Dallas County Promise

2026 IMPACT REPORT

The Dallas County Promise of Economic Mobility



One of the largest regional talent initiatives in the nation, built by Dallas County for Dallas County students.



Table of Contents

WELCOME LETTER
Dallas County Promise of Economic Mobility 2

LEADERSHIP
Promise Advisory Board 5

SECTION 1
Nine Years of the Promise 6

BY THE NUMBERS
2026 High School Grad Class Impact 7

SECTION 2
The Opportunity — Why This Moment Matters 8

SECTION 3
The System — What Dallas County Promise Built 11

SECTION 4
What This Looks Like for a Student 14

SECTION 5
The Funding Architecture — Built to Last 17

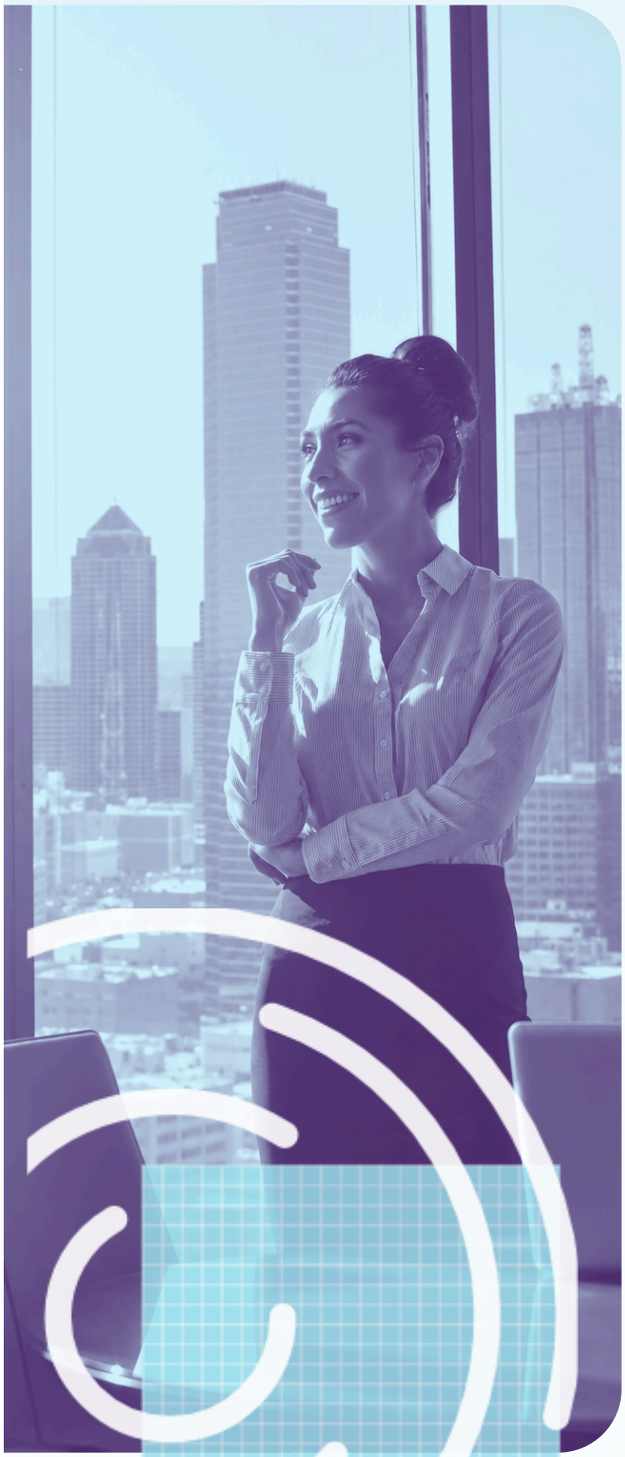
SECTION 6
The Progress — The Economic Mobility Awards 21

A LOOK FORWARD
Regional Leadership, Data and Systems, Workforce Engagement, Pathways for ALL 23

CLOSING
Forward Look 26

WELCOME LETTER

Dallas County Promise of Economic Mobility



Dear Partners, Investors, and Fellow Champions of Dallas County's Students,

Dallas is one of the fastest-growing economies in the United States—creating jobs at a remarkable pace and attracting companies and industries from across the country.

Yet for tens of thousands of young people growing up here, that prosperity has often felt out of reach. Historically, less than one third of Dallas County residents ages 25–34 have earned a living wage. Each year, an estimated $17.2 billion in potential lifetime earnings is lost per student cohort based on postsecondary outcomes. These results are not due to a lack of talent, but rather to systems that were not intentionally designed nor incentivized to guide and support all students in accessing the region's ever-expanding career opportunities.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL SYSTEM TAKING SHAPE

In 2017, regional leaders—led by Dallas College and the Commit Partnership, in collaboration with key K–12 and higher education partners—set out to change this trajectory by launching the Dallas County Promise. What began as a last-dollar scholarship program serving 9,000 high school seniors across 31 of the region's most underserved high schools has grown into one of the largest Promise initiatives in the nation. Today, it supports 110,000+ 9–12 grade students annually across 85 high schools in 12 public school districts and charter networks.

The Promise has evolved into far more than a scholarship program. It is becoming a comprehensive, coordinated redesign of how an entire region supports students in translating postsecondary attainment into economic mobility.

THIS SYSTEM REDESIGN IS ANCHORED IN TWO KEY COMPONENTS:

1. **FIRST, DALLAS COLLEGE AND THE COMMIT PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED THE ECONOMIC MOBILITY CENTER (EMC),** a regional backbone organization of approximately 40 full-time staff. EMC runs the Dallas County Promise regional leadership coalition, the Promise student and family campaign, and works daily with K–12, higher education, and workforce partners. EMC provides direct support and develops communities of practice to establish strategy, set goals, analyze data, identify progress, and pinpoint where systems need different approaches to improve.

