




Dr. Harrison Keller is Vice Provost for Higher Education Policy and Executive Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at The University of Texas at Austin and an officer in the United States Navy Reserve. Prior to coming to UT Austin, Dr. Keller served as director of research for the Texas House of Representatives and senior education policy analyst for the speaker of the Texas House. He is an appointed member of the Prepaid Higher Education Tuition Board that oversees the state college savings plans and of the Select Committee on Public School Finance Weights, Allotments and Adjustments of the 81st Texas Legislature, has worked with Texas state leaders from both parties to develop and pass major education budget and policy proposals, and frequently works with state policymakers, foundations, and national policy organizations on public and higher education policy issues. Dr. Keller is also a state advisor for the Lumina Foundation for Education's higher education productivity initiative. Previously, Dr. Keller served as project director for the Texas School Finance Project, which was funded by the Texas Education Agency and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and was Project Director for Education Policy at UT Austin's Charles A. Dana Center. His research interests include education policy and finance, moral philosophy, and democratic deliberation. He has taught at Georgetown University, St. Edward's University, and the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Keller holds a bachelors degree in philosophy with honors from the University of Notre Dame and a Master's degree and Ph.D. from Georgetown University. He is also a board member of the Austin Child Guidance Center, a member of the leadership council of Eastside Community Connection, and an alumnus of the Texas Lyceum. He and his wife, Gena Nivens Keller, live in Austin with their children, William, Elizabeth, and Emily. His contact information is: Harrison.Keller@po.utexas.edu or (512) 232-8277.



Harrison Keller, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Higher Education Policy and
Executive Director, Center for Teaching and Learning
The University of Texas at Austin
Main Building 301BB
Austin, Texas 78713
harrison.keller@po.utexas.edu
(512) 232-8277 (direct)

Testimony Regarding Efficiency and Productivity Initiatives
at The University of Texas at Austin
Submitted: September 16, 2010

Madam Chair, I am honored to be invited to testify before the committee on these important issues and to discuss our initiatives at UT Austin. Under President Powers' leadership, UT Austin has launched or expanded a number of initiatives to enhance our institutional efficiency and educational productivity. In my testimony today I will highlight two of these:

Course transformation. Over the next three years, UT Austin faculty will work with staff from our Center for Teaching and Learning to redesign approximately 12 large enrollment entry level courses using instructional technology. These projects will be different in a number of respects from other course redesign projects around the country, especially because we are approaching them as instructional design projects rather than technology integration projects. The research on what students should know and be able to do to navigate fields of study in upper-level universities is actually quite thin. Our aim is to work closely with faculty to clarify what these key entry level courses should convey, both in terms of conceptual knowledge and academic skills, and to develop new assessment strategies to help measure and improve the quality of the courses. The redesigned courses will also include web-based materials to better engage students such as simulations, assignments, and learning communities, and to reduce costs—including the

██████████

costs of instructional materials to students. More importantly, we believe that by better equipping students with the conceptual knowledge and academic skills they need, we can produce significant savings for students and the University through fewer dropped, failed, and retaken courses and more timely course and degree completions. We intend to make these redesigned course materials publicly available to other institutions.

Data-driven decision-making. In recent years, UT Austin has launched a number of initiatives to inform institutional policy making through better data about University operations, faculty, and our students' academic progress. One of our current projects is mapping students' pathways into and through the University and estimating the costs of the educational resources that our students consume. This project, which includes faculty researchers from four other national research universities as well as UT Austin, is designed to help us understand how students' undergraduate experiences may be affected by academic preparation, financial aid, student support structures, and academic program design. The findings from these analyses will be tested and expanded using extensive surveys focused on the undergraduate experience at UT Austin through our collaboration with the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley. This research will help us better identify and cultivate our students' talents and will help us better signal to prospective students what it takes to be academically competitive at UT Austin. The maps of student pathways and cost estimates developed through this initiative will also allow us to construct powerful new tools for evaluating the cost-effectiveness of various strategies for improving student success, including our Course Transformation Project.