

Report on the Texas Geography Fund Program

Fiscal Year 2004

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Division of Participation and Success
October 2004**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Board Members	Term	Hometown
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Mission of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the Legislature, Governor, governing boards, higher education institutions and other entities to provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

Philosophy of the Coordinating Board

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies. The Coordinating Board will engage in actions that add value to Texas and to higher education; the agency will avoid efforts that do not add value or that are duplicated by other entities.

Background

House Bill 3590, passed by the 77th Texas Legislature, established the Texas Fund for Geography Education. The legislation permits the Board to enter into an agreement with the National Geographic Society to develop and operate an endowment fund, the earnings of which will be available for competitive grants to fund partnerships which enhance geography education for K-12 students. The partnerships shall include, at a minimum, an institution of higher education and a Texas K-12 institution. The fund is currently endowed at approximately \$1 million. Staff has been notified that approximately \$56,000 in earnings is available for the 2004-2005 grant awards. The current year's grant cycle is underway, with new grants to be awarded later this fall.

This annual report includes a brief history of the fund, a statement of the fund's value and its earnings, a brief summary of each project supported previously by a grant from the earnings, a roster of the Advisory Committee members and their affiliations, and other related information, as required by the Texas Education Code, Sec. 61.99681 through 61.9685 and the Texas Administrative Code (Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 13, Subchapter J, Rule 13.187). The Texas Geography Fund Grants Program, while still a relatively new and small-scale endeavor, supports the participation and success goals of *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. In particular, these grants contribute to the goal of recruiting, preparing, and retaining additional well-qualified educators for elementary and secondary schools. The partnership requirement of these grants will continue to ensure that public education and higher education work arm-in-arm to equip K-12 students with the academic skills and preparation necessary to persist and succeed in their education.

Accomplishments of the Initial Phase of the Texas Geography Fund Grants Program, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004

The National Geographic Society (NGS) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) entered into an agreement in November 2001 to establish the initial corpus of the Texas Geography Fund with \$500,000 from NGS and \$500,000 from the THECB in state funds appropriated for this purpose. The agreement was executed by the Chairman of the NGS Board of Trustees, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, and the former Commissioner of Higher Education, Don W. Brown. The Coordinating Board and NGS may accept donations from private individuals or corporations to the fund. The Coordinating Board may also transfer additional appropriated state funds to the fund, so long as NGS agrees to match the amount of transferred, additional state funds. Grants to be awarded must be made from only the earnings of the fund, according to a prescribed pay-out formula. Any unexpended grant funds are to be re-invested in the corpus annually. To begin the process of making grant awards from earnings, the corpus was held in trust for the 2001-2002 academic year to allow some initial earnings to grow.

By July 2002, the fund had produced a small amount of earnings (approximately \$39,000), which was available for distribution through a competitive grants process. The Advisory Committee that oversees the process, together with Coordinating Board staff, issued a Request for Proposals (RFP). However, the Advisory Committee and staff determined that no awards should be made during the 2002-2003 academic year due to the small number of proposals received, the small size of the available earnings, and concerns about the proposals received. Both the corpus and the earnings were again held in trust for that year.

For the 2003-2004 academic year, the Advisory Committee and the Coordinating Board staff were able to recommend for funding three projects which were the most highly ranked in the competitive review process during the fall 2003 semester. These projects were reviewed by the Advisory Committee and THECB staff, and approved by the national office of the NGS in January 2004. The award period for these projects was approximately nine months, from the middle of the spring 2004 through the end of the fall 2004 semesters. Approximately \$100,000 in earnings from the fund were available for awards, and distributed as follows:

- Grosvenor Center for Geography Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "Geography from the Outside In: A Field-Based Workshop for Underrepresented Students," \$35,933.
- Texas Alliance for Geography Education and Texas State University-San Marcos, "The Geographic Road to Success: GIS Training for Teachers and Students," \$9,880.
- Texas A&M University, "Linking Early U.S. History to World Geography Studies," \$54,187.

Coordinating Board staff member Jeffrey Phelps served as the contact person for the Texas Geography Fund during the 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004 academic years. A brief summary of each of the three funded projects listed above is provided in Appendix A of this report.

Report on Current Status of Texas Geography Fund Grants Program, FY 2004

In July 2004, Gloria White replaced Jeffrey Phelps as the Coordinating Board staff member responsible for the Texas Geography Fund Grant Program. The Advisory Committee met on August 13, 2004 to plan for the 2004-2005 academic year and make recommendations about the upcoming cycle of grant awards. The current membership of the Advisory Committee includes:

