



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY  
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™  
EL PASO

Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine

**An established leader in border health, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso received approval to plan West Texas’ first dental school and the state’s newest dental school in over 50 years. The community-supported Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine will educate and help retain dental health professionals in the acutely underserved West Texas and border regions.**

**Legislature Request:** \$20 million to establish the Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine  
*Allocate \$20 million from the current \$50 million appropriated to the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine*

**TTUHSC El Paso has raised \$31.1 million in non-state funds to leverage state investment**

## A Critical Need

Texas currently ranks 33rd in the nation in the number of practicing dentists per 100,000 people. While the state’s population continues to grow, now reaching 28 million, Texas’ oral health disparities posing risks to overall health are most concentrated in its rural and border region. El Paso County has been designated a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area and a high-need area for dental care providers, which will be exacerbated by the rising population in El Paso.

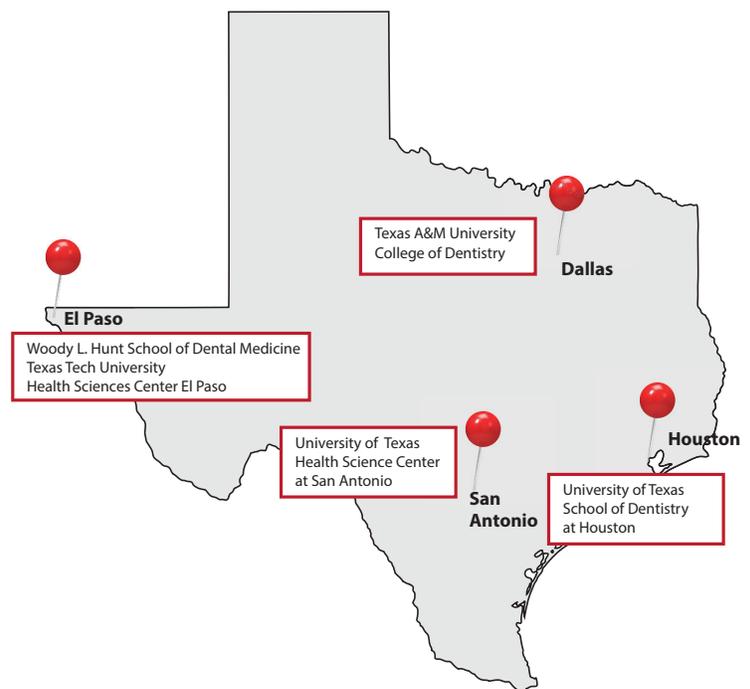
Adding to that strain is an aging population of dentists in the state. More than one-third of Texas’ dentists are at or approaching retirement age.

Health care professionals are acutely aware of the silent epidemic of untreated dental and oral diseases that substantially affect a variety of chronic health conditions in adults, as well as malnutrition and lower academic performance in children according to the Surgeon General.

## Benefitting the Region

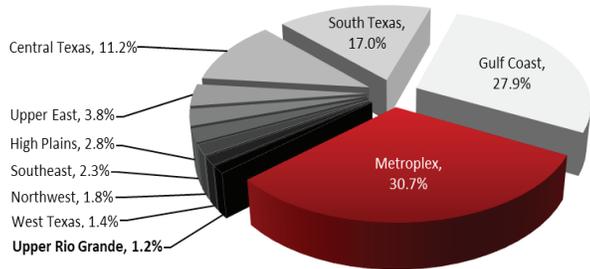
The current dental schools in Texas are located on the Interstate 35 corridor and eastern portion of the state, with the closest in-state school more than 550 miles from El Paso. Fifty-three percent of general dentists practicing in Texas are located in the five most populated counties of Texas – contiguous to the state’s existing dental schools.

