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Contact: Laura Rodriguez, 915-209-2230
Lrodriguez@rabengroup.com

LOCAL AND TEXAS LEADERS LAUNCH NEW 60X30EP INITIATIVE AND UNVEIL NEW REPORT WHICH FINDS SIGNIFICANT EDUCATIONAL GAPS IN THE EL PASO REGION

The initiative is informed by a report commissioned by CREEED, which points to ways the region can improve educational outcomes for El Paso to remain competitive in Texas and in the global economy

EL PASO, Texas - Today, the Council on Regional Economic Expansion and Educational Development (CREEED) along with business, academic, and civic leaders launched a new initiative, 60x30 El Paso, to address education and workforce gaps in the El Paso region. The initiative comes as a result of the findings of a study conducted by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) on post-secondary education attainment rates in El Paso compared to other metropolitan areas and an overall analysis of how prepared the region's workforce is to fill 21st-century jobs.

"The 60x30 El Paso initiative is crucial for the future of our region. We know that for El Paso to have a vibrant economy, we need an educated and high-skilled workforce that can compete with our neighbors across Texas," said **Richard A. Castro, Chairman of the CREEED Board**. "Other countries have set benchmarks for their citizens around college attainment and have made smart investments to reach these benchmarks. We can't fall behind by not setting benchmarks for El Paso or investing in our future workforce. The release of today's 60x30EP Summary Report will help us identify where we currently stand and how we move forward in the right direction."

The report found that in comparison to most other major metropolitan areas in the U.S., El Paso has both low education attainment and low per capita income. Across the country, high incomes are correlated with economies that have a higher skilled workforce and higher education attainment levels, but El Paso also has lower income among similar cities having the same level of educational attainment.

"Increasing El Paso's educational attainment could have a profound impact on the region and its economy. Only 17% of El Paso's 8th graders go on to earn a postsecondary credential within 11 years, the lowest of any region in Texas and well behind the national average," stated **Dennis Jones, President Emeritus, NCHEMS**. "A major factor in this poor performance is the high proportion of students entering El Paso's post-secondary institutions without the preparation necessary to succeed. Until these issues are addressed El Paso's economy will continue to lag behind other parts of the state and the rest of the nation."

The report also found that at the K-12 level, the primary issue is one of quality as the majority of students receive inadequate preparation for a post-secondary education. Only 85 percent of El Paso 9th graders graduate from high school, and of that group only 60 percent go on to college. Unfortunately, a great deal are not ready to excel at college. The report found that only 34 percent of students who enter El Paso Community College are fully prepared for college-level work, and at UTEP, only 70 percent of students who enter are fully prepared.

“Since 1950, El Paso dropped from 20 percent above the state average in college attainment to more than 30 percent below the Texas average in 1990. El Paso can reverse this trend by investing in our education system and ensuring more of our students are prepared to succeed in college, the workforce and life. The 60x30 El Paso initiative will ensure our students are prepared for all three and can bring El Paso to its position as an educational leader in Texas and across the nation,” said **Woody Hunt, Vice-Chair of the CREEED Board.**

As a result of the report, CREEED has announced that it will launch 60x30 El Paso, a new initiative that will bring together education, business, and community organizations to collaborate and champion change that will improve educational outcomes to remain competitive in Texas and the global economy. Recognizing that within a decade 65 percent of all new jobs will require a post-secondary degree or training beyond high schools, regional leaders have committed to moving El Paso’s post-secondary attainment rate to 60 percent by 2030.

Through 60x30 El Paso, CREEED will work with education, business, and civic leaders to prioritize the recommendations in the report and collectively develop solutions that address the education and workforce gaps identified at the K-12 level, at the post-secondary level, and within El Paso’s workforce.

“Our students in El Paso are as bright and motivated as students anywhere in the world. Initiatives like 60x30 El Paso are key to ensure that our students in the El Paso Independent School District are prepared to graduate high school, complete postsecondary education, succeed in their careers, and ultimately contribute to the success of our region,” claimed **Juan Cabrera, Superintendent for El Paso ISD.**

The report comes as a regional response to the state’s strategic plan for higher education, 60x30TX, which was launched by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. 60x30TX identifies goals that will enable Texas to train and educate a 21st-century workforce. For El Paso to be able to compete in the global economy, the 60x30EP Summary Report examines areas where the region must improve to be competitive and increase post-secondary attainment.

“El Paso business, academic, and civic leaders deserve recognition for taking steps to provide a roadmap to meet the statewide goal of 60x30,” said **Dr. David Gardner, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Academic Officer for THECB.** “What CREEED is doing in the El Paso region will help set the tone and serve as a model for other regions across the state as we work together to meet the statewide goals and prepare the Texas workforce to compete in the 21st century economy.”

To read the findings and recommendations of the 60x30EP Summary Report, please visit: <http://www.creed.org/60x30-el-paso>.