SUMMER 2025

Pathways Research Collaboratives

LONESTA**RP3**

➤ Collaborative Research

LONESTARP3 is turning shared priorities into collective action through collaborative research.

Traditional research often follows a linear and expert-driven model: a research team defines a problem, designs a study, collects and analyzes data, and publishes findings— often with limited involvement from those who will use or be affected by the research. In collaborative research, community members, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers work together as equal partners throughout the research process—from identifying priorities and designing studies to interpreting results and applying findings. The focus shifts from researching about people to researching with them. In essence, collaborative research doesn't just aim to generate knowledge—it aims to drive systemic change for the people and communities it serves.

LONESTARP3 is showing that when communities co-design research, they co-create solutions that last. Collaborative research prioritizes relationships, mutual learning, and shared power. It recognizes that those closest to the issues often hold essential knowledge—and that research is most impactful when it leads to action.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
Principles

How We Work

★ **Build Relationships First**
Strong partnerships begin with trust, respect, and shared purpose.

★ **Define Priorities Together**
The most important questions come from the people closest to the work.

★ **Share Power and Voice**
Everyone helps shape the research—what it asks, how it's done, and how it's used.

What We Deliver

★ **Focus on Actionable Learning**
The goal is useful insight that helps people make better decisions.

★ **Grow Skills and Opportunity**
Collaborative researchsupports learning for researchers, practitioners, and students alike.

★ **Work for Broader Impact**
Good research strengthens systems—not just single programs or projects.

RESEARCHERS
provide analytical skills to discover what's working for students.

PRACTITIONERS
understand the lived experience and needs of students and families.

POLICY ADVOCATES
influence policy making and legislation to benefit all students.

Pathways Research Collaboratives
Launching Investigations

In Fall 2024, LONESTA**RP3** released a Pathways Research Agenda organized around a set of questions Texans need to answer to increase the number of students who are prepared to access the good jobs our state offers. Estimates predict that by 2036, at least 70% of jobs in Texas will require some form of postsecondary credential, yet today less than half of Texas' young adults possess those credentials.

Complete research findings will be released in Fall 2026, but you can monitor progress of the Research Collaborative and learn more about LONESTA**RP3** in this document and through our CONNECT Virtual sessions, LONESTA**RP3 LIVE!** events, our VOICES quarterly newsletter, and our website. Our goal is to make our research timely, accessible, and actionable to make a difference in the lives of Texans. Your engagement with our work will deepen these efforts.
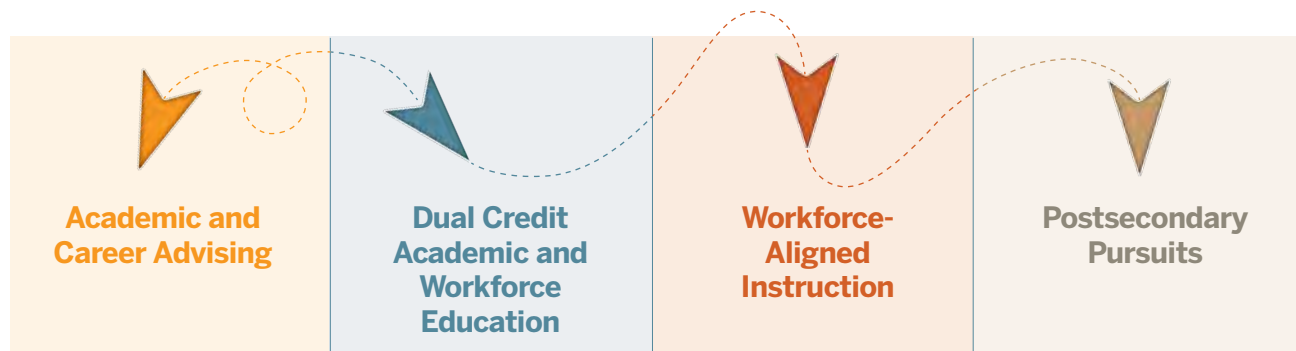

Along with many community partners, our collaborative teams represent multiple perspectives throughout the state:

30 Researchers   **6** Universities   **5** Non-profit organizations

---

Researchers are formed into four teams with emphasis on the following investigations.

