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https://wacotrib.com/article_cfda03a2-d7b4-5c57-bd35-a6631_ef95d_19.html

MCC excels on national NASA stage

Students conduct space research with design of engineering project

Jul 22, 2025



MCC's Team Pleiades, led by engineering professor April Andreas, from left, with students Jordyn Winter, Kandace Brown, Mike Baker, Mason Vanek, Brady Vanek, Vince Iwuzue and Peter Newcomer took home three awards in this year's NASA MINDS Challenge.

MCC, PROVIDED

A group of McLennan Community College students recently was honored with multiple awards for their work on yearlong project developing new ideas and strategies for NASA.

MCC's Team Pleiades won first place in the research poster category; second place in the overall design, build and demonstration competition; and third place in the technical paper contest. McLennan was the only community college to win awards among a group of four-year universities.

MUREP is a NASA initiative that aims to expand science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) opportunities to underrepresented and underserved students, including racial minorities, women and girls, and people with disabilities, with the goal of building a diverse workforce pipeline.

MCC has consistently performed well in the NASA MINDS Challenge, taking home multiple first-place awards in 2022 and 2023 for a working model of an anchor that could be used in weightless microgravity environments.



Dr. McKown and Ashley Cruseturner met with Ann Harder on July 21 for a recording of the Ann Harder Show podcast. Their episode is scheduled to air on August 7.

Waco colleges working to gauge Pell Grant changes in federal budget bill

Carl Hoover Jul 4, 2025 0

Waco college administrators are joining colleagues nationwide with a new assignment heading into the Independence Day weekend.

Officials are waiting for the dust to settle from the massive federal budget reconciliation bill passed Thursday to determine its effect on Pell Grants, an important piece of financial aid for thousands of local students and some 6.5 million nationwide, more than a third of undergraduates.

Senate changes created a markedly different picture for Pell Grants than the version of the bill initially passed by the House, and as the measure received final approval and headed to President Donald Trump's desk, school leaders were still working to understand which provisions made it through and their potential impact.

More than 5,000 undergraduate students at Waco colleges receive Pell Grant funding as part of their financial aid packages. The federal funding is need-based, usually does not require repayment as a loan would, and generally helps undergraduate students and families with limited financial resources. Students can receive up to \$7,395 per year with a six-year limit. Last year, the average grant was \$4,491.

Data provided by Baylor University shows 2,354 of its 14,915 undergraduates, or slightly more than 15%, received Pell Grants. Texas State Technical College's Waco campus reported 1,335 students received Pell Grants last fall out of a fall enrollment of 3,036 students. McLennan Community College had 1,546 spring semester students receiving Pell Grants of its approximately 7,500 students.

Higher education funding and student loans were a target for reduction in the Trump administration budget submitted to Congress this year. Even though the House legislation increased Pell Grant funding to address funding deficits in recent years, it would restrict the number of qualifying students moving forward, particularly by increasing the number of class hours required for full-time status. That was particularly concerning for community colleges, where the percentage of part-time students is higher than at four-year universities.

The House version would have set 15 hours as the minimum to qualify as a full-time student, an increase from the current 12-hour definition, and students taking seven hours or fewer would not qualify for Pell Grant support.

Excluding students taking dual credit classes, half of MCC's fall enrollment was part-time, with only 9% taking 15 or more hours and 70% taking 12 hours or fewer, according to data provided by the college.

MCC President Johnette McKown said many MCC students have jobs that make it difficult to carry a heavy class load. The MCC Foundation raises about \$700,000 in scholarship support for students, with Pell Grants often used to round out financial aid packages, she said.

The House passed its budget bill in May by a single vote with the Senate determining what amendments to make before reconciliation of the two bills.

The Senate budget bill, crafted by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, did not change the definition of full-time and part-time students. It also established new workforce Pell Grants providing financial support for students in skills training and certification programs.

McKown said she was keeping a close eye on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee's budget planning and then the Senate's discussions of the bill through reporting by David Baime, senior vice president of government relations for the American Association of Community Colleges.

It took a tie-breaking vote from Vice President J.D. Vance to pass the Senate version, 51 to 50, on Tuesday. House representatives then raced to approve the final reconciliation bill, which passed 218-214 on Thursday.

Just what Pell Grant changes survived the bill's last hectic days remained to be worked out heading into the holiday weekend, though commentary on the American Association of Community Colleges' website suggested much of the Senate's version remained. Representatives of MCC, TSTC and Baylor University agreed it was too early to tell.

"We just need to see the budget reconciliation bill and what it looks like," McKown said, adding that the college would work with individual students on navigating any new Pell Grant requirements to find sufficient financial aid.