2. **SECOND, THE COMMIT PARTNERSHIP PARTNERED WITH EDUCATION IS FREEDOM (EIF)** to serve as the region's centralized career advising provider. EIF delivers contracted support to K–12 partners, offering lower student-to-advisor ratios and year-round advising, including for those going straight to the workforce and during the critical summer period after high school graduation. EIF currently has 96 staff members across 38 high schools, 65 middle school campuses and 8 school districts, serving more than 25,000 students. This year, EIF also leveraged its scale to partner with Kaplan to provide free SAT preparation— showing promising early results.



110,000+

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SERVED ANNUALLY ACROSS 85 HIGH SCHOOLS

BUILT TO LAST

A defining feature of the Promise is its path to long-term public sustainability. From the outset, the initiative was designed to be catalyzed by philanthropy and sustained through outcomes-based state funding enabled by landmark legislation (HB 3 in 2019 and HB 8 in 2023). Together, these policies can generate more than $300 million annually tied to postsecondary readiness, access, and completion. Currently, less than 20% of this funding is being accessed—representing a significant opportunity to expand resources for the institutions serving our students.

CATALYTIC PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT

Since its 2024 expansion into a comprehensive middle school–to–workforce initiative, the Promise has secured more than $130 million in multiyear commitments. These investments reflect confidence in a model that uses philanthropy to bridge near-term system improvements while leveraging public funding for long-term sustainability.

Support includes a transformational $110 million investment from the O'Donnell Foundation, alongside major contributions from national partners such as JPMorgan Chase, the Gates Foundation, and the BlackRock and Fidelity Foundations. Regional and state partners—including the Communities Foundation of Texas, the Moody Foundation, and both Dallas College and its Foundation—have also played critical roles.

$300M+

Annual outcomes funding enabled by HB 3 and HB 8

$130M+

Multi-year philanthropic commitments since 2024

PROGRESS ACROSS KEY METRICS

The Dallas County Promise operates within the broader Opportunity 2040 community investment plan, which aims to increase living-wage attainment among Dallas County young adults to 50% by 2040. Achieving this goal would place 150,000 additional students on a path to economic mobility and generate more than $90 billion in additional lifetime earnings.

The infrastructure now being built—real-time data systems, aligned pathways, coordinated advising, and outcomes-based policy—is designed to meet that level of ambition. The data in this report reflects meaningful progress on key indicators, highlighting where outcomes are improving and where opportunities for acceleration remain.

CONCLUSION

The Promise represents an effort to build a new kind of civic infrastructure—one that is outcome-driven, publicly sustainable, and replicable across Texas and beyond. We are grateful for your partnership in this work and look forward to the conversations this report will spark, as well as the continued progress we will achieve together.

With gratitude and confidence in what we are building together,
The Dallas County Promise Advisory Board

OPPORTUNITY 2040 — THE NORTH STAR GOAL

50%
YOUNG ADULTS EARNING A LIVING WAGE BY 2040

150,000
MORE STUDENTS ON A PATH TO ECONOMIC MOBILITY

$90B+
IN ADDITIONAL LIFETIME EARNINGS



LEADERSHIP

Promise Advisory Board

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Commit Partnership
Todd Williams — Chairman and CEO
Miguel Solis — President
Jeannie Stone — Superintendent in Residence

Communities Foundation of Texas and Educate Texas
Kerri Briggs — Executive Director, Educate Texas
Robert Kent — Chief Philanthropy Officer
Reo Pruiett — Chief Programs and Engagement Officer
David Deggs — Senior Director of Higher Education and Workforce
Aubrey Talley — Program Investment Officer, Education and Workforce

Dallas Citizens Council
Kelvin Walker — CEO

Dallas County Promise Board Advisors
Angela Farley — Workforce Executive in Residence
Usamah Rodgers — Superintendent in Residence

Economic Mobility Center
Anne Motsenbocker — Board Chair
Megan Aghazadian — CEO
Eric Ban — Founder

Education is Freedom
Susanna Russell — CEO
Natalie Williams — Chief Impact Officer

K–12

Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD
Wendy Eldredge — Superintendent

Dallas ISD
Stephanie Elizalde — Superintendent
Angie Gaylord — Chief Academic Officer
Tiffany Huitt — Chief of School Leadership

Duncanville ISD
T. Lamar Goree — Superintendent

Garland ISD
Ricardo López — Superintendent
Ida Perales — Chief Leadership Officer

Grand Prairie ISD
Gabe Trujillo — Superintendent

HIGHER EDUCATION

Dallas College
Justin Lonon — Chancellor
Madaline Burillo-Hopkins — Vice Chancellor of Workforce Education
Beatriz Joseph — Vice Chancellor of Student Success
Brad Williams — Vice Chancellor of Operations

Texas Woman's University
Carine Feyten — Chancellor and President, TWU
Christopher Johnson — President, TWU Dallas

University of North Texas at Dallas
Warren Von Eschenbach — President
Patrick Valdez — Deputy to the President

WORKFORCE

Accenture
Deanna Naugles — North American and Dallas Local Market Lead

Dallas Regional Chamber
Jarrad Toussant — Senior Vice President, Education and Workforce

DFW Hospital Council
Steve Love — President and CEO

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas
Anna Crockett — Community Development Senior Advisor

United Way Metropolitan Dallas
Susan Hoff — Chief Strategy, Impact, and Operating Officer

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas
Laura Ward — President and CEO

SECTION 1

Nine Years of the Promise

What began in 2017 as a last-dollar scholarship at 31 high schools is now one of the largest regional talent initiatives in the nation.