Academic and Career Advising   **Dual Credit Academic and Workforce Education**   **Workforce-Aligned Instruction**   **Postsecondary Pursuits**

"LONESTA**RP3** *galvanizes shared wisdom, intelligence, and expertise to focus on local issues within a statewide context. The prospect is exciting. Good things lay ahead!*"

—SHARON L. NICHOLS, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, The University of Texas at San Antonio

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Matt S. Giani, Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor
The University of Texas at Austin

David Deggs, Ph.D.
Senior Director of Higher Education and
Workforce Development Programs
Educate Texas

Gina Moraida
Associate, RGV Focus
Texas College Access Network (TxCAN)
Educate Texas

Briana Hagelgans, Ed.D.
Director, K12 & Postsecondary
UP Partnership

Dash Weerasinghe, Ph.D.
Data Strategist in Residence
Commit Partnership

Ben Higgins
Director of Analytics & Insights
Commit Partnership

9
Researchers

4
Including
student
researchers

1
University

3
Non-profit
organizations

Strand 1 | Academic and Career Advising

ACTION

Have you ever wished you could see all the college and career advising programs (CAPs) mapped out for the entire state? This research collaborative has, and they have begun the process to build the map. The team will create an interactive webpage where users can search and view CAPs by distinguishing characteristics. Information for each CAP will include characteristics like advising practices, third-party providers, and program features. In an ambitious undertaking, this Collaborative plans to build a school-level datafile and interactive tool that houses profiles of CAPs across high schools.

APPROACH

★ Gathers information from public sources to map which college advising programs (CAPs) have operated in Texas schools over the past 10 years.

★ Connects with CAP providers, higher education partners, and school districts to collect details about how advising is delivered—including advisor roles, training, and target student groups.

★ Compiles a statewide dataset showing which programs operated in which schools and when—creating a foundation for future research on advising effectiveness.

AS A PARTNERSHIP, this team underscores the collaborative's role in bridging disconnected research-practice partnerships (RPPs), enabling shared insights, and strengthening connections between researchers, policymakers, and educational leaders to address shared challenges more effectively.

"LONESTARP3 is such a great resource—it connects previously disconnected RPPs and creates a community of scholar-practitioners that can share insights in ways that prevent redundancies, streamline analyses, and ensure the broader dissemination of findings."

—**MATT S. GIANI,** The University of Texas at Austin

3
Research questions

TX
Statewide focus

20
Interview participants

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Han Bum Lee, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Jessica J. Gottlieb, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Texas Tech University

Robert Stein, M.P. Aff.
Research Analyst
E3 Alliance

Sharon L. Nichols, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Annelies Rhodes, Ph.D.
Senior Director of Research and Data
E3 Alliance

Katherine S. Mortimer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
The University of Texas at El Paso

10 Researchers

4 Including student researchers

3 Universities

1 Non-profit organization

Strand 2 | Dual Credit Academic and Workforce Education

ACTION

Dual credit has long been a hot topic in Texas. Students, families, and legislators are invested in the promise of this educational experience. This research collaborative is taking a deep dive into all things dual credit to uncover the who, what, and where of course delivery in the nine counties surrounding San Antonio and in El Paso County. Their research will also dig into topics that haven't received much attention, yet. They will compare dual credit (who, what, where) to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). They will describe teachers who deliver dual credit and AP/IB. And they will learn what drives students to choose dual credit over other options, including influences, motivations, and perceptions.

APPROACH

★ Analyzes data from schools and colleges to understand which early college programs—like dual credit, AP, and IB—are offered, and how students participate.

★ Applies statistical methods to examine how access, support, and course options influence students' decisions.

★ Combines surveys, interviews, and focus groups to explore how students and educators view early college programs, and what motivates student choices.

AS A PARTNERSHIP, team members highlight the strength of their collaborative, the value of diverse expertise, and the statewide perspective made possible through LONESTARP3's structure and support.

"I really appreciate the structure LONESTARP3 has provided. This is the first time I've worked with so many entities. The structure to jump-start collaboration has been helpful."

—**JESSICA J. GOTTLIEB,** Texas Tech University

ACTIVITIES

| **12** Research questions | **10** Counties included | **35** Interview participants | **40** Focus group participants | **4** ERC users | **300** Survey respondents |

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Israel Aguilar, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Holly Heard, Ph.D.
Vice President of Data and Analytics
Texas 2036

Katherine S. Mortimer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
The University of Texas at El Paso

Erin Doran, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
The University of Texas at El Paso

Carlo Castillo, M.P. Aff.
Data Analyst
Texas 2036

6
Researchers

1
Including
a student
researcher

2
Universities

1
Non-profit
organization

Strand 3 | Workforce-Aligned Instruction

ACTION

Students in Texas have long had opportunities to graduate high school with more than just a diploma. Students can graduate with one or more industry-based certifications (IBCs). IBCs are certificates, certifications, and/or licensures granted by industries that certify students have certain skills. Texas has used IBCs to signal career readiness since 2017. What IBCs are students earning? Are these the same IBCs that employers need? How much are IBC-holders earning each year? Are the IBCs that students are earning aligned with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses they are taking? These are the questions this research collaborative will explore, with a special focus on Texas borderlands.

APPROACH

★ Interviews district leaders and local employers in two border communities to understand how IBCs are selected, how workforce needs are considered, and whether credentials outside the state-approved list are in demand.