Baylor spokesperson Lori Fogleman said, "we're actively reviewing developments in Washington and planning how those changes will impact Baylor."

On Thursday morning, Joe Arnold, deputy vice chancellor in TSTC's government relations office, said, "Once the bill is signed into law, we will need time to understand it fully and study its impact on Pell Grants and students who receive them."

WACOAN Magazine Feature on MCC Employee



Jenn Tobin

5 years with Sunshine Recovery House
Tutoring Program Specialist at McLennan Community College

How did you become involved with Sunshine Recovery House?

My very good friend was the founder, it was her dream and her vision, and she just pulled me along. So, I jumped in with both feet, and when she assembled the first board at that first meeting, she was like, 'I want this to carry on, even if I get hit by a bus, even if I go off the rails, even without me.' I want the same thing. 2020 really took a lot of people off the rails. So, [my friend] stepped back, and somebody had to pick up the ball. I knew at the beginning that this was something bigger than us, and that it was a need in Waco — I had to keep going. So here we are trudging along.

What do you do as a volunteer?

I don't do it alone. Natasha is our house manager, and she is my right hand; she's the day-to-day. She's our executive director, I'm just a chaos coordinator. I help her. She vets most of our ladies who come in and I try to stay on top of all the paperwork. We have extensively added on and tweaked our guidelines for living here. I do all the shopping for cleaning supplies, and I'm here every Monday night for the house meetings. I do interviews (when the ladies move in, we do an intake interview). And then, if something happens in the middle of the night, they know they can call me. I just got off the phone with someone who had concerns about her roommate. So, I listen to that. I'm the keeper of the mail and the keeper of the keys, and anything that they need for the household, like a vacuum cleaner or blankets or whatever, I go get it.

What does your work at Sunshine Recovery House mean to you?

I love Sunshine. It wasn't my baby, but I've been part of it since the conception and I'm committed to staying part of it until God tells me to stop. I'm not a quitter. When I was

asked to join the board I heard, 'I know you won't walk away even if I get run over by a train, and I want Sunshine to outlast me,' from the founder.

I also want Sunshine Recovery House to outlast me, but I'm not planning on going anywhere anytime soon. Which is why I don't want a paycheck. Although, I could use some compensation, and sometimes I really feel like I'm not cut out for this and maybe someone else could do a better job. I love our residents. I'm a natural servant and I pour my life into these ladies. I want to hear their stories and serve them with our five loaves and two small fish. I want to show them the love of Jesus and the compassion of a forgiving Father, while demonstrating how to trust and follow the Holy Spirit.

Experts say Texas needs more money for adult education. Federal funding for it is increasingly uncertain

From funding delayed to a proposal that would mean funding denied, adult education providers don't know what's coming.



Experts say Texas needs more money for adult education. Federal funding for it is increasingly uncertain

June 24, 2025



By Sarah Asch | June 24, 2025 10:15 am
Education, Texas Standard Original

The Trump administration has made big promises to cut federal spending, and the Department of Education has been one target.

Trump signed an executive order in March [dismantling the agency](#) and returning oversight of education to states, though that order has been held up in court.

And while many have focused on [what that would mean for public school funding](#), there has been less discussion about how these changes will affect adult education.

Adult education programs in Texas — which encompass GED classes, English as a second language instruction, and job training — receive a mix of federal and state funding through the Texas Workforce Commission.

“We put out a request for applications. Entities from across the state who have demonstrated experience in serving adult learners can apply for those funds,” said Mahalia Baldini, the commission’s director of adult education and literacy. “Typically those organizations are community colleges, independent school districts, nonprofits...think about any entity that’s really just focused on serving adult learners in the state.”

The commission distributes grants throughout Texas via 28 regions. Each region has a primary provider that uses these funds to meet adult learning targets in their areas.

For Waco and the surrounding counties, that provider is McLennan Community College. This summer, a small group of GED students at McLennan are preparing to take their math exams — among them is Brittnay Camp, who started taking GED courses last August.

Camp said she was motivated to go back to school because she wants to become a paramedic.

“I started in the fire department as a volunteer and I got into the medical world,” she said. “I want to (be a) paramedic but you can’t be a paramedic without a GED.”

» **RELATED:** [Life often gets in the way of adults going back to school. This Texarkana nonprofit has a solution.](#)

McLennan has been trying to do a lot with a little for students like Camp for a while now.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council found that federal and state grants only pay for about 3% of adult education needs statewide – and that need is substantial. The council’s [report](#) from last December estimates about 4.7 million Texans qualify for adult education services. That’s about 1 in 5 Texans over the age of 16.

