

## ARLINGTON CHAMBER BRINGS BUSINESS AND EDUCATION TOGETHER TO BOOST ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

*"The Chamber is committed to ensuring that employers have access—today and tomorrow—to a highly skilled, trained, educated and innovative workforce."*

*—Wes Jurey, President & CEO, Arlington Chamber of Commerce*

### Deep Partnerships + Deeper Learning = Global Competitiveness.

Today's knowledge-based economy requires a new level of qualification and academic achievement. That is why The Arlington Chamber of Commerce has created partnerships that help students get the core knowledge and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they need to succeed in college and career through Deeper Learning opportunities. The Chamber recognized that academic achievement in Arlington was stalling and that a lack of communication between business and all levels of education was delaying progress. Through collaborative partnerships and results-oriented programs with local colleges, universities, independent school districts, workforce development boards and businesses, the Chamber is helping to deepen Arlington students' engagement in academics, improve graduation rates and give students clear pathways to successful careers.

**Putting the Community to Work for Students.** Public Private Partnerships are a priority for the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, and are helping ensure that what students learn in school prepares them for post-secondary education and for what employers look for in new hires, and helping schools replicate successful efforts.

- **Champion Education** started with a meeting between the Chamber and the Arlington Independent School District to discuss how the business community could more effectively support education and workforce development. What resulted was a program that engages students in Deeper Learning, integrating the school district with the Community College and University, involving all aspects of the community and raising awareness about the challenges faced by public education. There are four components:
  - **What's Your Big Idea?—Grades 3-8:** Through this sixteen-week reading and writing curriculum, students form an idea for a new invention. Up to 4,000 students submit ideas annually.
  - **Partners in Education—Grades 7-8:** Volunteer mentors meet with 7<sup>th</sup> grade students after school to discuss interests and career options. 8<sup>th</sup> grade students attend a daily class, have a year-round mentoring and guest speaker program focused on Career, Technology and Higher Education Investigation and formulate a career plan mapping their career of interest for college and the workforce.
  - **Seamless Pathway—Grades 9-12:** Community college faculty mentor at-risk students identified in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to ensure they are prepared to enter the Dual Credit Program by 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

### Working to Improve Academic Achievement

*The Arlington Chamber took on a number of challenges facing the education system, including:*

- A lack of alignment between Arlington universities, community college districts and independent school districts
- High dropout rates and a discrepancy in academic achievement
- 964,000 unemployed Texans, while Texas businesses lack qualified, technical employees

### The Arlington Chamber works to solve these problems by:

- Boosting academic achievement by aligning education institutions and creating Deeper Learning opportunities for students
- Acting as an employer intermediary by establishing public-private partnerships to enhance student achievement, attainment and retention

- **The Career Ladder—Grades 11-12:** The University of Texas at Arlington works directly with students in Dual Credit—offered in all high schools—to ensure they are on track to be accepted into UT after graduation.

- **The Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development** was developed with grants from the Ford Foundation and The Department of Labor to bring together Education & Workforce Development institutions, business groups and related stakeholders to better prepare Arlington students for college and career. For example, the Center helped establish the **North Texas Regional Workforce Leadership Council**, focused on aligning workforce development efforts by convening workforce development boards, Chambers and business representatives from key industries that make up the Texas workforce. The Council facilitates “Industry Clusters” in Aerospace, Healthcare, Infrastructure, Logistics and Technology that identify workforce needs and propose solutions for helping students meet the needs for each individual cluster.

- **The Unmanned Aircraft Systems Consortium** was formed when the Department of Defense approached the Chamber to help them meet the demand for unmanned systems. This was due to the Chamber’s role as a Federal Partnership Intermediary to the Defense Department, and success in the unmanned aerospace industry in the region. The Chamber established an industry-led consortium that is developing curricula for certificate, two-year and four-year degree programs to train the workforce needed. The Consortium includes the Texas Workforce Commission, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Governor’s Office of Economic Development and universities and colleges, school districts, industry leaders and chambers.

## Accountability and Assessment Agenda

*The Chamber supports a robust accountability and assessment agenda to ensure students graduate college- and career-ready.*

- Increase five-year graduation rates to 90% by 2020
- Support the work of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium to develop innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability
- Clearly communicate the changing assessment, accountability and high school graduation expectations for educators and the public
- Provide evaluations that measure students’ progress towards college-and career-readiness
- Collect and report student performance data
- Require districts and campuses to meet college-and career-ready standards to retain accreditation
- Recognize students’ academic improvement

For more information, view the Chamber’s [legislative agenda](#).

**Breaking Down Barriers.** Not all students will pursue a traditional university degree, and those who choose to may not be able to afford it. The Chamber is working to ensure that every student has a path to post-secondary education.

- The Chamber helped establish a **Dual Credit Program** in all Arlington high schools with Tarrant County Community College. Students can graduate with 32 college credit hours at no cost and then move directly into UT Arlington after graduation. This means students can get a four-year university degree for just \$10,000—a first in Texas.
- The Chamber supports legislation that encourages students to pursue certification and associate degree programs, helping them to become the qualified employees that Texas industry needs, even if they do not see themselves as university-bound.



Deeper Learning uses interactive techniques such as project-based learning and real-world application to engage students in core academics and build the skills they need for success in college and career.

Your Chamber can prepare the future workforce for success in a globally competitive economy by building partnerships across sectors that help students become innovative, collaborative and flexible employees..

Visit [ArlingtonTX.com/CCW](http://ArlingtonTX.com/CCW) to learn more.