



MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Trustees, Southwest Texas College

From: Armando J. Mondragon, Dean of Applied Sciences

Date: November 12, 2025

Subject: Crystal City Coalition Conference and Community Engagement Report

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an overview of Southwest Texas College's participation and outcomes from the Crystal City Coalition Conference (October 9–11, 2025, Tapatio Springs) and the subsequent Crystal City Community and Workforce Development Meeting (October 25, 2025).

Both events reflect the College's continued collaboration with regional leaders and stakeholders to strengthen workforce alignment, expand educational access, and support the economic development of Zavala County and the Middle Rio Grande region.

Overview

During October 2025, Southwest Texas College (SWTX) strengthened its partnership with the Crystal City Coalition through two key engagements:

1. The Crystal City Coalition Conference held at Tapatio Springs, October 9–11, 2025, and
2. The Crystal City Community and Workforce Development Meeting was held in Crystal City on October 25, 2025.

Both gatherings emphasized the shared mission between the College and community partners to expand educational access, promote workforce readiness, and support Zavala County's economic development.

Crystal City Coalition Conference – October 9–11, 2025 (Tapatio Springs)

Regional Economic and Workforce Growth

- **Projected Import/Export Growth:** The region anticipates a 4.5X increase in import and export activity, indicating major expansion in logistics, warehousing, and trade-related sectors.
- **Projected Job Growth:** Maverick County is expected to grow by 105,000 new jobs, while Zavala County will add approximately 28,000 new jobs. These forecasts highlight the need for continued alignment between SWTX academic offerings and workforce demands across the Middle Rio Grande region.

Community and Coalition Insights

- **Short-Term Credentials and Training:** Coalition members expressed interest in short-term credentials and noncredit workforce training to prepare residents for in-demand jobs. Requests were made for more information on Occupational Skills Awards (OSAs) and micro-credentials, with a focus on the International Business (OSA) and Child Development (OSA) programs.
- **Technical and Career Pathways Identified:** The Coalition identified several fields of interest for future programs, including Surveying, Engineering, Permitting, Construction, Heavy Equipment, Welding, Safety, Customs, Trucking, Warehousing, Retail, Hospitality, and Management.
- **Workforce Pell and Kate's Cowboy Promise:** Members requested additional information on the Workforce Pell Grant expansion and Kate's Cowboy Promise, recognizing both as critical to improving access and affordability for local students.

Student Participation and Appreciation

Three students attended the conference: two from Billing and Coding and one from the Patient Care Technician (PCT) program. They expressed gratitude for being able to pursue their education close to home, highlighting the impact of local access to workforce training programs.

Transportation and Local Infrastructure

The Coalition praised SWTX for providing transportation to students traveling to training sites, noting its importance to persistence and retention. Interest was expressed in developing a bus driver licensing program and establishing a CDL testing site in Crystal City to reduce travel barriers.

Community Perceptions and Engagement

Attendees reaffirmed their view of SWTX as a trusted educational partner and strategic ally. The new Welding program was celebrated as a symbol of the College's continued investment in Crystal City. Coalition members encouraged enhanced community outreach and voiced pride in dual credit student success. Members also strongly supported SWTX's plan to pursue four-year degrees in Education.

Program-Specific Interests

The Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program is identified as a high-priority area for regional employers. Coalition members expressed enthusiasm for SWTX's structured four-week CDL format, which offers high completion and pass rates, instructor-led training, and rapid workforce entry. These features distinguish SWTX's CDL program as a high-quality, outcomes-focused regional driver training option.

Crystal City Community and Workforce Development Meeting – October 25, 2025

Following the Tapatio Springs conference, Southwest Texas College met again with coalition members and community stakeholders to present updates and discuss progress on workforce initiatives.

Workforce Infrastructure and Program Expansion

A Workforce Training Center will be constructed across from the SWTX Rivera Campus in Crystal City, with an anticipated 2026 opening. The facility will serve as a flexible space for short-term training programs and credit-bearing technical instruction aligned with local workforce demand. The Pell Grant Program will be expanded to include short-term, high-quality workforce training programs, enabling participants to earn industry-recognized credentials and hands-on skills valued in today's job market. The Department of Education and the State of Texas are finalizing guidelines, with funding expected by Fall 2026.

Program Development and Local Impact

SWTX continues to grow its technical and workforce programs in Crystal City: Welding Program (Fall 2025), Patient Care Technician Program (Spring 2025, first graduates December 2025), and Medical Billing and Coding (Fall 2025). These initiatives reflect SWTX's mission to expand local access to in-demand, high-wage career pathways.

Occupational Skills Awards (OSAs)

New OSAs have been introduced across technical programs, providing stackable credentials that enable students to gain immediate employment while progressing toward higher-level awards and degrees.

Kate's Cowboy Promise

Kate's Cowboy Promise covers tuition, required fees, and book stipends for graduates from Uvalde, Real, Frio, or Zavala Counties who attend SWTX within five years of graduation. This initiative continues to expand affordability and promote long-term student success.

Institutional Priorities and Regional Goals

The College emphasized its 11 Fields of Study, expanding workforce education programs, the continued pursuit of four-year degrees in Education, and ongoing collaboration with the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Board to sustain funding and align training programs with projected job growth.

CDL Pilot and Workforce Alignment

Crystal City has formally contacted Workforce Solutions to pilot a CDL cohort within the community. This step will allow residents to access CDL training locally, increasing workforce participation and supporting regional economic mobility.

Community Reception

Southwest Texas College was warmly received by community members, local officials, and coalition representatives. Feedback emphasized that the College remains a trusted and valued partner in Zavala County's ongoing educational and economic growth.

Conclusion

The Crystal City Coalition Conference at Tapatio Springs and the October 25 Community Meeting both underscored Southwest Texas College's role as a regional leader in education and workforce development. Through partnership, planning, and shared purpose, SWTX continues to expand access to workforce training and higher education, strengthen collaboration with employers and workforce boards, advance affordability through Workforce Pell and Kate's Cowboy Promise, and serve as a cornerstone for regional economic advancement and opportunity.