Funding from the Department of Education makes up most of the money that pays for these services in Texas – about 80%. But as the Trump administration works to cut spending and eliminate the Department of Education, that funding is increasingly uncertain.



McLennan Community College in Waco receives a mix of federal and state dollars to support adult education and literacy efforts in the area. These dollars are distributed by the Texas Workforce Commission to providers across the state. Sarah Asch / Texas Standard

The money is usually allocated in the spring. But Sharon Bonney – the CEO of a national advocacy organization called the Coalition on Adult Basic Education – said this year, spring came and went with no announcement about incoming money.

“We were really fighting for it even in June,” Bonney said. “We knew that local programs would have to start laying people off, and it would come down to closures if the funding didn’t come through.”

The Texas Workforce Commission was also waiting. In the midst of the uncertainty, TWC staff proposed at least allocating a smaller budget so providers of adult education in Texas had some ability to plan for the months ahead.

Adult Education Literacy funding sources in Texas

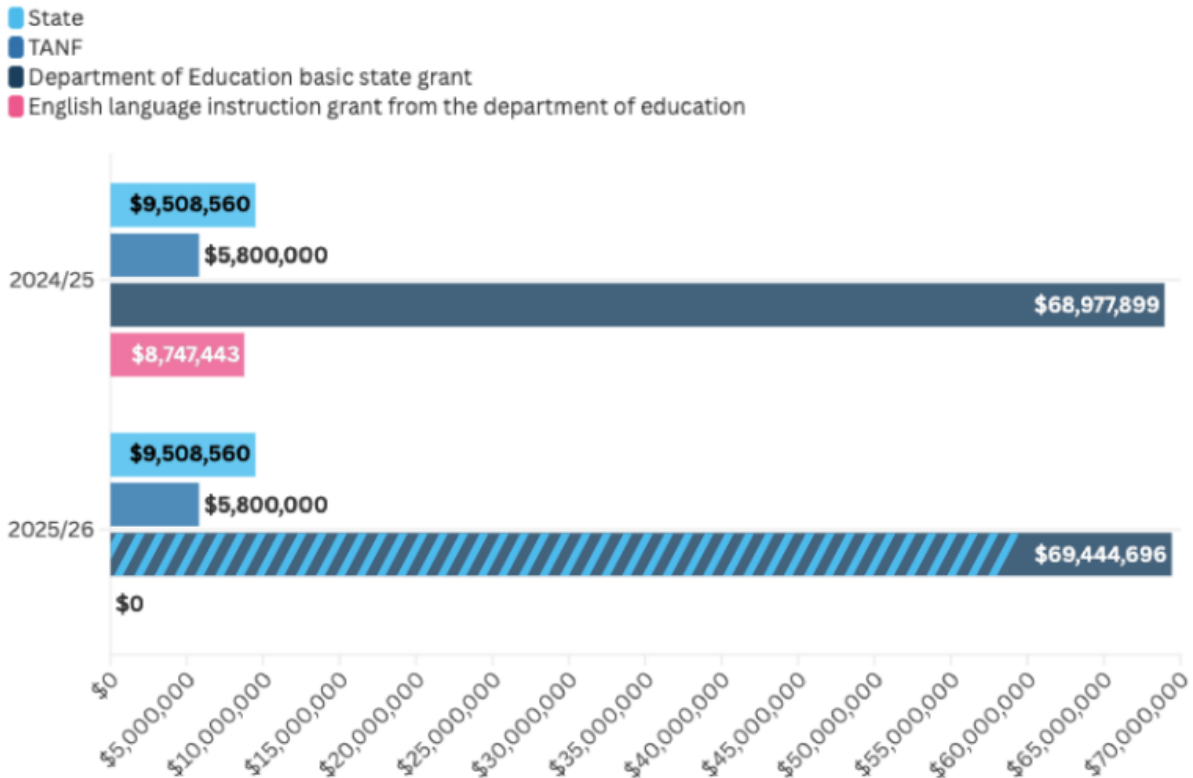


Illustration by Raul Alonzo / Texas Standard

Funding for adult education in Texas comes from a combination of state and federal grants funneled through the Department of Education. State funds and funding from the TANF program are projected to remain the same for the upcoming grant cycle that starts on July 1. The Department of Education basic grant is projected to go up slightly, though the final grant allocation will not be announced until next week. However, the Department of Education has not released the usual funding earmarked for English language learning programs. If nothing changes, this funding will run out on June 30.

Workforce Commission CFO Chris Nelson brought the proposal to commissioners at a meeting in May.

Nelson proposed the TWC allocate all of the \$9.5 million in state funding that usually goes to adult education, as well as all of the money from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. But, Nelson's proposal to the commission was to only include half of the biggest chunk of federal funding.