★ Leverages regional partnerships—including El Paso Norte RPP, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, Brownsville ISD, Vanguard Academy, RGV Focus, Workforce Solutions Cameron, and ESC Region 19— to help ground the work in local context.

★ Analyzes ERC data on student course-taking, demographics, and outcomes to explore how well IBCs align with CTE programs—especially in Energy and STEM fields.

★ Connects IBCs to labor market trends by matching them to federal and state occupation codes— assessing how well high school certifications prepare students for in-demand careers.

AS A PARTNERSHIP, this team describes their experiences as a Research Collaborative as having deep connections built across disciplines and communities, emphasizing the value of learning from local voices and the unity of purpose.

"This partnership is a good fit for the topic. We have a shared passion. Our synergy manifests in natural and organic ways! There's a kind of natural finesse and beauty to this group work and I'm excited to get started."

—ISRAEL AGUILAR, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ACTIVITIES

4
Research questions

TX
Statewide focus plus border

20
Interview participants

2
ERC users

WWW.LONESTARP3.ORG

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Gabriela Sánchez-Soto, Ph.D.
Senior Researcher
Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC),
Kinder Institute, Rice University

Jennifer Freeman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Texas Tech University

Mauricio Molina, Ph.D.
Senior Research Analyst
HERC, Kinder Institute, Rice University

Stacey Hood
Research Analyst
HERC, Kinder Institute, Rice University

Erin Baumgartner, Ph.D.
Director
HERC, Kinder Institute, Rice University

6 Researchers

1 Including a student researcher

1 University

1 Non-profit organization

Strand 4 | Postsecondary Pursuits

ACTION

By 2036, 70% of jobs in Texas will require a postsecondary credential, yet the latest figures show only 52% of working adults in Texas have such a credential. Texas has attempted to fill this gap through investments in college, career, and military readiness (CCMR) initiatives, including creating multiple ways for students to show they are ready for college and work. There are five different ways students can show they are college ready and four ways to show they are career ready. And yet, despite historically strong high school graduation rates, many Texas graduates are not transitioning to postsecondary education or earning the certifications, credentials, or degrees required by a modern workforce. To address this challenge, this research collaborative is evaluating how student outcomes after high school align with CCMR indicators.

APPROACH

★ Uses statewide data from the ERC, including National Student Clearinghouse data, to study how current CCMR indicators—like AP, dual credit, and career certifications—relate to student outcomes, including college enrollment, persistence, and degree completion.

★ Groups students into readiness profiles based on their high school preparation patterns, then explores how those profiles connect to long-term success.

★ Applies machine learning modeling to test how well CCMR profiles and other indicators predict student success—and whether those patterns vary by student background or school context.

AS A PARTNERSHIP, team leaders believe this collaboration strengthens their focus on actionable, policy-relevant research. In addition, they appreciate the opportunity to acknowledge and incorporate diverse viewpoints as a marker of mutual respect.

"The sense of community stands out to me…. Our research will result in something actionable for, and by, our community. We are pivoting, and being flexible, to ways we can approach this work and keep community in mind."

—**JENNIFER FREEMAN,** Texas Tech University

ACTIVITIES

4
Research questions

TX
Statewide focus

5
ERC users

➤ Connect with us.

Partnerships drive the success of our work. Whether you are a researcher, educator, policy advocate, or philanthropist, we welcome your feedback, concerns, ideas, and aspirations. Please reach out to: **Suggest a topic for future research** ★ **Inquire about our existing reports and findings** ★ **Find out how to engage your community in our research process** ★ **Seek decision-support to act on findings from our research.** We welcome your input.

➤ Partner with us.

You can help ensure that every Texas student experiences great teaching and learning. LONESTA**RP3** members work tirelessly to generate and spread innovative, evidence-based, ready-to-implement solutions that improve education locally and at scale. While all LONESTA**RP3** members commit institutional resources to support partnership activities, conducting research and supporting implementation is only possible with additional philanthropic support. Investment from philanthropists, foundations, and sponsors advances LONESTA**RP3**'s research and accelerates the delivery of solutions to teachers, policymakers, and system leaders across Texas.

➤ Founding Members.

- ★ **Commit Partnership**
- ★ **E3 Alliance**
- ★ **Educate Texas**
- ★ **Houston Education Research Consortium**
- ★ **Philanthropy Advocates**
- ★ **Texas 2036**

- ★ **Texas Tech, Center for Innovative Research In Change, Leadership, and Education**
- ★ **UT Austin, College of Education**
- ★ **UT El Paso, Paso del Norte**
- ★ **UT Rio Grande Valley, College of Education**
- ★ **UT San Antonio, Urban Education Institute**

WWW.LONESTARP3.ORG

1912 Speedway, Stop D5000
Austin, Texas 78712

LONESTA**RP3**
Education research practice policy **partnership**