

UNIVERSITY FUNDING FOR EXCELLENCE  
IN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS & FIELDS BENCHMARK AWARD

**Background**

The University Funding for Excellence in Specific Programs and Fields Incentive Awards, established under Texas Education Code §61.0956(a), aims to develop and maintain specific programs or fields of study of the highest national rank or recognition for that type of program or field.

**Eligible Institutions**

Public institutions of higher education that are general academic teaching institutions as defined in Texas Education Code §61.003(3), other than Lamar State Colleges, that are not research or emerging research universities.

**Program Selection**

Each eligible institution shall nominate an existing degree program to the Coordinating Board for consideration. The program must be consistent with the institution's mission and demonstrate the greatest commitment to success. After nominating a program, the institution may change its designation with the consent of the Board. Institutions wishing to change their institutional recommendation may do so after submitting, in writing, a request for the change with the recommendation information for the new program.

**Establishment of Benchmarks**

On behalf of the Commissioner, Board staff will select a qualified out-of-state peer reviewer to evaluate the applications. Reviewers shall not evaluate any application for which they have a conflict of interest. Three benchmarks of excellence for the designated program including criteria within the areas of student, faculty and research excellence shall be determined by the Board and peer reviewers. Upon attainment of each benchmark and with approval from the Legislature, institutions may be granted funding for the program.

**Allocation of Funds and Administrative Costs**

Institutions may only use awarded funds for faculty recruitment or faculty support for the designated program for which the grant is awarded, including establishment of endowed faculty positions or enhancement of faculty compensation as considered appropriate by the institution. If full funding is not available, fund allocation will be determined in order of receipt of each benchmark application attainment form.

Institutions participating in this program shall reimburse the Board for costs incurred by the Board in administration of this program. Estimated costs for the benchmark program are \$2,900.

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**Review Process**

*Step One - Announcement and Call for Recommendations*

The Coordinating Board staff will send the announcement and call for recommendations via e-mail to all eligible public institutions of higher education (chancellors, presidents, and chief academic officers).

*Step Two - Recommendations*

To be considered for an benchmark award, institutions must complete & submit the Recommendation Form via the THECB's Online Submission System\* - <https://www1.thecb.state.tx.us/apps/proposals/>

*Step Three – Determination and Approval of Benchmarks*

The Coordinating Board staff and a qualified peer reviewer will determine three appropriate benchmarks within the areas of faculty, student and research excellence, criteria for evaluation, and associated funding levels for the designated program. These benchmark criteria and possible funding allocations will be recommended for approval by the Coordinating Board at its quarterly meeting. Upon approval by the Coordinating Board, instructions for completing and submitting the required benchmark attainment application will be provided to the institution with the criteria for evaluation.

*Step Four – Application for Benchmark Award Funds*

The benchmark attainment application form with supporting data and documents must be completed upon achievement of each benchmark to be considered for funding disbursement. Send the application and supporting materials via the THECB's Online Submission System\*. **If full funding is not available, funding allocation will be determined by order of receipt of each benchmark attainment application.**

*Step Five – Evaluation and Funding Allocation*

The Coordinating Board staff and peer reviewer will evaluate all materials submitted to determine if the benchmark for the designated program meets the criteria requested. This report will be submitted to the Commissioner. Based upon recommendations of the Commissioner, the Legislature will determine available funding.

**Future Submissions and Alterations**

Once the Board determines that an institution has met all the applicable benchmarks for the institution's designated program, the institution may designate another degree program for consideration for new funding. In addition, the institution may change its designation by submitting, in writing, a request for the change with the recommendation information for the new program.

\* THECB's Online Submission System is a password protected website designed to expedite requests from an institution or system office to THECB. At this time, the chief academic officer (for institutions not within a system) or designated System officer must submit all forms and materials.

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For questions or further information, please contact Dr. Andrew Lofters, Program Director, at (512) 427-6239 or via email at [andrew.lofters@thecb.state.tx.us](mailto:andrew.lofters@thecb.state.tx.us)