

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 944
By: King
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas is home to many well qualified applicants, but due to such discrepancies in admission standards, many universities demand higher scores, GED requirements, and additional tests above and beyond what is expected from the traditional education backgrounds.

There are varying degrees of standards consistently applied by different institutions of higher education for private and home school applicants compared to their traditionally educated counterparts. For example, at the University of Texas applicants are required to show proficiency in three SAT-II subject areas (mathematics, writing, and a third test of their own choice); a copy of GED results, if available, and a written statement of education goals to be submitted with the application.

At the University of Houston, accredited school graduates with a GPA as low as 2.5 may be accepted with an 820 SAT score or an 18 ACT score. Unaccredited school graduates are required to have a minimum 1100 SAT score or 26 ACT score and an individual review.

At North Texas University, an unaccredited school graduate is placed in the individual review process along with accredited school graduates, in the 4th quarter of their graduating class.

Home school graduates score consistently 5% above the national average on the ACT college entrance exam and Texas home school graduates matched those numbers in 2001 reports. They also score 80 points above the national average on the SAT college entrance exam. These graduates taking the ACT college entrance exam have increased by almost 300 percent since 1997.

In 1998, the Texas Administrative Code dealing with the Texas Workforce Commission and admission into proprietary schools {Section 807.2(21)} was modified to define secondary education as “successful completion of public, private or home schooling at the high school level or obtainment of a recognized high school equivalency credential.”

In 2001, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board issued a memorandum to all colleges and universities in Texas to explain that home school graduates are eligible for Texas grants and scholarships.

Under current law, Texas junior colleges must authorize dual credit courses to private school students on the same basis as public school students.

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

HB 944 amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Section 51.9241 to provide that because the State of Texas considers successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education to be the equivalent to graduating from a public high school, an institution of higher education must treat an

individual who has applied for undergraduate admission to the institution, and who presents evidence of successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education, according to the same general standards as other applicants for undergraduate admission who have graduated from a public high school. The bill provides definitions for an “institution of higher education,” and a “nontraditional secondary education.”

HB 944 prohibits an institution of higher education from requiring a person who has applied for undergraduate admission to the institution and who has presented evidence of having completed a nontraditional secondary education to obtain or submit evidence that the person has obtained a general education development certificate (GED), certificate of high school equivalency, or other credentials equivalent to a high school degree; or take an examination or comply with any other application or admission requirement not generally applicable to other applicants for undergraduate admission to the university.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2003.