

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
79R207 JRJ-F

S.B. 527
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S/C on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) is located in Edinburg, Texas. UTPA serves an area of Texas facing many socio-economic challenges. Among those challenges is the limited awareness of the issues and factors affecting personal health and wellness. With those issues in mind, UTPA's vice president for enrollment and student services began exploring the possibility of a new wellness-recreation center approximately two years ago. In the fall of 2003, a task force of students, faculty, and staff was appointed to research the issue and develop a recommendation. The Wellness-Recreations Task Force surveyed more than 600 students and toured five newly constructed recreation centers. Task force members learned how a quality wellness-recreation center could facilitate the development of a healthier lifestyle and saw first hand how a new center could serve as a focal point for students and transform campus life. As a result, task force members voted unanimously to recommend the creation of a fee, not to exceed \$75 per full semester or \$35 per summer semester, to fund the planning, construction, and maintenance of a wellness-recreation center at UTPA. This fee would allow UTPA to build a center approximately 100,000 square feet in size at a cost of \$20 to \$24 million. After meeting with many student organizations and holding two campus forums, more than 85 percent of students voting in a campus referendum approved the creation of a wellness-recreation center.

UTPA currently has some recreation and fitness facilities, but those facilities are limited both in terms of resources and availability. Because the facilities are also used to meet athletic and kinesiology department needs, students who want to exercise or engage in other recreation activities are left with few hours to do so. UTPA's recreational facilities are open to students only 18 hours per week, which is fewer than The University of Texas at Austin's are open each day. In general, most universities the size of UTPA have their fitness facilities that are open approximately 100 hours per week.

As proposed, S.B. 527 provides for the imposition of a sports recreational wellness facility fee to finance, construct, operate, maintain, or improve a sports recreation and wellness facility at The University of Texas-Pan American.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter E, Chapter 54, Education Code, by adding Section 54.5421, as follows:

Sec. 54.5421. SPORTS RECREATION AND WELLNESS FACILITY FEE; THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN. Authorizes the board of regents of The University of Texas System to charge each student enrolled at the University of Texas-Pan American a sports recreation and wellness facility fee to finance, construct, operate, maintain, or improve sports recreation and wellness programs and facilities at the university. Prohibits the fee from exceeding \$75 for each semester of the regular term or for each summer session. Sets forth certain guidelines for the imposition, increase, and use of the fee.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or the 91st day after adjournment.