NINE YEARS OF PROMISE

180,000+

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS SERVED OVER NINE YEARS

12,000+

MORE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES ENTERING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

$50M+

MORE FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID DOLLARS TO SUPPORT THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

15,000+

STUDENTS EARNING AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE FROM DALLAS COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL

#1 IN THE NATION

34,000+

STUDENTS SERVED ANNUALLY THROUGH DUAL CREDIT FROM DALLAS COLLEGE

#1

IN THE NATION FOR FINANCIAL AID COMPLETION

+9 ppt

INCREASE IN YOUNG ADULTS 25–34 EARNING A LIVING WAGE

–5 ppt

DECREASE IN ADULT POVERTY ACROSS DALLAS COUNTY

MOMENTUM IN THE LATEST COHORTS

+3 ppt Dallas College

+4 ppt Promise university partners

CLASS OF 2024 COLLEGE PERSISTENCE, FALL 2024 TO FALL 2025

+2.5 ppt

CLASS OF 2019 SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATE



BY THE NUMBERS · CLASS OF 2026

2026 High School Grad Class Impact

Follow one graduating class from the Promise Path to a college seat, and the share who arrive at each step.



28,000
Graduates

98%
PROMISE PATH FORM COMPLETION

87.5%
FINANCIAL AID COMPLETION
#1 IN THE NATION

95%
COLLEGE APPLICATION COMPLETION

40%
TESTING COLLEGE READY
UP 5 PPT

3,500
ASSOCIATE DEGREES IN HS
#1 IN THE NATION



SECTION 2

The Opportunity: Why This Moment Matters

Dallas County is home to one of the strongest, most rapidly growing economies in the U.S. The Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metro boasts a gross domestic product of about $744 billion.

That is economically larger than 80% of countries around the world. GDP grew about 36% from 2019 to 2023, driven by a wide array of industries, including manufacturing, information, trade, and healthcare.

Almost 900,000 more jobs exist in the North Texas economy compared to a decade ago, even with the turmoil caused by COVID-19. Yet the financial gains from this economic boom remain out of reach for far too many students in Dallas County schools.

Without continued, deliberate intervention to guide students toward well-paying jobs, they are at perpetual risk of missing out on the upward economic mobility our economy offers. Each cohort of Dallas County students who don't complete postsecondary programs — or don't finish high school at all — faces an estimated lifetime earnings loss of $17.2 billion.

$744B
DFW GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

36%
NORTH TEXAS GDP GROWTH, 2019–2023

$17.2B
LOST LIFETIME EARNINGS PER HIGH SCHOOL COHORT FROM LACK OF POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

900K
MORE JOBS IN NORTH TEXAS THAN A DECADE AGO



60%

OF THE JOBS IN TEXAS WILL REQUIRE A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL BY 2030

Beyond that, with the rise of artificial intelligence and more technological innovations, the job market will continue to rapidly evolve. Employers need candidates with quality education and durable skills. About 60% of the jobs in Texas will require a postsecondary credential by 2030, such as 2- and 4-year degrees or industry-based certificates. Worryingly, recent reports show less than 40% of Texas students achieve this within six years of graduation. Considering the varied workforce skills needed, Dallas County students can find opportunities aligned with their interests, if they are prepared with the right credentials.

To close these prosperity and skills gaps, leaders from the public and private sectors have joined forces to expand the Dallas County Promise and build on its success over nearly a decade. Launched as a last-dollar scholarship program in 2017, the Promise now serves as a regional infrastructure that moves students toward economic mobility via postsecondary pathways that include higher education, industry-based certificates, or dual credit attainment. Since its launch, the Promise has engaged more than 180,000 high school seniors along the path to postsecondary success.

Through the Promise, a broad-based coalition is working to fulfill Opportunity 2040 – a regional north star goal supported by the Commit Partnership and the Child Poverty Action Lab to get at least half of Dallas County's young adults (ages 25 to 34) into jobs that pay a living wage by 2040. Succeeding would put 150,000 additional students on a path to upward economic mobility and add $90 billion in lifetime earnings to Dallas County.

Educational attainments yield a high return on time invested. It's one that most students, especially from economically disadvantaged families, can't afford to miss. Dallas County has more than 450,000 students and 75% fall into this category. These students are capable and talented but are often locked out of certain opportunities. Postsecondary education presents high up-front costs, complicated systems to navigate, strict deadlines, and countless requirements that can seem like insurmountable barriers for these young people. The obstacles in their postsecondary journeys have serious results.

75%

of Dallas County's 450,000+ students are economically disadvantaged.

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS ARE:

87%

LESS LIKELY TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL ON TIME

54%

LESS LIKELY TO ENROLL IN A 4-YEAR INSTITUTION

40%

LESS LIKELY TO EARN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

61%

LESS LIKELY TO EARN A LIVING WAGE



Whether pursuing work certifications in healthcare or trade or pursuing a bachelor's degree, postsecondary credentials are an increasingly crucial determinant of an individual's future economic success. Supporting school districts opens the door to more transformative change. Guiding and supporting students throughout high school will change how they approach their future. They may have grown up feeling they weren't college material or that higher education wasn't an affordable option. The Promise helps them realize their potential and offers economically disadvantaged students an opportunity to attend college tuition-free. Efforts have already seen some great successes and created a wave of new opportunities. Still, achieving countywide living-wage goals requires accelerated support and a wider range of connection points to bring students into the Promise.

AN ECONOMIC NEED AND MORAL IMPERATIVE

Opportunity exists in Dallas County, yet too many local students and young people are missing out on it.

Breaking down barriers that are in their way is "the right thing to do" as the region works to close the economic prosperity gap, says Dallas Citizens Council CEO and Dallas County Promise advisory board member Kelvin Walker.

"The ability to learn and discern and intelligence – that's all distributed equally. But the opportunity to get to the next level is not," Walker says.

