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CHAIRMAN AMATO TALKING POINTS
JOINT COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
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Chairwoman Zaffirini, Chairman Branch, members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of our administration, faculty, staff, and the 77,000 students we serve. I'm Charlie Amato, Chairman of the Texas State University System Board of Regents.

I want to start by commending the members of this committee for your leadership during a time of dramatic change in higher education. Your efforts during the last legislative session and through this joint committee are setting the stage for what I believe will be an education renaissance in Texas.

To be sure, our public colleges and universities face enormous challenges, not the least of which is creating a new economic model that is responsive to taxpayer demands, supportive of academic excellence, and sufficient to keep college affordable and accessible for all who wish to attend.

I use the term "renaissance" because I believe the future of higher education is brighter than it might appear. The climate around public universities is certainly

gloomy, but I believe we have an opportunity to evolve and improve by using the tools and talents before us.

Our model of shared governance—as well as our tradition of strong and effective leadership in higher education—has put us in a position to succeed, just as we have succeeded in the past. Let me give you a few brief examples.

When our universities were criticized for being top-heavy and inefficient, we responded by becoming leaner and more efficient. At the Texas State University System, all of our institutions have reduced administrative costs as a percentage of their operating budgets over the past decade, with most doing so by double digits.

When our universities were appropriately scrutinized for admitting too few students and graduating even fewer, Texas made “Closing the Gaps” a priority, the Legislature aggressively increased support for student financial aid, and our universities created innovative, new student success programs like the “SAM Center” at Sam Houston State University. The result: Enrollment at our institutions has soared and our graduation rates have steadily improved, though we have more work to do.

Over the past decade, our public universities have become more efficient, more accountable and more transparent because the people of Texas, this Legislature and our governing boards made it so.

I want to take a moment to recognize my fellow members of the Texas State University System Board of Regents. They truly represent a cross-section of this

state, and they bring a diverse range of viewpoints within their areas of expertise and distinguished life experiences to their positions on the board.

Some members of our board graduated from component institutions of the Texas State University System; others graduated from schools in other systems and other states. But when we come together as a Board, there are no favorites, no loyalties and no personal agendas.

Each Regent, in addition to his or her Board duties, is assigned to serve on one or more committees that provide oversight on matters such as finance, audit, planning, legal, construction, technology, curriculum, governmental relations and diversity.

This allows our Board of Regents to monitor important issues facing our institutions and to provide leadership when needed. And I think our chancellor and administration would agree that this model strikes a critical balance by ensuring that the Board best serves as an asset, rather than an obstacle to progress.

Again, I want to thank the members of this committee for your leadership and for working to ensure that our students have the best possible education that we can provide. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.