- Dr. James Kracht, Associate Dean of the College of Education, Texas A&M University (Convening Chair);
- Ms. Patricia Hardy, Social Studies Supervisor, Weatherford ISD, Weatherford, TX and Board Member, State Board of Education;
- Mr. George Rislov, Director of Curriculum, Texas Education Agency;
- Dr. William Brown, Professor of Geography, Texas Southern University;
- Dr. Margaret A. (Peggie) Price, Assistant Professor of Education, Texas Tech University;
- Mr. Dagoberto Ramirez, Social Studies Coordinator, La Joya ISD, Mission, TX;
- Dr. Sherry Field, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, UT-Austin;
- Mr. Lanny Proffer (ex-officio), National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.; and
- Dr. Gloria White (ex-officio), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

The committee's recommended updates to this year's Request for Proposals (RFP) have been made, and the RFP and accompanying application materials are ready for on-line activation. It is anticipated that the most highly ranked and recommended proposals from this fall's competition will be approved for awards from the National Geographic Society not later than December 1, 2004. The grant award period is again expected to be a 12-month period, from January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005. For the 2004-2005 grant awards, approximately \$56,000 will be available from fund earnings. These earnings represent a 5.25 percent payout rate, as required by the current rules of the fund. For information, the fund's 2004-2005 balance sheet is provided in Appendix B.

The Coordinating Board staff extends its appreciation to the members of the Advisory Committee who volunteer their time and efforts to meet regularly in Austin, to review and rank proposals for funding, and to assist with the oversight and management of the grant awards process. In addition, the Texas Alliance for Geography Education (the state's professional association for geographers and geography educators) has continued to provide financial support to help cover a portion of the travel costs for Advisory Committee members' attendance at meetings. Finally, appreciation is extended to Dr. Roger Elliott (former Coordinating Board staff member), to the Texas Legislature, and to the National Geographic Society for their contributions in 2001 to begin this program, and also to Jeffrey Phelps (Coordinating Board staff member) for his service as the program's staff coordinator during its initial, formative period.

Appendix A

Projects funded during 2003-2004, Texas Geography Fund Grant Competition

“Geography from the Outside In: A Field-Based Workshop for Underrepresented Students,” Project Director – Richard G. Boehm, Grovsvenor Center for Geographic Education, Texas State University-San Marcos (\$35,993): Provides an on-campus residential eight-day workshop for up to 12 teachers and 36 students from area high schools to introduce geographic skills, concepts, and applications through field-based experiences. A variety of research methods will be utilized in conjunction with geographic technology training, demonstrations, and classroom sessions. Participating campus teams of teachers and students will consist of 1 teacher and 1–3 students; students will be recruited from groups that are historically underrepresented in the field of geography, including Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, and women.

“The Geographic Road to Success: GIS Training for Teachers and Students,” Project Director – Richard G. Boehm, Texas Alliance for Geographic Education, Texas State University-San Marcos (\$9,880): Provides a two-day “hands-on” intensive training session for middle school and high school educators and students during an annual GIS Technology Conference held at an area high school. Classroom teachers have become interested in GIS as a powerful educational tool, but implementation in the K-12 environment has lagged behind the evolution of the technology. This intensive training program seeks to overcome some of the initial and structural barriers which prevent the effective implementation of GIS technology in classroom teaching, and allow for increasing the level of knowledge and skills in educational settings with regard to Geographic Information System (GIS) technology.

“Linking Early U.S. History to World Geography Studies,” Project Director – Sarah Witham Bednarz, Department of Geography, Texas A&M University (\$54,180): Approximately one-third of the items on the Grade 10 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) requires students to know early U. S. history content taught in Grade 8. However, students in Grade 9 and Grade 10 typically take World History and/or World Geography, and often do not retain what was learned in Grade 8. This project provides the curriculum development and dissemination of a training module for teachers of World Geography and/or World History for 9th and 10th grade students. The training module includes lessons and detailed materials which infuses U.S. history content into the context of World Geography and World History, so that teachers can more effectively and memorably help students master the TAKS-tested U.S. history content.

Appendix B

<u>Texas Geography Fund</u>	
2004/2005	
<i>Texas</i>	
<i>National Geographic Society's collaboration for programs in association with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</i>	
Net Asset Balance, as of:	
As of 12/31/2001	\$998,232
As of 12/31/2002	\$1,000,000
As of 12/31/2003	\$1,167,733
Average Balance	\$1,055,322
Spending Rule/Payout @ 5.25%	\$55,404

Related reports and data available from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's
Division of Participation and Success:

*Public High School Graduates Enrolled in Texas Public Higher Education, by County,
1995 – 2000 Graduates*

Student Performance and the Recommended High School Program, February 2003

*Partnership Plans to Increase College-going Rates and the Pilot Program for College
Enrollment Workshops, July 2002*

*Higher Education Assistance (HEA) Pilot Program: A Report on the Implementation and
Effectiveness of the HEA Pilot Program, July 2003*

*Higher Education Assistance (HEA) Pilot Program: A Report on the Implementation and
Effectiveness of the HEA Pilot Program, July 2004*

*Final Executive Summary of the TAKS Higher Education Readiness Component Task Force,
April 2004*

This document is available on the
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
World Wide Web Site
<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>

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