

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1502
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S/C on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Current law requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a master plan for higher education which is to be reviewed and revised every five years. Texas currently has a master plan, but no requirement for a strategic plan to specify the actions necessary to meet the broader goals of the master plan. Although the state has a master plan for higher education required by statute, it does not specify the collaborative and individual strategies the state and institutions of higher education must undertake to fulfill the goals of the master plan.

As proposed, S.B. 1502 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a master plan and report on progress and recommendations related to it to the legislature at least every other year. The legislation also requires development of a strategic plan to support the master plan.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.051, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.051, Education Code, by amending Subsections (a-1), (a-2), (a-3), and (e) and adding Subsections (a-4) and (a-5), as follows:

(a-1) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) to develop a long-range statewide, rather than a five-year, master plan for higher education to provide information and guidance to policy makers to ensure that institutions of higher education meet the current and future needs of each region of this state for higher education services and that adequate higher education services at all levels are reasonably and equally available to the residents of each region of this state. Requires the plan to project the status of higher education in this state for future five-year intervals and to consider, rather than take into account, the resources of private institutions of higher education in this state. Makes a conforming and nonsubstantive change.

(a-2) Requires the board, in developing the master plan, to examine existing undergraduate, graduate, professional, and research programs provided by institutions of higher education and identify the geographic areas of this state that, as a result of current population or projected population growth, distance from other educational resources, economic trends, or other factors, have or are reasonably likely to have in the future significantly greater need for higher education services than the services currently provided in the area by existing institutions of higher education. Requires the board to also consider the higher education services provided by private and independent institutions of higher education in developing the plan. Requires the board to identify as specifically as practicable the programs or fields of study for which an area has or is projected to have a significant unmet need for services. Requires the board, in determining the need for higher education services in an area, to consider the educational attainment of the current population and the extent to which residents from the area attend institutions of higher education outside of the area or do not attend institutions of higher education. Requires the board to include in the plan specific recommendations, including alternative recommendations, for administrative or legislative action to address an area's unmet need for higher education services as efficiently as possible. Requires the

board, not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, to deliver to the governor, lieutenant governor, and legislature a report of the current master plan developed under this section.

(a-3) Redesignated from existing Subsection (a-2). Makes conforming changes and a nonsubstantive change.

(a-4) Requires the board to adopt a strategic plan to guide the implementation of the master plan and the use of state resources in the implementation of the master plan. Requires the strategic plan to identify and incorporate strategies to be used by the board and each institution of higher education to implement the master plan, other strategies necessary to implement the master plan, and strategies for maximizing the use of state resources to implement the master plan and to make specific recommendations regarding higher education in the different regions of the state. Requires the board to notify each institution of higher education of all strategies for implementing the plan.

(a-5) Redesignated from existing Subsection (a-3). Requires the board, in the biennial report, to assess the state's progress in meeting the goals stated in the master plan developed under this section and to recommend legislative action to assist the state in meeting those goals. Makes conforming changes.

(e) Requires the board by rule to adopt criteria for the addition of a new department, school, or degree or certificate program by an institution of higher education

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 61.059(a) and (i-1), Education Code, to make certain conforming changes.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0818, as follows:

Sec. 61.0818. IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONS AS COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES OF THE FIRST CLASS. (a) Requires the board to establish a system for designating a general academic teaching institution as a comprehensive research university of the first class and to prescribe criteria to determine whether a general academic teaching institution should be assigned that designation. Requires the board to determine which general academic teaching institutions merit the designation and to periodically review that determination.

(b) Requires the board, in prescribing the criteria for purposes of Subsection (a), to consider the criteria used by generally recognized college and university classification systems to identify those universities in the highest classification or ranking. Requires the board to specifically consider whether to prescribe criteria based on certain factors.

(c) Requires the board, in prescribing the criteria for purposes of Subsection (a), to include any criteria the commissioner of higher education considers appropriate to achieve the purposes of this section.

(d) Requires the board to administer this section with the assistance of an advisory committee composed of at least five but not more than 15 higher education experts or scholars from any state. Requires the commissioner of higher education to select the members of the advisory committee. Provides that Chapter 2110 (State Agency Advisory Committees), Government Code, does not apply to the advisory committee.

(e) Requires the board, not later than October 1, 2006, to establish the initial criteria and make its initial determinations under this section and report the board's actions to each legislative standing committee and subcommittee with primary jurisdiction over higher education. Provides that this subsection expires January 1, 2007.

SECTION 4. Repealer: Section 61.051(i) (Coordination of Institutions of Public Higher Education) and 61.056 (Review of Legislation Establishing Additional Institutions), Education Code.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.