Beyond that, educating and training people for in-demand jobs that pay a living wage has potential to make Dallas a more attractive place for businesses to grow or relocate.

The presence of Dallas County Promise "shows there's a path and a talent pipeline that can be accessed," Walker says. Businesses stand to benefit substantially if the region invests more in teaching students the skills that stand out.



"The ability to learn and discern and intelligence – that's all distributed equally. But the opportunity to get to the next level is not."

KELVIN WALKER
Dallas Citizens Council CEO

SECTION 3

The System — What Dallas County Promise Built

Dallas County Promise launched in 2017 to provide last-dollar tuition grants to economically disadvantaged students at participating Promise high schools.

The focus was closing a critical financial gap to help students attend college and creating an essentially tuition-free pathway for students attending higher ed partner institutions.

In its first year, Promise served some 9,000 students at 31 underserved area high schools. After nearly a decade, Dallas County Promise has become one of the largest regional talent initiatives in the nation. Now reaching 110,000+ 9-12 grade students annually at 85 area high schools, the Promise offers a potentially tuition-free pathway to 11 North Texas colleges and universities for eligible students, including Dallas College, UNT Dallas, East Texas A&M University, UNT, Tarleton State University, Texas Woman's University, UT Arlington, Midwestern State University, Southern Methodist University, UT Dallas, and Texas Wesleyan University. Beyond putting the traditional 4-year higher ed pathway within reach, the Promise now also operates as a ninth grade- to-workforce initiative that supports upward economic mobility by promoting dual-credit programs and industry-based certification. It is a vital part of the educational ecosystem moving students from the classroom to a job that pays them a dignified living wage.

PROMISE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

Dallas College
UNT Dallas
East Texas A&M
UNT
Tarleton State University
Texas Woman's University
University of Texas Arlington
Midwestern State University
SMU
UT Dallas
Texas Wesleyan University

11 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ON A TUITION-FREE PATHWAY

Dallas County Promise's growth is due to transformative changes made by a coalition of supportive, innovative organizations dedicated to removing the obstacles and barriers that prevent upward economic mobility. These partners each play different, equally critical roles in introducing students and school districts to the Promise, guiding them through options and applications, and setting them up for success in their postsecondary journey.

ECONOMIC MOBILITY CENTER

Economic Mobility Center is the primary nonprofit "backbone" entity supporting the Dallas County Promise and the region's key postsecondary-to-workforce intermediary. Founded by Commit and Dallas College, EMC serves as the effort's data-driven operational infrastructure, connecting students, districts and employers. Its data tools give school districts and institutions of higher education actionable, real-time information to rapidly improve student outcomes and identify the barriers in the way. EMC staff work daily with partner districts and colleges to analyze data, surface insights on reaching students and track progress toward goals, and the team sends reminders and updates directly to students about application deadlines. To broaden its impact, EMC built a first-of-its-kind regional data hub linking K-12, higher education and workforce data across the full student journey. It also coordinates Dallas College, Workforce Solutions, the Dallas Regional Chamber and United Way to map labor-market data to programs and short-term credentials, equipping students and advisors with timely job and program information.

EDUCATION IS FREEDOM

Education is Freedom, a nonprofit founded in 2002, drives student success with quality career and higher education advising. EIF's year-round approach guides students through figuring out what postsecondary pathway is right for them. Whether it is a traditional 4-year education, military enlistment, or going straight into the workforce, EIF is there. Students get help applying for college, navigating financial aid, and staying on track to postsecondary education during the critical summer period after they graduate. It is the most commonly used advising service in Dallas County public schools.



DALLAS COLLEGE

The largest provider of dual credit in the state of Texas, and the most common path for Promise scholars. Although Promise scholars can attend any institution that accepts them, a common and affordable postsecondary path for Promise scholars runs through Dallas College. Once Promise scholars graduate from partner high schools, they find an all-around supportive environment prepared to guide them to workforce certification or an associate or bachelor's degree. The seven-campus college offers childcare, food pantry aid, counseling and health support, transportation assistance, and academic support. Dallas County Promise coaches and case managers help keep students on track through their associate or bachelor's degrees, technical programs, or transfer process. Dallas College serves 34,000 high school students, producing more than 3,500 associate degrees annually in high school, making it the largest provider of dual credit in the state of Texas. Students who transfer to one of DCP's partner four-year institutions can also receive the Dallas College Transfer Success Fund to help them pay for the remainder of their postsecondary education.

34,000+
DUAL CREDIT STUDENTS SERVED EVERY YEAR

3,500+
ANNUAL ASSOCIATE DEGREES IN HIGH SCHOOL

10,000+
FIRST-TIME FRESHMAN ENROLLED ANNUALLY, MOST FROM THE PROMISE PIPELINE

These organizations are dedicated to strengthening educational opportunity and postsecondary attainment for Dallas County students and work alongside many others to achieve these goals.



SECTION 4

What This Looks Like for a Student

Kamila Vargas-Gonzalez's journey from Thomas Jefferson High School to Dallas College to SMU and ultimately a full-time salaried job exemplifies the success of Dallas County Promise.

Kamila was raised in the Bachman Lake neighborhood of northwest Dallas. Her parents instilled in her the belief that getting good grades and going to college would help her get ahead in life. As hard-working and supportive as they were, Kamila's parents had no experience navigating higher education.

Exactly how Kamila would achieve her goal of graduating from college got less clear in 2015, when her father was deported to Mexico. Kamila's mother was left to provide on a single income from the service industry. More massive challenges came during her final two high school years. First, in October 2019, a devastating tornado displaced Kamila and her fellow students from Thomas Jefferson High School. Then, in March 2020, COVID-19 upended everything about her daily life. She sometimes felt disconnected from academics and isolated.

