher education that should:

- Build on existing systems and sources of data
- Be aligned with state efforts
- Create a conceptual framework
- Utilize multiple kinds of measurements
- Select meaningful indicators

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## Guest Editorial

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TACT Office Manager

## Higher Education Commission Explores Standard Test for Colleges

(continued from previous page)

- Develop a method to benchmark higher education institutions with similar missions
- Foster engagement of higher education community
- Communicate widely about process and results
- Foster use of results by rewarding success

Besides Miller, who is a private investor from Houston, the members of the Commission on the future of Higher Education include:

Carol Bartz  
Chairman of the Board, President & CEO  
Autodesk, Inc.

Nicholas Donofrio  
Executive Vice President for Innovation & Technology  
IBM

James Duderstadt  
President Emeritus  
University Professor of Science & Engineering  
Director, the Millennium Project  
University of Michigan

Gerri Elliott  
Corporate Vice President  
Worldwide Public Sector  
Microsoft Corporation

Kati Haycock  
Director  
The Education Trust

The Honorable James B. Hunt, Jr.  
Chairman, James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership & Policy  
Former Governor of North Carolina

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

---

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## Guest Editorial

by Laurie Born  
TACT Office Manager

## Higher Education Commission Explores Standard Test for Colleges

(continued from previous page)

Jonathan Grayer  
Chairman & CEO  
Kaplan, Inc.

Arturo Madrid  
Murchison Distinguished Professor of the Humanities  
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures  
Trinity University

Robert Mendenhall  
President  
Western Governor's University

Charlene R. Nunley  
President  
Montgomery College

The Honorable Arthur J. Rothkopf  
Sr. Vice President & Counselor to the President  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
President Emeritus, Lafayette College

Richard Stephens  
Sr. Vice President, Human Resources & Administration  
The Boeing Company

The Honorable Louis Sullivan  
President Emeritus, Morehouse School of Medicine  
Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Sara Martinez Tucker  
President & CEO  
Hispanic Scholarship Fund

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

---

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



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by Laurie Born  
TACT Office Manager

## Higher Education Commission Explores Standard Test for Colleges

(continued from previous page)

Richard Vedder  
Adjunct Scholar, American Enterprise Institute  
Distinguished Ohio University Professor of Economics

Charles M. Vest  
President Emeritus  
Professor of Mechanical Engineering  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

David Ward  
President  
American Council on Education

Robert Zemsky  
Chair & Professor  
The Learning Alliance for Higher Education  
University of Pennsylvania

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Oct/Nov/Dec 2005 LIX No 2

Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



## Report to the Higher Education Board

by Dr. Raymund Paredes  
Texas Commissioner of Higher Education

### Closing the Gaps. Taking the Next Steps

*Dr. Raymund Paredes, Texas Higher Education Commission, provides periodic written reports to the Coordinating Board. They may be accessed at <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/Commissioner/>. The following is the intro to his October 2005 report to the Board.*

*-Editor.*

This morning I would like to talk about where we are in Texas in relation to achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps*. You have already had some indication from David Gardner that we are not doing well in one particular area and I want to talk about what we might do next in all the areas in which we have established goals. As I've said before, *Closing the Gaps* is one of the great initiatives in American higher education, a plan that is bold and holds great promise for Texas. As such, it has attracted attention and admiration from every part of the country. But for all its admirable qualities, as a document, *Closing the Gaps* is short on a range of precise strategies for achieving its lofty goals related to participation in college, student academic success, institutional excellence and federal research support. The original work of the Closing the Gaps project was to establish a great vision for higher education in Texas and to chart general path towards its goals. It is time now to provide definition for our vision, to enact specific strategies to move us aggressively forward. It is not too much to say that the well-being of Texas is heavily dependent on what we do as a higher education community.

While we have formidable challenges before us, it is important to note that significant progress towards the goals of *Closing the Gaps* has already been made. The goal related to federal research support is already within our grasp ten years before the goal was intended to be reached. My colleagues are now prepared to ask the Board to set a more ambitious goal that aims for a higher percentage of total federal research support that comes to Texas and would also help us to close the gap in federal research dollars between California and Texas. Currently, Texas receives approximately 41 percent as much federal research support as California, \$1.22 billion compared to \$2.95 billion for California. In terms of our participation goal, the major accomplishment has been the adoption of the Recommended High School Program which will, as it begins to take effect, dramatically increase college readiness among high school graduates in Texas. The establishment of now 200 GO Centers in high schools and other institutions around the state, which offer academic counseling and

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Defending Academic Freedom

---

## CONTENTS

Cover Page

The President's  
Column

The Executive  
Director's Report

Guest Editorial:  
Laurie Born

Report to Higer  
Ed. Board

Membership  
Application

Upcoming Events

Legislative First  
Alerts

Past eBulletins



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Texas Commissioner of Higher Education

### Closing the Gaps. Taking the Next Steps

(continued from previous page)

financial aid information, has certainly expanded college awareness. And the establishment of a higher education accountability system in the state aligned with *Closing the Gaps* goals helps all of us in higher education keep our eyes fixed on the challenges ahead.

As I've suggested, it is time to both readjust and sharpen our strategies for achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps*. Over the past 16 months, in the time that I have been at the Coordinating Board, the staff at the Board has been involved in a thorough review of our own activities, as well as an extensive review of both literature and practice related to *Closing the Gaps*, both inside Texas and around the country. I would like to offer for your consideration a strategic overview of our plans for achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps*, with a brief description of some of the specific practices we propose to implement.

To read the full report, click below:

<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Commissioner/CommRep1005.pdf>

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