

**Written Testimony of Dr. Joe May
Chancellor, Dallas County Community College District
Dallas, Texas**

before the

**Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate**

**Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act:
Access and Innovation**

January 25, 2018

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Joe May serves as the seventh chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) and assumed his duties in February of 2014. Throughout his career, May has expanded opportunities for students who want to pursue a bachelor's degree by starting at a community college. At the same time, he brings a strong commitment to improving the Dallas economy by helping to grow middle-class jobs. His relentless advocacy for the role of community colleges in solving today's most challenging issues has brought him national and international recognition.

As chancellor, he is directly involved in building community college and business partnerships that enhance success for both students and businesses. He was influential in bringing the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program to Dallas (DCCCD teaches the education modules to new business owners) as well as a significant grant from JPMorgan Chase for Project On-Ramp, which trains certified nurse assistants to become patient care technicians so that they may earn up to 20 percent higher salaries. Additionally, Dr. May helped start, and then became the founding president of, Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC), a national consortium of community colleges that is dedicated to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to pursue the "American dream."

As a community leader and educator, he strongly believes in achieving academic excellence and has worked closely with public school districts, sponsored charter schools, career academies and early college programs.

Previously, May served as president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System; system president for the Colorado Community College System; and president of Pueblo Community College before he accepted the system's CEO position. Respected throughout the world, May has delivered consulting services to new community college initiatives in Japan, the United Kingdom, Russia and Saudi Arabia. He also served in leadership roles at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas; Navarro College in Corsicana, Texas; and Vernon College in Vernon, Texas.

A native of East Texas, Dr. May was the first in his family to attend college. He earned his doctorate in education from Texas A&M-Commerce; he also holds Master of Education and Bachelor of Science degrees from Stephen F. Austin State University. Dr. May started his higher education career in 1978 as an adjunct faculty member at Cedar Valley College in the Dallas County Community College District. Those initial experiences were the foundation for his strong belief that the role of community colleges is the solution for the greatest challenges facing individuals, employers and communities.

SUMMARY

We've all heard people make the following comment: "College is not for everyone". What they mean is a 4-year degree is not needed by everyone, however, almost all jobs today require some education beyond high school. The Higher Education Act was created at a time when there were great middle-class jobs that required no more than a high school diploma. Today, we live in a very different world. We need a higher education system that values career and technical education in a manner that the current Act does not.

Access can be improved through collaboration. Innovation can be improved through collaboration. I'd like to discuss three ways that collaboration can be used to increase college access and student success – Employer Collaborations, K-12 Collaborations, and Collaborations with non-institutional education providers.

Today's economy demands a flexible and trained workforce. We need the flexibility to leverage private partnerships to get students skilled through short-term training, work-learn programs, and apprenticeships. This requires flexible and funded Short-term or Workforce Pell that allows more students to obtain higher paid career opportunities through short-term certifications.

In Dallas, we realize that we can't wait and only partner with employers. We created a transformative collaboration, between high schools, universities, employers, non-profits, and individuals that are dramatically improving upward mobility for thousands of our students. We call it the Dallas County Promise. As we continue to expand dual credit and grow the program, we hurt our scores on the White House Scorecard. I am asking that we recognize in our reporting systems actual student success.

The economy has changed, and there is a demand for more individuals with certificates and associate's degrees. This is why so many for-profit, not-for-profit, and industry-based organizations that are not affiliated with any institutions of higher education are offering more and more educational programs and services.

Our current higher education policies and regulations were designed at a time when institutions did not collaborate. We need a higher education act that facilitates collaboration. The new higher education act must prioritize career and technical education certificates and degrees and provide them the same value as baccalaureate and advanced degrees. To keep our economic engine running we need to educate and train all our students. Thank you for listening to my thoughts as to how we can make this a reality.

TESTIMONY

Good morning Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to speak with you today.

My name is Joe May, the chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District. Our district is comprised of seven colleges with over 7,000 employees - we are the largest community college district in Texas. In addition, we operate one charter high school and partner with school districts on 31 Early College High Schools. Combined, we will serve over 150,000 credit and non-credit students this year.

I have heard people make the following comment: "College is not for everyone". What they mean is that a 4-year degree is not needed by everyone, however, almost all jobs today require some education beyond high school.

The Higher Education Act was created at a time when there were great middle-class jobs that required no more than a high school diploma. Today, however, we live in a very different world.