Still, Kamila worked toward maintaining a 3.7 GPA while taking Advanced Placement courses and never gave up on her plan to go to college. Thanks to the lone Education Freedom advisor at her high school, she discovered the tuition-free pathway available through Dallas County Promise and other resources available to her.



Throughout a series of virtual Education is Freedom calls during her senior year, Kamila crossed the hurdles posed by the pandemic and a lack of knowledge about higher education. She learned how to apply for college and financial aid, got support for writing college entry essays, and found more scholarships and grants. She filled out the Promise Path form, like almost 19,000 other Dallas County seniors that year. Kamila recalls feeling "incredibly lucky" to have a designated person she could count on to answer her questions and ease doubts she had.

Kamila graduated from high school in 2021. She completed her associate degree at Dallas College with financial aid from Dallas County Promise and other scholarships and grants. While at Dallas College, a Promise success coach helped ensure that the credits she was earning would count toward her bachelor's degree. Then, she transferred to DCP partner school Southern Methodist University on a full-ride scholarship, graduating in May 2025. After college, Kamila completed internships at the Commit Partnership and nonprofit Bachman Lake Together. The latter developed into a job offer in December 2025, and Kamila became Bachman Lake Together's Development & Communications Coordinator. Her income now supports her with money left over to help ease the costs of living for her mom and other family members.

"Without that support, I would not be in this position where I am now," Vargas-Gonzalez says. "I would have struggled to know what the next step is in my career, or my professional life, or in my academic goals."

Kamila plans to get an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Texas at Austin. She also hopes to launch a literary magazine for residents of her beloved Bachman Lake neighborhood.

"Without that support, I would not be in this position where I am now."

KAMILA VARGAS-GONZALEZ
SMU Graduate
Development & Communications Coordinator, Bachman Lake Together



SECTION 4 · DISTRICT PARTNER STORY

Four Shared Bets. Stronger Student Outcomes.

Garland ISD shows how strong district leadership and aligned community partners can expand readiness, credentials, and the public funding that sustains opportunity.



"When schools, colleges, and community partners align around students, results follow. This isn't just a Garland story; it's a model."

RICARDO LÓPEZ
Superintendent, Garland ISD

The foundation — strong district leadership: a shared economic mobility vision, ownership at every level, actionable data and accountability, and students and families as partners.

FOUR ALIGNED BETS

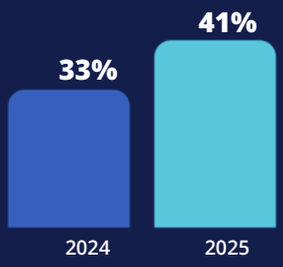
1 **DALLAS COUNTY PROMISE**
Student & family engagement
Make pathways and opportunities visible and accessible to every family.

2 **EDUCATION IS FREEDOM**
Career & college advising
Embed personalized guidance so students can choose and pursue a clear next step.

3 **ECONOMIC MOBILITY CENTER**
Leadership & data services
Align partners, make data actionable, and use shared checkpoints to improve outcomes.

4 **DALLAS COLLEGE**
College & workforce programs
Deliver dual credit, credentials, workforce pathways, and student success support.

WHAT THE BETS ARE PRODUCING



TSI ready +8 points

~15%
of the Class of 2025 graduated with an associate degree

59,000+
college credit hours earned in 2024–25

60%+
of graduating seniors completed CTE pathways

$3.9M
estimated college cost savings for families

$4.4M
HB3 outcomes bonus funding up 49%

HB3 figures: Class of 2025 early counts, up from $2.9M for the Class of 2023, a 49% increase calculated from unrounded amounts. These are leading indicators on the path to economic mobility; they do not yet establish living-wage outcomes.

"What you're seeing in our outcomes today reflects a community committed to that vision and unwilling to settle for less." — Dr. Ricardo López

SECTION 5

The Funding Architecture — Built to Last

Transforming the future opportunity of Dallas County's young adults is a bold and complex proposition. Philanthropy made a critical difference in laying foundations and changing thousands of lives. Now, after dedicated efforts to move state legislation forward, public incentives are transforming the durability of these postsecondary preparedness initiatives statewide.



Since Texas passed HB3 in 2019 and extended public dollars to schools with graduates meeting preparedness metrics, many school districts have seen the opportunity to align their standards to achieve these funding-backed outcomes. College enrollment earns incentives, as do dual credit and certification programs – a recognition of the various pathways to a stable future. With the passage of HB8 in 2023, community college funding was linked with student outcomes - high school dual credit participation, degree and certificate completion, and 4-year transfers - with additional weight given to economically disadvantaged and adult learners. This reversed a history of funding structures that focused on enrollment.

HOW PUBLIC FUNDING NOW FOLLOWS STUDENT OUTCOMES

HB 3

K–12 outcomes bonus funding
Rewards districts for graduates who meet readiness metrics: college enrollment, dual credit and certifications.

HB 8

Community college performance funding
Links funding to dual credit participation, completion and 4-year transfers, weighted for economically disadvantaged and adult learners.

These public dollars create a mutually beneficial scenario where students have easier access to credentials that improve their futures, educators have more funds to sustain them, and institutions are encouraged to collaborate to simplify and streamline processes.

Data shows the payoffs can be substantial. Dallas and Garland ISDs have put in efforts to improve early access to higher education in partnership with Dallas College. The results have been impressive - although the two districts educate 4% of Texas students, they produce more than 15% of all associate degrees awarded in high school across Texas. **These and other pushes to align district and state expectations place Dallas ISD as the #1 earner of HB3 outcomes funding in the state and Garland in the top 10. For the Class of 2025, Dallas ISD is projected to receive $9.5 million (137% growth from 2023) and Garland ISD is projected to receive $4.4 million (49% growth from 2023).** With associate degrees produced in high school alone at Dallas ISD and Garland ISD, Dallas College is estimated to earn more than $8M in HB8 performance for the Class of 2025. Funding note: Class of 2025 figures reflect early counts, not final awards. Growth percentages use unrounded amounts.

