

SUBJECT: Creating a public online comparison tool of certain academic institutions

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Branch, Castro, Alonzo, Bonnen, Brown, D. Howard, Lewis, Patrick
0 nays
1 absent — Johnson

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 28 — 31-0, on the Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: Currently the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) compiles and makes public various statistical reports and data on certain general academic teaching institutions on its website.

THECB does not offer an online mechanism for a person to compare teaching institutions using certain criteria.

DIGEST: SB 1730 would require THECB to make available on its website a search tool that would allow a person to compare general academic teaching institutions that met certain criteria, including the offering of a particular major or program of study.

The bill would require that the comparison tool be accessible from THECB's website, allow a user to identify general academic teaching institutions according to selection criteria as determined by THECB, and to be accessible to the public without a required registration or user name, password, or other user identification.

SB 1730 would require the comparison tool to generate a comparison chart in a grid format that listed the general academic teaching institutions that matched a user's search criteria and provided information for each institution listed that THECB had determined would aid a prospective student in evaluating the institution.

The Internet page displaying the comparison chart would have to include a link to the Texas Workforce Commission's website and, to the extent practicable, the information would have to consist of information that a general academic teaching institution was already required to report to the THECB.

The bill would require each general academic teaching institution to provide THECB with information for the comparison tool no later than October 1, or a date determined by THECB, each year. The bill also would require THECB to update the comparison tool as soon as practicable after receiving information from each institution.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2011, and the THECB would have to create and post the comparison tool on its website by February 1, 2013.