

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 85
By: McClendon
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There is a significant gap between the percentage of Hispanics and African Americans in Texas medical schools and their percentage in the population at large. This gap has serious effects on public health. Many studies have shown that a lack of diversity among health care providers results in less effective physician-patient communication, and delayed physician visitation, which causes undue progression of serious conditions and preventable diseases.

Projections show that Texas must have an educational “pipeline” producing 150 or more qualified minority applicants to Texas medical schools per year in order to meet the state’s growing needs. Currently, the “pipeline” is producing about 40 such students per year.

To bolster student interest in science and medicine, and to increase the number of “qualified” applicants to Texas medical schools, CSHB 85 would establish an undergraduate Medical Academy at Prairie View A&M University. The academy would serve as a state-wide magnet for students interested in medicine and provide intensive preparation for the medical school application process. The Academy would interact and work closely with medical schools within the state to keep abreast of the skills and knowledge that they are seeking in their applicants.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee’s opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

CSHB 85 amends Subchapter B, Chapter 87, Education Code, by adding Section 87.108, to establish the Prairie View A&M Undergraduate Medical Academy at Prairie View A&M University. The bill authorizes the board of regents of The Texas A&M University to organize, control, and manage the academy, and to approve the employment of personnel by and the operating budget of the academy. The bill provides that an employee of the academy is an employee of Prairie View A&M University. Provides that the purpose of the academy is to prepare students for medical school.

CSHB 85 provides that a student is eligible to apply for admission to the academy if the student is enrolled in the Prairie View A&M University with a major that requires completion of the prescribed core of basic science and mathematics courses needed as a foundation preparation for gaining admission into medical study at an accredited medical school in the United States, has completed at least one year of undergraduate college-level or university level courses approved by the academy, has demonstrated an interest in a medical career, and has met the academic achievement standards established for the academy by the academy’s admissions committee in the student’s undergraduate courses.

CSHB 85 requires the academy to provide academic and career counseling, faculty mentorship, enriched undergraduate courses designed to strengthen academic preparation, including preparation for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), preparation for the MCAT and instruction in

standardized testing techniques, long distance educational technology to allow interactive participation with medical schools, visitation to medical school educational sites, and visitation of medical school faculty to the academy for enrichment purposes.

CSHB 85 requires that a student admitted to the academy enter into an agreement with the university under which the student agrees to maintain the student's eligibility for continued enrollment and to repay any scholarships or stipend the student receives in connection with enrollment in the academy if the student fails to apply to medical school in Texas and enrolls in a medical school outside of the Texas or declines an offer to attend medical school in Texas and enrolls in a medical school outside of Texas.

The bill provides that the academy shall consult with medical schools in Texas to ensure that its curriculum and methods are consistent with current medical school needs and requirements. The bill authorizes the academy to enter into cooperative programs, as appropriate, with medical schools in Texas to achieve the academy's goals. The bill requires the academy to incorporate into its curriculum, current medical school educational practices, such as small group tutorials using problem-based instruction. The bill provides that the university shall enhance the facilities of the university as necessary to achieve the purposes of the academy.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

The committee substitute provides that for a student to be eligible to apply for admission to the academy, the student must be enrolled in the Prairie View A&M University with a major that requires completion of the prescribed core of basic science and mathematics courses needed as a foundation preparation for gaining admission into medical study at an accredited medical school in the United States, rather than just being enrolled in the Prairie View A&M College of Science. The substitute provides that the academy shall provide preparation and test taking skills for the Medical College Admissions Test. The substitute requires a student admitted to the academy to enter into an agreement with the university under which the student agrees to maintain the student's eligibility for continued enrollment, and to repay any scholarships or stipend the student receives in connection with enrollment if the student fails to apply to medical school in Texas and enrolls in a medical school outside of Texas, or declines an offer to attend medical school in Texas and enrolls in a medical school outside of Texas. The substitute provides that the university shall enhance the facilities of the university as necessary to achieve the purposes of the academy.