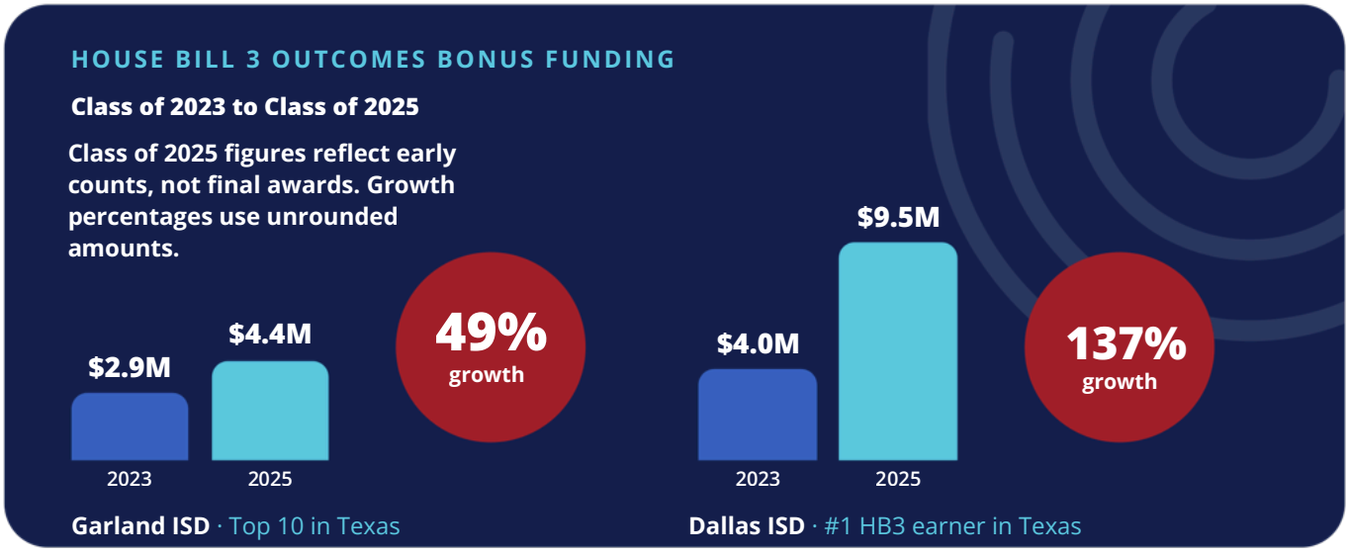
These additional dollars are critical to develop and maintain the infrastructure required to manage these programs at scale. HB3 and HB8 can generate up to $300 million in incentives countywide annually to sustain and grow the programs that are successfully preparing students for better job opportunities.

4% → 15%+

DALLAS ISD AND GARLAND ISD TOGETHER EDUCATE 4% OF TEXAS STUDENTS AND PRODUCE 15%+ OF ALL ASSOCIATE DEGREES EARNED IN HIGH SCHOOL STATEWIDE

The value of working toward these outcomes is well understood among educators - improving their students' lives after graduation is important to them. But moving a school system requires effort and a shared commitment to change. District leaders must first feel like the effort is going to be sustainable and can really lead to improvements. They want to build trusted partnerships to reach an attainable goal without busting their budgets.

This is where philanthropic capital can continue proving its power to catalyze innovation and improvement in schools. For Dallas County Promise and its partners, multiyear commitments totaling more than $130 million have provided a bridge to more success. With the anchor $110 million investment from the O'Donnell Foundation



When legislators can see systems clearly working, policy changes receive greater support."

and contributions from JPMorganChase, the Gates Foundation, the BlackRock and Fidelity Foundations, and other regional supporters, the Promise is working at a greater scale and helping districts unlock the remaining public funds. The Commit Partnership directed part of the investment it received to bring meaningful funding support to middle and high school advising programs and other core needs like data and employer coordination. These investments are the launching pad to success for thousands of young people across Dallas County.

The Dallas College Foundation has used philanthropic capital to help more economically disadvantaged students. Thanks to the O'Donnell Foundation investment, it grew the size of its tuition grant program for graduating high school seniors and initiated a new program allowing their parents the same opportunity. Dallas College Foundation also established the Dallas County Promise Transfer Success Fund, a new resource for economically disadvantaged Dallas College students transferring to one of the ten partner universities.

There are grants to cover tuition and stipends to handle other unexpected college costs, minimizing or removing several barriers that have limited postsecondary attainment. It also worked with partner universities SMU, UNT Dallas, and UTD to launch and sustain early recruitment programs. These initiatives meet economically disadvantaged students earlier in their academic journey and encourage them to focus on college and higher education as a valuable and achievable goal.

Insights from informed stakeholders and educators have guided the educational ecosystem toward programs that are valuable for students and sustainable. To make the greatest difference, the Promise and its partners need funding to extend their reach farther and faster than before. The expansion of data insights, support systems, and a regional network of educators were enabled by philanthropic investments. By repeating positive results across districts of different sizes with different demographics, the Promise and its partner organizations have shown that these changes are effective at scale. Other

$110M investment

The O'Donnell Foundation's investment anchors $130M+ in multi-year commitments to the Promise



"The Dallas County Promise is a community platform that helps funders understand that we are developing an ecosystem of institutions, programming, and supports. The Promise is a community commitment to improve student outcomes aligned with North Texas jobs and our true north goal of living wage."