A few weeks ago, the Department of Education finally released adult learning funds— though they left out money usually dedicated to support English language learners.

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The Texas Workforce Commission said the agency is prepared to make amendments to their original funding estimates and distribute the remaining dollars. However, they will wait until we receive the final grant award notification from the Department of Education, which usually happens on July 1.

But even with the funding on its way, adult learning advocate Sharon Bonney says she's still concerned it's at risk of being taken back. In early June, for example, the administration requested Congress [claw back over \\$9 billion](#) of previously approved funding.

“Typically we would say, ‘oh, we’re safe,’” she said. “We have the funding that we need just for this next year, at the very least. But now, if it was clawed back, that would be a real hardship for the field.”

And then there’s Trump’s so-called “skinny budget” – which proposes cutting adult education funding entirely.

The budget proposal document claims that as control of public education returns to the states, K-12 outcomes will improve, making remedial education for adults less necessary. It also outlines a plan to redirect resources to programs that prepare people for meaningful careers.

Glenda Rose is the managing director of the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning at Texas A&M. She said she couldn’t speak on behalf of the center, but based on her personal experience teaching adult education, this plan to redirect funds shows a misunderstanding of what adult ed is really for.

“If you are going to go into a meaningful career, you have to have the foundation of literacy to do the training for that career,” Rose said.



Sarah Asch / Texas Standard

McLennan Community College’s adult education students meet on campus throughout the year to work toward their learning goals. This could include better English fluency, a GED or a career certification. Pamphlets and fliers are shown at the college on June 17, 2025.

Rose said that adult education is usually career-oriented. But this is especially true in Texas, where the Workforce Commission oversees the adult ed grants and sets the program requirements. In most other states, adult ed is under the state department of education.

“Texas is way far ahead of the group as far as this training component,” Rose said. “We’ve pretty much got it down. But they’re saying we’re ineffective. And it infuriates me because it shows a real lack of understanding about what we’re doing.”

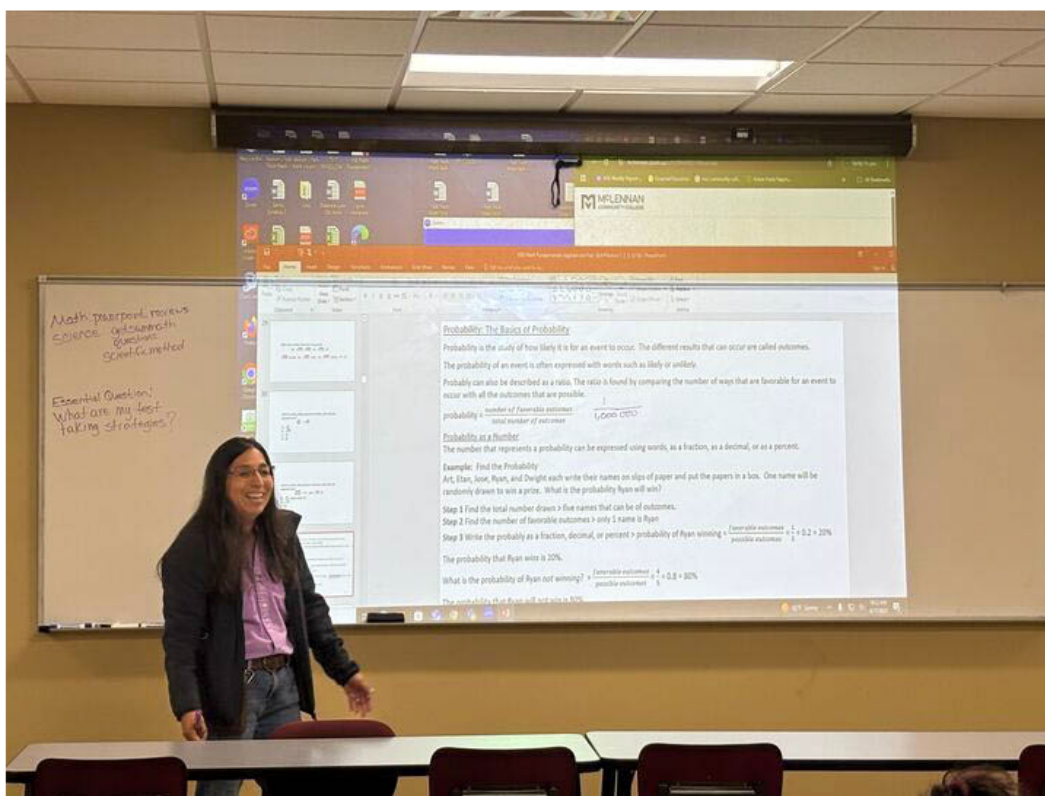
This focus on career training is evident in the state targets that providers like McLennan Community College have to meet to maintain their funding.