Between September 2015 and September 2016, there were 122,000 jobs created in North Texas. Our labor market information office looked at these jobs and determined that fully 65% required more than a high school diploma. In fact, 32% required a bachelor's degree or higher while 32% required a certificate or an associate's degree.

In a survey conducted by the Dallas Regional Chamber, over 2,000 business leaders indicated that their number one concern was finding and attracting talent. Their number two concern was retaining talent.

The Higher Education Act is the primary way that we ensure both student access and innovative solutions to ensure that colleges and universities are responsive to the needs of individuals, employers, and our nation. We must ensure that higher education is accountable to producing the skilled workforce necessary to keep companies in our communities.

While previous versions of the Act have done a relatively good job of encouraging individuals to earn a bachelor's degree, it has not had the same impact on encouraging more short-term certificates or associate degrees in technical fields that support the ever-changing economy.

In drafting the new Higher Education Act, there are several opportunities to help improve access and innovation. These would include areas such as supporting competency-based-education, online learning, short-term education programs, partnerships with non-institutional providers, apprenticeship and work-learn models, and creating local partnerships. I will speak on how all these can be synthesized into one word – collaboration.

Access can be improved through collaboration. Innovation can be improved through collaboration.

There are opportunities for a revised Higher Education Act to help improve access and innovation. Today I'll discuss three ways that collaboration can be used to increase college access and student success – Employer Collaborations, K-12 Collaborations, and Collaborations with non-institutional education providers.

By encouraging greater access to innovative solutions, the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act has the potential to help grow our economy while rebuilding our middle class.

EMPLOYER COLLABORATIONS

As I mentioned a few moments ago, people searching for jobs should be working hand and glove with employers searching for a skilled workforce. The current challenge we face as a nation is in bringing these two together. While Title IV was designed to encourage the attainment of baccalaureate degrees, current law does not allow for students to receive Title IV benefits unless they are in a program that is at least 600 contact hours in length.

Perhaps this was acceptable policy when only a quarter of our population needed a postsecondary credential, it is not acceptable when we have thousands of jobs going unfilled that require less than one year of education, but more than a high school degree. 65% of jobs in the workforce require some form of postsecondary education.

The current system keeps students locked into low-wage jobs because they can't afford to take time off to earn an associate or bachelor's degree. In North Texas alone, getting more people in short-term certificate programs would have a huge financial impact on the economy.

Therefore, by allowing Pell grants to be used to pay for career and technical education certificates for programs with as few as 150 clock hours of instruction, we can help keep companies in our country, grow stronger families and have more viable communities.

To meet the dynamic pace of our economy, we should match skills that are needed in our communities. We need to collaborate, we need private sector partnerships. Those relationships should be rewarded, not prohibited. By partnering with employers, we can certify work eligible programs that meet employer's needs while helping people get hired.

My recommendations are:

- Allow flexibility to leverage private partnerships
- To assist with transparency, require public reporting of job acquisition information on individuals awarded workforce Pell
- Require colleges to publicly report whether individuals who were awarded workforce Pell obtain employment in their field
- Allow Pell to be used for short-term training certificates, for example, 150 clock hours of instruction
- Extend Pell to potentially 14 semesters

K-12 COLLABORATION

By believing in providing more access and innovation, then we must provide more opportunities for all students. We aim to solve the problem locally, even if that means working against our own best interest.

I am proud of our K-12 collaboration on the Dallas County Promise. The promise is a transformational effort between school districts - specifically 31 schools - colleges, universities, workforce, and communities to increase college completion.

The Promise is about one thing, and one thing only: eliminate barriers and remove friction in transitions and processes both within and between systems. It is about ensuring that there is a network of financial, educational, and business resources to ensure that every student can succeed.

Why - you may ask. Because institutions of education face several regulatory barriers allowed under the Higher Education Act that impede student success through these types of educational innovations. Currently, instructions for reporting current high school students taking college courses and instructions for first-time-in-college (FTIC)

students who earned college credits in high school are unclear and limiting to student success. These challenges result in skewed completion data collection and reporting.

This innovative use of dual-credit/early-college high school is the educational framework of the promise program designed to help mitigate educational access barriers and ensure reduced time to degree completion without the need to incur debt.

As we continue to expand dual credit, increase the number of early college high schools, and grow the Promise program, we need related successful outcomes to be recognized through the federal data collection system.

However, it is difficult to address student success barriers when managing administrative limitations and barriers. My recommendation is to allow institutions to track all enrolled students regardless of student categorization. This would allow reporting systems to actually student success by allowing institutions to report current dual enrolled students separately in the fall enrollment survey, and graduating with a credential and getting a middle-class job.

