



Texas's higher education strategic plan, 60x30TX, calls for at least 60% of Texans ages 25-34 to hold a certificate or degree by 2030. This is a key goal, if we, as a state, are to meet the demands for a skilled workforce that will drive our economy and support our families. Today, those Texans are 11-20 years old.

To achieve this goal, educational institutions must focus their attention on building strong partnerships that map a clear path from the endorsements that students and families embark upon in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, to dual credit opportunities, to level one and level two certificates, to associate's degrees and beyond. The students who enter dual credit, early college high schools, collegiate academies and similar programs will have the opportunity to acquire level one and level two certificates as well as the AAS degree as they simultaneously fulfill high school endorsement requirements and meet 60x30TX goals.

Because of these trends, Texas is likely to see a significant increase in the number of students who will earn technical certificates and degrees in coming years.

Students who successfully earn AAS degrees have demonstrated their ability to succeed in college-level coursework and to finish what they start. These students most often represent adult, first generation, low income, and minority students, and they possess clear awareness of the marketable skills they acquire through the AAS. A pathway that provides opportunities for "stackable credentials" provides these students and their families a bridge into a better future.

Unfortunately, the old paradigm that divides education into "academic" and "vocational" tracks can create a barrier that limits the long-term advancement of some students. Often, advancement into managerial and executive ranks requires, or at least favors, candidates with a bachelor's degree. Most AAS graduates are unaware that there are degree programs that will honor their technical course hours and help them progress quickly toward a bachelor's degree and beyond.

The AAS to BAAS Transfer Collaborative was created to help address this problem. The North Texas Community College Consortium, representing 209,519 enrollments (30% of all Texas community, junior, and technical college enrollments), in conjunction with 11 universities representing 143,759 enrollments (24% of all Texas public university undergraduate enrollments), have built the Collaborative. An early outcome of the Collaborative has been the development of a "common template" that clearly shows how AAS degrees align with BAAS degrees across North Texas.

The AAS-BAAS guided pathway is not intended to replace a degree audit, but to function as a guided pathway for students, leading to informed decision-making. The template does not create policy, but rather organizes already existing information at each college into a single readable and consistent form. It is structured as a full time eight semester pathway, but can also be used as a checklist for part-time students.

The Collaborative is eager to get these pathways into the hands of students and families and to get feedback from AAS and BAAS programs, school districts, industry partners, and the community to continue to improve their usability.