Michelle Telg-Moore is the program director of adult education and literacy at McLennan. She said providers are required to offer workforce literacy programs.

“For instance, this year we did a class with a local hotel where we were teaching English skills to people in their housekeeping department,” Telg-Moore said.

Education can also be combined with career training in healthcare or manufacturing. And programs are designed to help professionals who have immigrated to the U.S. or who were recently released from prison.

“Another thing we do is they’re called ‘second chance programs’ where recently released individuals who want to get back into society... How can we help those students as well?,” she said. “So we have a really large mandate that we’re trying to accomplish in six counties.”



Sarah Asch / Texas Standard

Instructor Gina Serros teaches a GED math class at McLennan Community College in Waco.

Telg-Moore says, with funding uncertain, her team is looking at ways to combine services and classes without outright cutting programs.

“I was talking with someone yesterday, I was in a meeting, I’m like, ‘well, this could happen, or this could happen, or this can happen, or this could happen,’” she said. “So we’re just waiting.”

While Telg-Moore and her team strategize about how to move forward, students in the McLennan adult education building are moving toward their learning goals.

Fast Track Your Future with McLennan Community College

By [Waco Moms](#) - June 23, 2025

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- Paralegal (Litigation Paralegal \$54-73K)
- Cybersecurity (IT Manager \$85-115K)



STEM:

- Engineering (Engineering Tech \$40-45K)
- Agriculture (Food Safety Tech \$35-70K)



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Jul 11, 2025 3:54 PM EDT

● Pos.

1

🌐 **McLennan Community College earns top placements in national NASA competition**

Source KCEN HD Market Temple, TX Type Digital News Category Local



MCC was the only two-year college among the winners of the contest, the college said. WACO, Texas — Students from **McLennan Community College (MCC)** are celebrating a stellar success. A team from **MCC** placed second overall in the NASA Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP) Innovative New

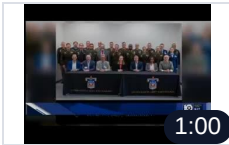
Jul 11, 2025 7:18 AM EDT

● Pos.

2

📺 **KWTX News Ten This Morning at 6 am**

Channel KWTX (CBS) Market Waco, TX DMA: 83 Genre News Program Type Local



a big honor for central texas college. chancellor dr. michele j. carter was invited to the u.s. army war college's national security seminar -- one of just a few civilians chosen nationwide. she says the experience will help c-t-c continue supporting service members and their families through education. students at **mclennan**

Jul 10, 2025 2:00 PM EDT

● Pos.

3

🌐 **MCC becomes only community college to earn top honors in NASA competition**

Source Everything Lubbock Market Lubbock, TX Type Digital News Category Local



WACO, Texas (FOX 44) - Science projects at a **community college** aren't always expected to reach beyond the classroom, but that's not the case at **McLennan Community College (MCC)**. The college says students from various majors concluded a year-long collaborative research project which developed ideas to

Jul 4, 2025 3:33 PM EDT

● Neu.

4

🌐 **Waco colleges working to gauge Pell Grant changes in federal budget bill**

Source Waco Tribune Herald Market Waco, TX Type Digital News Category Local



... grant was \$4,491. Data provided by Baylor University shows 2,354 of its 14,915 undergraduates, or slightly more than 15%, received Pell Grants. Texas State Technical College's Waco campus reported 1,335 students received Pell Grants last fall out of an enrollment of more than 11,000 students. **McLennan Community**



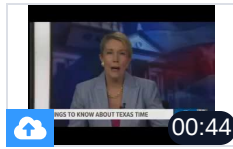
6 News at 5

Channel KCEN (NBC)

Market Waco, TX DMA: 83

Genre News

Program Type Local



mclennan community college is expanding its summer camp program -- it aims to prevent the summer slide. 6 news attended the math learning lab for first through second graders. the math lab is one of the twelve new camps running this summer. **mcc** says the program provides affordable summer camp options. program



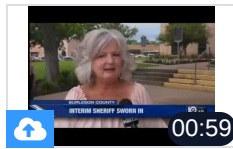
KWTX News Ten at Six

Channel KWTX (CBS)

Market Waco, TX DMA: 83

Genre News

Program Type Local



mclennan community college kicked off one of four new kids college career academies it's offering this summer. these career academies are day long sessions where kids ages five through 12 get a chance to explore different career paths and connect with real world professionals. today's academy was focused on law

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