These modifications would improve data collection and allow for better data analysis that informs policy and practice. It would clarify how institutions define high school students taking college courses.

The impact of this change could be huge, for example in Dallas, we anticipate within the next two years over 1,800 students will graduate high school with an associate's degree annually. Imagine if cities across the nation were experiencing similar results. This would have a tremendous positive impact on our economy. Currently, these students are not fully counted toward our graduation and completion rates. They do not meet the laws definition of the first-time in college full-time student that must enroll in the fall semester to be tracked and counted as successful.

I would urge this committee to consider reforming federal graduation rates to better reflect community college student success.

Another critical component of our access strategy is opening our doors wide to all students looking for opportunity. This includes our DACA students.

If we care about businesses and communities prospering, then we must find a pathway for all our students, that includes students identified as Dreamers. I ask that you consider allowing those students to be eligible for Pell. DFW, at approximately 36,000, is the largest metro area in Texas with DACA recipients. Of the seven colleges that

comprise DCCCD, seven are HSI. Today, 65% of jobs in Dallas county require a degree or certification beyond high school. To keep our economic engine running we need to educate and train all our students.

My recommendations are:

- Allow institutions to track all enrolled students regardless of student categorization
- Allow for new definitional and instructional language that addresses the unclear existing IPEDS definitions and instructions
- Allow community colleges to report current dual enrolled students separately in the IPEDS fall enrollment survey
- Allow community colleges to report current dual enrolled students separately in the IPEDS 12-month enrollment survey
- Allow DACA recipients to be eligible for Pell

NON-INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The Higher Education Act's existing policies do not align well with non-traditional partnerships, and ultimately the students pay the cost.

In 2015 The U.S. Department of Education initiated an experimental program designed to accelerate and evaluate innovation through partnerships between colleges and universities and non-traditional providers of education. The goals of EQUIP are straight forward – provide more Americans with the skills, knowledge, and training they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. This is accomplished by breaking down the silos between organizations that almost never collaborate, despite the fact that they often have a shared mission.

The Dallas County Community College District, a regionally accredited community college system, in partnership with StraighterLine, a non-accredited, non-institutional provider of postsecondary education proposed to the US Department of Education an initiative to work together to improve college access while lowering both the educational delivery cost and the cost to students.

To ensure quality, we proposed to engage the Council for Higher Education Accreditation's (CHEA) Quality Platform and DCCCD's accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. As a result, this is one of only eight initiatives selected in 2016 by the Department of Education to participate in the Experimental Sites Initiatives Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships or EQUIP initiative.

Through this partnership, 600 students will have the opportunity to receive an Associate in Science in Business or an Associate in Arts in Criminal Justice for little or no out of pocket cost.

The partnership creates a pathway for students to earn an Associate degree by taking over 50% of their courses through StraighterLine's online platform. This partnership also allows StraighterLine students to receive Title IV benefits through DCCCD.

1. Because of the low cost of DCCCD and StraighterLine courses, students can complete their degree without incurring debt.
2. The quality of the program is assured by the following groups:
 - a. U.S. Department of Education
 - b. Council on Higher Education Quality Platform (CHEA)
 - c. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

As we often discover when attempting to implement innovation solutions for students and employers, both existing policies and regulations make implementation a challenge. In fact, StraighterLine was forced to change a proven business model to accommodate current Title IV requirements.

It has required a multi-step approval process between representatives in the Department of Education in Washington and by the regional office. Sometimes, it was unclear who was making the decisions. We should focus on accountability of results, not accountability of processes. Innovative programs like this should include innovative processes – outside of the bureaucratic norm.

My recommendations are:

- A flexible act that facilitates collaboration among non-institutional providers
- Prioritize career and technical education certificates and degrees, and provide them the same value as baccalaureate and advanced degrees

Our current higher education policies and regulations were designed at a time when institutions did not collaborate. We need a higher education act that facilitates collaboration.

The Act must encourage freedom and flexibility to innovate. It must ensure accountability that is measured by results, not by processes.

The new higher education act must prioritize career and technical education certificates and degrees and provide them the same value as baccalaureate and advanced degrees. Businesses are pleading for higher education to fill their talent pipelines, but they have become frustrated at a system that is too slow and unresponsive.

To keep our economic engine running we need to educate and train all our students. Thank you for listening to my thoughts as to how we can make this a reality.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.