

Environmental Scan

Good to Great May 2023



ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT
St. Philip's College

P

POLITICAL

- SB 16 -- prohibit a college or university professor from “compelling” a student to adopt certain political beliefs; passed the Texas Senate in early April 2023. Now at Texas House for final approval.
- SB 17/HB 5127 -- prohibit diversity, equity and inclusion offices, programs and training on public college campuses; passed Texas Senate April 20, 2023. Now heads to the full education committee for approval.
- SB 18 -- eliminate tenure only for newly hired professors and would allow a university system governing board to set up its own system of “tiered employment” for faculty, as long as professors receive an annual review. Passed Texas Senate April 21, 2023. Now heads to Texas House for review/approval.

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ECONOMIC

- San Antonio payrolls increased an annualized 4.1 percent from January to February 2023 (3,810 jobs).
- Professional and business services grew the most (1,638 jobs), followed by government (1,395 jobs).
- Sectors that experienced the largest declines were construction (670 jobs) information, and other services (353 jobs).
- The three-month moving average of wages in San Antonio was \$27.62, below both the state average of \$30.91 and the national average of \$33.01.
- The San Antonio unemployment rate increased to 3.9 percent in February. The metro’s unemployment rate was higher than the U.S. rate of 3.6 percent but lower than the state’s 4.0 percent reading.
- In February 2023, rental prices increased in both San Antonio and Texas after declining in the fourth quarter of last year. Average rents rose an annualized 3.6 percent from the prior month in San Antonio and 4.7 percent in the state. Year-over-year rents in San Antonio increased 4.2 percent, down notably from the double-digit growth in 2022.
- The “big three” price index—aggregating three of the largest and least-volatile components of core services: rent, owners’ equivalent rent (OER) and the price of dining out—rose at an 8.7 percent annualized rate in February, compared with an annualized 8.4 percent in January. Individually, the annualized increases were 9.5 percent for rent, 8.7 percent for OER and 8.1 percent for dining out (more formally, “other purchased meals”).
- COVID relief money has helped almost 2/3 of students stay in college
- Texas Politics Poll from UT-Austin (February 2023) noted that 47% of Texans surveyed said property taxes have the greatest impact on their personal finances

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SOCIAL

- UT-Austin’s Texas Politics Project poll indicated that since April 2022, 50% of Texans believe the state is on the wrong track; 24% think immigration/border security should be the Legislature’s focus. Five (5)% said the Legislature should focus on education.
- Growing numbers of “Disconnected (or Opportunity) Youth”: In Bexar County, 9% of 14-26 year olds have opted out of school AND the labor market; across the US, 4.8 million disconnected youth
- For youth who were connected during the critical ages of 16 to 24, approximately 15 years later (ages 31-39), the median family income was about \$78,000, compared to about \$44,000 for those who were disconnected for one year or more. Future earnings are even lower for those who reported being disconnected for two years or more, around \$31,000
- The “Enrollment Cliff” of 2026 has been revised to be the Enrollment Cliff of 2025, with college enrollment projections to drop 15% or more (Nathan Grawe, <https://www.cupahr.org/issue/dept/int-eractive-enrollment-cliff/>). However, San Antonio is expected to have an 11% GROWTH by 2029 due to immigration.
- Trend in enrollment at public two-year colleges being offset by a rise in the number of dual credit students (Chronicle of Higher Education, March 30, 2023)
- SPC’s major competitors are student poverty, family needs/expectations, the military, and the workforce. Secondary competitors are other ACD colleges. Tertiary competitors are four-year public and private colleges/universities in the San Antonio region

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TECHNOLOGICAL

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and products like ChatGPT have had an immediate yet divisive effect on higher education
- Digital Twin, a very complex virtual model that exactly replicates a physical thing, is in use for remote learning. Morehouse College has pioneered a Digital Twin Morehouse to provide a campus experience for online students.
- Smart automated campuses are becoming the norm, as 5G networks can create an Internet of Things (IoT) all-connected campus
- Cloud computing services are expanding into turning physical college libraries into limitless virtual libraries
- Big Data being leveraged through data analytics programs to close the gap between immediate needs and future opportunities as well as for performance tracking
- College cybersecurity challenges will require continual culture changes beyond multi-factor authentication as the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act (CIRCA) becomes connected for compliance with Dept of Defense grants and funding

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LEGAL

- Artificial Intelligence/ChatGPT will require new review of academic misconduct policies, policies regarding use of facial recognition technology, and online proctoring policies for students who are neurodivergent, transgender, or have various health conditions that may conflict online proctoring systems
- Supreme Court will hear two cases on the legality of the Dept of Ed’s student loan forgiveness plan
- DACA is being litigated in the Southern District of Texas court and the Fifth Circuit court; if DACA is ruled unlawful, the temporary reprieve to DACA recipients could end
- Title IX scope and rules are under proposed rulemaking from the Dept of Ed; the notice of proposed rulemaking indicates several significant changes to Title IX to roll-back the 2020 rules: restoring the standard for when sex discrimination is triggered, clarifying Title IX coverage for conduct that occurs off-campus, and returning to a single-investigator model for Title IX reviews, and clarifying whether transgender athletes can participate in men’s or women’s collegiate sports