*Existing and Proposed Dental Schools in Texas*



- 86 percent of Texas dental school students who graduated since 2007 are currently licensed in Texas
- Approximately 75 percent of Texas dental school graduates establish their practice in proximity to their dental schools
- The ratio of dentists per capita is highest among Texas counties with a dental school

## Texas Dental School Graduates by Practice Region



\*N = 9180

Source: Texas State Board of Dental Examiners, 2018

While the state faces a critically uneven distribution of dentists and an overall aging workforce of dentists, data suggests graduates of Texas' existing dental schools are not likely to fill the workforce shortages of West Texas and the Upper Rio Grande.

## Increasing Access to Quality Education, Care

Interest in attending dental school in Texas is strong, and applications to its dental schools have substantially increased over the past 15 years. In 2017, Texas dental schools did not accept 69 percent of applicants for admission, with even greater numbers rejected in previous years.

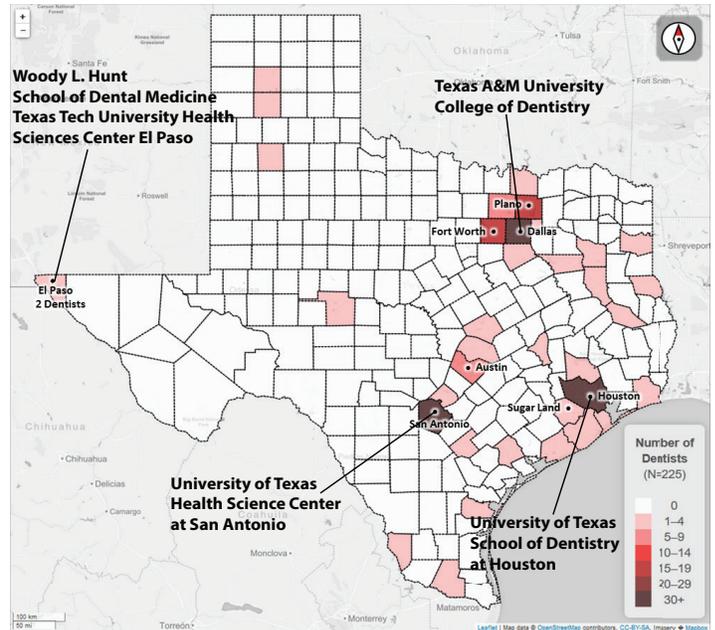
Ninety students from Texas were admitted into private and public dental schools outside of the state in 2016. Educational programs outside of Texas and the U.S. supply approximately 45 percent of the dentist workforce in the state.

Because graduates typically establish practices in the same region where they attend school, the number of dentists serving West Texas residents is expected to increase significantly upon opening the WLHSDM. At full capacity, the school will graduate 60 dentists per year.

## A New Vision

The goal of the WLHSDM is to attract, matriculate and graduate a diverse student body with an interest in serving West Texas and the border region. Recruitment efforts will focus on West Texas universities and pipeline colleges that target underserved minority high school and college students. The WLHSDM will utilize an integrated curriculum model with some shared components from TTUHSC El Paso's nationally-ranked Paul L. Foster School of Medicine.

## Texas Dental School Graduates Practicing by County: Currently Active Dentists, Graduated 2017



Source: Texas State Board of Dental Examiners, 2018

## Major Developments

- In July 2016, the THECB granted preliminary authority to TTUHSC El Paso to plan the professional practice-level program in dentistry.
- In August 2016, the Hunt Family Foundation dedicated \$25 million to support the initiative, which was followed by a \$6.1 million gift from the Paso Del Norte Foundation.
- In May 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature provided TTUHSC El Paso with an \$8 million appropriation to begin planning and establishing a dental program.
- TTUHSC El Paso has conducted a feasibility study, developed innovative curriculum, designed facilities, secured community and industry support, and consulted with state authorities and accrediting bodies.
- In August 2018, the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents approved the dental doctoral program.
- In November 2018, TTUHSC El Paso submitted its degree program to the THECB and CODA for approval.