

SUBJECT: Automatic admission of certain undergraduate transfer students

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Morrison, E. Reyna, West
0 nays
1 absent — Uher

WITNESSES: For — Dr. Rey Garcia, Texas Association of Community Colleges
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Subchapter U of Education Code, ch. 51 governs the state’s uniform admission policy for higher education. Sec. 51.803 requires state general academic teaching institutions (“institutions”) to admit applicants as undergraduate students if they graduated with a grade point average (GPA) in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class in one of two school years prior to the academic year for which they are applying for admission and if they graduated from an accredited public or private high school in Texas or a high school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense.

The institution may require a student who needs additional preparation for college-level work or would benefit from inclusion in a retention program to enroll during the summer immediately after the student is admitted to participate in an enrichment course or orientation program. Sec. 51.803 does not prohibit a student who is not determined to need such additional coursework from voluntarily enrolling during the summer immediately after the student is admitted.

DIGEST: CSHB 47 would add Education Code, sec. 51.8065 to establish guidelines for automatic admission of certain undergraduate transfer students. CSHB 47 would require institutions to admit undergraduate transfer students if in the year prior to the academic year for which they applied for admission,

they received a degree or certificate from a public junior college or technical institute in a program requiring at least 30 semester credit hours, and they completed the program with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent.

Applicants for undergraduate transfer would have to submit their applications before any application filing deadline established by the institution expired. Admission to specific institutions would be contingent upon available space at the institution. Also, if an institution's admission requirements for a particular program or school exceeded a 3.0 GPA, admission would be based on the requirements of the institution.

CSHB 47 would allow institutions to review the applicants' record and any other factors considered appropriate to determine whether they required additional preparation for college-level work or would benefit from a retention program. The institutions could require any students that needed such preparation to enroll in such courses during the summer immediately after their admission. Students who were not determined to need additional preparation still could voluntarily enroll in them during the summer immediately after their admission.

The bill would take effect immediately and would apply beginning with admissions for the 2002 fall semester. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and each institution would be required to adopt rules or policies relating to the admission of these undergraduate transfer students by January 1, 2002.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 47 would benefit both the state of Texas and its students by providing incentives for students to get good grades, complete their studies at a public junior college or technical institute, and then transfer to the public university of their choice. This would help ease enrollment pressures at some universities, since students would be encouraged to complete their first two years of study at community colleges before transferring to the universities.

The LBB estimates that CSHB 47 would save the state \$1.17 million in fiscal 2004 and \$2.33 million in fiscal 2005. These savings are based on THECB estimates that five percent of new students, or 2,157, who currently enroll in universities would choose instead to enroll in community colleges.

The bill also would save students money, because the average tuition at public 2-year institutions is \$826, compared to \$2,276 at public 4-year institutions, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

CSHB 47 would increase student participation, retention and graduation rates. As a result, more students would, ultimately, complete their studies and become active and productive members of the Texas economy. Studies have shown that students who transfer from colleges to universities as juniors have higher graduation rates, higher GPAs, and lower dismissal rates than students who transferred as freshmen or sophomores. Therefore, under CSHB 47, students would benefit by completing their first two years of study at a public college, and then transferring to a university.

CSHB 47 would build upon the automatic admissions policy already in place in Education Code, sec. 51.803 for high school students. The bill would guarantee universities high caliber students, with proven track records of successful completion of college level work. It also would help ensure geographic, socioeconomic, and ethnic diversity in the state's public universities by drawing from community colleges around the state.

CSHB 47 would be consistent with the principles and goals of the "Top 10 percent" admission policy and would reward hard-working students who have demonstrated academic excellence at the college level. Since public colleges do not rank their students, the "top 10 percent" requirement would be replaced with a minimum GPA requirement.

CSHB 47 would be consistent with two of the goals outlined in THECB's "Closing the Gaps" plan, as well as the recommendations made by the Governor's Special Commission on 21st Century Colleges and Universities. Specifically, CSHB 47 would increase the affordability and accessibility of higher education as well as ensure the automatic admission of qualified students to the state's general academic teaching institutions.

According to THECB, community colleges are the largest sector of Texas' higher education system, with approximately 44 percent of total student enrollment. Public community colleges are growing rapidly, and demographic projections indicate that this trend will continue. According to THECB's

“Closing the Gaps” study, by 2015 Texas must enroll about 500,000 additional students in its higher education institutions to meet its goal of raising the state participation rate to 5.7 percent. Sixty percent of these students will begin their studies at community and technical colleges. Therefore, CSHB 47 would be one effective method to target these students and encourage them to pursue their higher education goals.

CSHB 47 would be limited in scope and would not overinflate university enrollments. CSHB 47 would make admission contingent upon the institution having space available for additional students. This would help boost enrollment at certain state universities that currently have a surplus of space, while decreasing or at a minimum maintaining the status quo at institutions with space deficits.

Finally, the bill would not mandate statewide admissions policies. It would provide sufficient flexibility to universities to allow them to maintain their own admission policies for particular programs or schools, especially in cases where their admission requirements exceed those set forth in CSHB 47. CSHB 47 would not lower the academic standards of students admitted to universities as transfer students. Any concerns regarding the quality and applicability of transferring technical courses to academic majors could be addressed through voluntary local articulation agreements.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 47 would decree statewide admissions policies that would be better left to individual institutions. The state’s universities should retain the authority to make such decisions and implement policies that best suit their individual needs, goals, and student bodies. These institutions have proven themselves responsible in the past and should be allowed to continue determining their own admissions policies.

By including automatic admissions from technical and certificate programs, CSHB 47 would lower the academic standards of transfer students admitted to universities. Courses required in many technical programs and certificate programs could not transfer into academic programs, such as those at universities, because of different accrediting standards and because of differing course work requirements for technical and certificate programs. CSHB 47 at least should be limited to students in academic degree programs

at colleges and not include students completing technical/non-academic degree programs.

NOTES:

The committee substitute modified the filed version of HB 47 by providing that admission to specific institutions would be contingent upon the institution having space available for additional students. The substitute also allowed institutions to maintain admission requirements that exceed a 3.0 GPA.

The fiscal note for CSHB 47 indicates that while the bill would make no appropriation, it could provide the legal basis for an appropriation of funds to implement its provisions. The LBB found that since formula funding is based on historical enrollment, any savings to the state from the projected shift in enrollment from universities to colleges would not be realized until fiscal 2004. The savings to general revenue would be approximately \$1.17 million in fiscal 2004 and \$2.33 million in fiscal 2005.

The LBB assumed that students who would be admitted to universities under this provision would have attended other universities rather than start their higher education studies at a community or technical college. Therefore, CSHB 47 would affect the distribution of students among universities, but would not result in additional enrollment or significant enrollment costs to the state. The LBB also noted that due to capacity concerns, some universities would revise their admissions policies in order to accommodate the students admitted under CSHB 47. Local community college districts would incur costs related to increased enrollment in community colleges, but these would be offset by increases to tuition and state support.