

Affordable Bachelor's Degrees

[Photo: Dr. Farmer.jpg] **4/21/21** — The price of houses, automobiles, and the general necessities of life continues to rise. Inflationary pressures are compounded by the growth of our area and the associated competition for existing resources. Employers are having to raise wages in order to attract and retain the best and brightest human capital.

Higher education is in no way immune to these price increases. The cost of earning a bachelor's degree continues to skyrocket, and is simply becoming unaffordable for some. This trend must be reversed if we are to maintain a highly qualified workforce. The continued economic prosperity of both our citizens and our society depends on an educated labor pool abundant with skilled workers.

We have some excellent universities in our region awarding bachelor's degrees. Among these leading universities is a public institution, Tarleton State University, and a private institution, Texas Christian University (TCU). The Tarleton website posts an annual cost of attendance for resident undergraduates as \$25,033 per year. The annual cost of attendance for resident undergraduates posted on the TCU website is \$66,600 per year. As high as these costs seem, they are actually a good value by national standards.

But what about the total costs of a full four-year bachelor's degree? A resident student attending four years at Tarleton to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree would spend a little over \$100,000. A BSN at TCU would cost a student over \$266,400. This same BSN degree can now be earned at Weatherford College for \$58,980 by on-campus resident students, and for even less by those living at home.

Community colleges began offering bachelor's degrees on a very limited basis in the late 1980's. Florida and Washington State later became national policy leaders regarding community college bachelor's degrees. State authorization across the country has consistently grown over the last three decades, with 23 states now authorizing public community colleges to award bachelor's degrees. Texas authorized the pilot of limited community college bachelor's degrees in 2003. Then on June 12, 2017, Governor Abbott signed Senate Bill 2118 authorizing statewide community college bachelor's degrees. To date, only 15 of the 50 Texas community college districts offer baccalaureate degree programs.

Weatherford College is strongly committed to affordable bachelor's degrees. We are simultaneously expanding our students' educational opportunities and supplying the skilled labor pool demanded by our business community. In addition to the BSN currently offered, a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Organizational Leadership degree program will begin this August. Furthermore, we have applied for approval to launch a Bachelor of Technology degree beginning in August 2022. We currently offer, and will increasingly offer, some of the most affordable bachelor's degrees in the nation.

There has never been a better time to be a Coyote! Weatherford College offers an outstanding education at a fraction of the price. Now, more than ever, you can stay close and go far.

Tod Allen Farmer

President, Weatherford College