

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 2198
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S/C on Higher Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Community colleges offer educational opportunities to local communities at an accessible distance and affordable cost. They serve to strengthen the economy by responding to workforce training needs in their respective local industries through various associate degree programs. However, the technology growth and demand of today's industrial workplace has created a disparity between the need and supply of workforce education programs.

H.B. 1544, 78th Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, created a pilot project to allow selected public junior colleges to offer limited baccalaureate degrees in applied science and technology, providing the opportunity to examine the effectiveness and feasibility of a permanent program. Since that time, South Texas College, Brazosport College, and Midland College have invested substantial resources to meet the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation standards and are now accredited as Level II baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. The three pilot institutions have made long-term financial investments including an expansion of library resources and the hiring of doctorate-level faculty to teach the requisite courses. Lastly, all three colleges have provided reports and assessments regarding this program as required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). This program has allowed students to build upon their technical background and move forward to managerial and first-line supervisory positions.

H.B. 2198 removes the pilot status of these programs and makes the granting of baccalaureate degrees in applied science and technology at these schools permanent. This bill also authorizes THECB to authorize additional public junior colleges, if they meet all the stated prerequisites, to participate in the baccalaureate degree program.

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 Section 130.0012, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 130.0012. New heading: BACCALAUREATE DEGREE PROGRAMS. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to authorize, rather than to establish a pilot project to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of authorizing, public junior colleges to offer baccalaureate degree programs in the fields of applied science and applied technology under this section. Provides that offering a baccalaureate degree program under this section, rather than participation in the pilot program, does not otherwise alter the role and mission of a public junior college.

(b) Requires THECB to authorize baccalaureate degree programs at each public junior college that previously participated in a pilot project to offer such programs and requires THECB to authorize such programs at an additional junior college if THECB determines that it is in the best interest of this state for the public junior college to offer those programs after considering the criteria established by THECB under Subsection (e). Deletes existing text requiring THECB to operate the pilot project at three public junior colleges, as determined by THECB.

(c)-(d) Makes conforming changes.

(e) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires THECB to make certain considerations in determining whether a public junior college may offer baccalaureate degree programs and what baccalaureate degree programs are to be offered. Deletes existing text requiring junior colleges to make certain considerations in determining what baccalaureate degree programs are to be offered.

(f) Redesignated from existing Subsection (e). Makes a conforming change.

(g) Redesignated from existing Subsection (f). Makes conforming changes.

(h) Redesignated from existing Subsection (g). Makes conforming changes.

(i) Requires THECB to establish an application process to select additional public junior colleges that will be authorized to offer baccalaureate degree programs under this section. Deletes existing text requiring THECB to prepare a progress report on the pilot project not later than January 1, 2009, and to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the pilot project not later than January 1, 2011. Deletes existing text requiring THECB to deliver a copy of the report to certain persons. Deletes existing text setting forth certain prohibitions for public junior colleges to be instituted unless the authority to continue offering the baccalaureate degree programs is continued by the legislature.

(j) Deletes existing text requiring THECB to prescribe procedures to ensure that each public junior college that offers a degree program under the pilot project informs each student who enrolls in the degree program of the nature of the pilot project, including the limited duration of the project. Deletes existing text providing that this section expires January 1, 2020. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to establish the application process required by Section 130.0012(i), Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than January 1, 2009.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2007.