JOSH SKOLNICK
Executive Director, Dallas College Foundation

leaders have taken notice; some have taken action. Education is making huge gains thanks to HB3 and HB8, but there are more avenues to improve public funding access. When legislators can see systems clearly working, policy changes receive greater support. WWhen donors seed this catalytic capital, they seize the opportunity to make meaningful change across the community. They create the foundation for school districts to maintain the vital pathways that draw students toward greater long-term financial success.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION'S EXPANDING DEFINITION

In Dallas County, the traditional definition of postsecondary education — completing a 2- or 4-year degree — is slowly but surely expanding, according to Commit Partnership President Miguel Solis.

Whereas going to work after high school without a college degree may have once carried a negative stigma, Solis believes efforts like Dallas County Promise indicate educational systems that are increasingly embracing students' self-motivated entry into the workforce to achieve upward economic mobility.

That's why Solis champions the importance of advising kids earlier in their high school careers. Students who are intent on going to work need to feel that "pathways exist for them as much as for those kids who say they want to go to college," Solis says.

The expanding definition of postsecondary education and growing availability of P-TECH, early college high school, and dual credit means a school district can maintain high academic standards for its students and prepare them for the workforce as much as it can prepare them for college.

"A kid in any public school system should be prepared to be as competitive as kids coming out of private schools to go to Harvard or Yale – and they should also be prepared for an entry-level job that's going to be paying $60,000 or $70,000 without a college degree," Solis says.



$60–70K
ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS WITHOUT A COLLEGE DEGREE

MIGUEL SOLIS
President, Commit Partnership



SECTION 6

The Progress — The Economic Mobility Awards

Every year, thousands of students across North Texas end their K-12 academic journeys and chart their futures. Dallas County school districts and institutions of higher education have made meaningful strides to improve their potential outcomes. In 2025, the Commit Partnership joined the Economic Mobility Center in developing the Economic Mobility Awards. The initial awards focus on college readiness, enrollment, retention, and completion.

2025 K-12 DISTRICT AND CAMPUS AWARDS

Districts and campuses that hit a strong benchmark or improved 5 or more percentage points from the prior year on college readiness (45%+) or college enrollment (65%+).

Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD	College Enrollment District Award, plus 3 campus awards
Cedar Hill ISD	1 campus award
Dallas ISD	17 campus awards
DeSoto ISD	College Readiness District Award, plus 1 campus award
Garland ISD	College Readiness District Award, plus 6 campus awards
Grand Prairie ISD	College Readiness District Award and College Enrollment District Award, plus 2 campus awards
Lancaster ISD	1 campus award
Mesquite ISD	1 campus award
Richardson ISD	College Readiness District Award, plus 3 campus awards
Uplift Education	College Readiness District Award, plus 9 campus awards

2025 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AWARDS

The same standard applied across enrollment share, retention (70%+ retained into year two, or +5 points), and completion (60%+ on time, or +6 points).

Midwestern State University	Retention, Completion
Tarleton State University	Enrollment Share, Improvement, Completion
Texas Woman's University	Retention, Completion
University of North Texas	Retention, Completion
University of Texas at Arlington	Enrollment Share, Improvement, Retention

SECTION 6 · DISTRICT MOMENTUM

School Districts Leading the Way on Economic Mobility

Four momentum metrics that track Dallas County seniors from college readiness through enrollment, and the five districts leading on each.

These rankings reflect the share of each district's Promise seniors meeting the metric, a view of which systems are moving the most students toward postsecondary success right now.

COLLEGE READINESS TESTING — 2026

Seniors meeting Texas Success Initiative (TSI) college-ready standards by assessment

1	Uplift Education	82%
2	DeSoto ISD	59.2%
3	Dallas ISD	44.5%
4	Garland ISD	44.2%
5	Irving ISD	40%

Source: Dallas County Promise. Class of 2026, preliminary figures; student counts to be confirmed.

COMPLETING COLLEGE APPLICATIONS — 2026

Seniors submitting at least one college application

1	Lancaster ISD 564 students	99.5%
2	DeSoto ISD 395 students	99.2%
3	Garland ISD 3,949 students	98.8%
4	Mesquite ISD 2,795 students	98.7%
5	Dallas ISD 8,711 students	97.7%

Source: Dallas County Promise. Class of 2026. Student counts are seniors meeting the metric.

COMPLETING FINANCIAL AID — 2026

Seniors completing a FAFSA or TASFA application

1	Lancaster ISD 567 students	100%
2	DeSoto ISD 385 students	96.7%
3	Mesquite ISD 2,704 students	95.4%
4	Cedar Hill ISD 504 students	94.7%
5	Garland ISD 3,755 students	93.9 %

Source: Dallas County Promise. Class of 2026. Student counts are seniors meeting the metric.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT — 2025

Graduates enrolled in a two- or four-year institution the fall after high school

1	Uplift Education 531 students	74.6%
2	Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD 1,033 students	65.9%
3	Richardson ISD 1,399 students	64.6%
4	DeSoto ISD 269 students	63.1%
5	Grand Prairie ISD 1,121 students	59.1%

Source: Dallas County Promise. Class of 2025. Student counts are graduates meeting the metric.

How to read these tables. Rates are the share of each district's Promise cohort meeting the metric; bars are drawn on a common 0–100% scale. Rankings are by rate, not growth, so they will differ from the Economic Mobility Awards on the previous page, which also recognize year-over-year improvement.

A LOOK FORWARD

Nine years in, the Dallas County Promise has proven that a region can move postsecondary outcomes at scale. The next chapter is about making those gains durable and extending them to every student, in every district. That work rests on four priorities:



1 Regional Leadership

The Dallas County Promise Advisory Board and Alignment Council are outlining a stronger regional scorecard to support students across K-12, postsecondary, community, and workforce. Understanding the metrics that matter for economic mobility across the student journey is vital to improving student outcomes. Additionally, regional leaders recognize that (1) aligning these metrics with state policy and funding is critical to sustaining improvement, and (2) collective commitment to better data sharing will improve data security and usability for every student in Dallas County.

