

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 1404
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Education
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Engrossed

DIGEST

Distance learning in higher education via video transmission and on-line services is rapidly increasing. About 20 of Texas' universities and one-third of its community colleges offer courses via distance learning. Last year, 60,000 students took a course via distance learning and that number is estimated to grow by 20 percent each year.

In Texas, institutions of higher education must meet two requirements to offer courses through distance learning. First, they must meet with all of the higher education institutions in their region to ensure that offering a course on-line will not cause unnecessary duplication of courses, or jeopardize another institution's program. If an institution objects to the course, it may not be offered. Then they must meet certain quality standards set forth by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. There is concern that these requirements serve as barriers to institutions' efforts to deliver their services.

H.B. 1404 would authorize public technical institutes, public community colleges, or a public college or university to offer courses via distance learning without the approval of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, if the courses are offered through computer access, are part of the approved curriculum of the institution and have already been approved to be delivered by distance learning.

PURPOSE

As proposed, H.B. 1404 authorizes public technical institutes, public community colleges, or a public college or university to offer courses via distance learning without the approval of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, if the courses are offered through computer access, are part of the approved curriculum of the institution and have already been approved to be delivered by distance learning.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.051(j), Education Code, to prohibit any off-campus courses for credit from being offered by any public technical institute, public community college, or public college or university without specific prior approval of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board). Authorizes, however, any of those institutions without additional board approval to offer a course within the approved curriculum of the institution to a student who accesses the course through a computer or computer network. Requires the board, in order to facilitate the delivery of courses by distance learning and to improve access to those courses, to encourage collaborative efforts to make the benefits of computer access to educational opportunities widely available. Requires the board to maintain a central informational resource, to be called the Texas On-Line University, accessible to the public through the Internet and other similar telecommunications networks accessible by computer by the general public, containing information relating to all computer-accessible distance learning programs offered by institutions of higher education and including computer links, addresses, or other directions to assist an interested person to obtain additional information directly from the appropriate institution.

SECTION 2. Emergency clause.
Effective date: upon passage.