2 Data and Systems

Central to the improved visibility and support for every student is the civic infrastructure in data and systems to create a world-class regional talent system. At the heart of this system is data governance so that every institution and organization that supports students is working together as a regional ecosystem. The regional governance oversees a Regional Data Hub technology with a pathway rules engine to see, empower, and support students across institutions, partners, and transitions.

3 Workforce Engagement

The Promise ecosystem is beginning to engage more intentionally with the workforce ecosystem and employers to create more seamless pathways from interest through enrollment, credentials, and jobs. A few of the key initiatives include: career advising, clearer communication campaigns to students and families, focusing on short term credentials and support like Workforce Pell, and the translation layer of the jobs across K-12, postsecondary, and community programs to improve pathway clarity.

4 Pathways for ALL

We believe that all students should be on a meaningful and achievable pathway to a living wage job. Dallas College is building on the foundation of Early College High Schools, and Pathways to Technologies. As part of its Vision 2030 plan, Dallas College is committed to ensuring all students earn a minimum of 15 college credits and a credential of value with school district, university, community, and workforce partners. The regional leadership, data and systems, and workforce engagement are all leading up to one vision: every student on a path to a living wage.



"Pathways for ALL happens when there is clear alignment of the education and community ecosystem (supply) with the regional jobs (demand). This is what we are aspiring to achieve with a focus on engaging students and families with the direct campaigns and career advisors."

ANGELA FARLEY
Workforce Executive in Residence and Promise Advisory Board Consultant,
Economic Mobility Center



"This community is used to embracing our challenges with bold bets and working to achieve strong outcomes."

USAMAH RODGERS
Superintendent in Residence and Promise Advisory Board Consultant,
Economic Mobility Center

THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHANGING WORKFORCE LANDSCAPE

DFW's economy will continue to offer opportunities for local talent. But whether Dallas County Promise scholars will be the ones to take on those jobs will come down to how technically and socially prepared they are for the changing workforce.

Anne Motsenbocker, Economic Mobility Center Board of Directors chair and former JPMorgan Chase executive, believes there's an opportunity for Dallas County Promise and its higher ed partners to collaborate and provide soft skills training, like writing emails, receiving feedback, and managing workloads. Documenting this type of skills accumulation could help during hiring.

She also feels that Dallas County Promise and its higher ed partners can build employer confidence in the local talent pool by paying closer attention to labor market demands and aligning their academic offerings to meet them.

"I want our business community to have comfort that those students are well prepared," Motsenbocker says.

Beyond this, the growth of artificial intelligence is challenging how companies staff and the work they need done. The Promise ecosystem must continue reinforcing the irreplaceable knowledge, like critical thinking and problem solving, while advising students about potentially AI-proof jobs, like healthcare or teaching, according to Angela Farley, Workforce Executive in Residence and Promise Advisory Board Consultant.

Farley believes students should be encouraged to explore new emerging fields for work opportunities. Postsecondary preparedness in the DCP ecosystem should be about "trying to get kids and families more information about what's now and what's next so that they can navigate pathways more effectively," Farley says.





Healthcare is the largest job market and workforce sector in North Texas. The ability to bring our jobs and employers into alignment with this new talent supply work in Dallas County is unprecedented. Talent is our competitive advantage and building a world-class regional talent system is our plan to deliver on the true north goal of living wage aligned to the needs of our North Texas employers."



STEVE LOVE
CEO, DFW Hospital Council



CLOSING

Forward Look



The past nine years are proof that the Dallas County Promise has created a way for the region's underserved students to achieve upward economic mobility.

Thousands more Dallas County students, through their efforts and the support offered by the Promise and its partners, are on their way to dignified living wages. K-12 school districts and higher ed are recognizing the self-sustaining financial benefits of aligning their academic offerings and standards to get students college- or workforce-ready. They are meeting the challenge by being adaptive and agile to meet student interest and workforce needs. With greater support, they can maximize outcomes funding and add hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of dollars to their budgets in the coming years.

Yet the demands of DFW's growing, more diversified economy mean the county's homegrown talent, now more than ever, needs the boost provided by the Promise's support ecosystem. If the county is to meet Opportunity 2040's goal of getting at least half of all 25- to 34-year-olds to a living wage, the Promise and its partners will need to continue growing efforts to reach more students and increase their college or career readiness.

The Promise and its partners must also improve how they track student outcomes after they complete their postsecondary trajectories, show that the Promise model can work at scale,

> **I want our business community to have comfort that those students are well prepared.**

ANNE MOTSENBOCKER
Economic Mobility Center Board of Directors
Chair, Former JPMorgan Chase Executive



and work at aligning academic systems to maximize student success and outcomes-based funding. This will only be possible with continued support from philanthropic partners who, recognizing the success and potential of the Promise, have repeatedly invested in this ambitious agenda. With philanthropic capital, the Promise has made strategic expansions to include ninth- through 11th-grade pathways and increase the number of partner districts. More opportunities exist to keep engagement high and better align with workforce expectations. Dallas County Promise aspires to create a stronger pipeline that engages students earlier in their academic career, builds enthusiasm about the future, and supports informed career planning with workforce data. New and continued investment will lead to more innovation by school districts to get students college- or workforce-ready.

By doing this, we can show employers and business leaders that Dallas County can produce quality workers at every level, from the factory floor to the boardroom. The region can become the living proof that the promise of economic mobility is achievable in Dallas, Texas, and beyond.





Every student on a path to a living wage.



Dallas County Promise



2026 Impact Report

Dallas County Promise

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