

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
78R10578 JSA-D

H.B. 1544
By: Bonnen (Janek)
Subcommittee on Higher Education
5/8/2003
Engrossed

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

Currently, community colleges are well positioned to address the need for readily available applied baccalaureate opportunities. Their open-door admission policies, low tuition costs, and convenient locations would provide access to many more citizens wishing to pursue a bachelor's degree in workforce training areas. H.B. 1544 establishes a pilot project to allow certain public junior colleges to offer limited baccalaureate degrees in applied science and applied technology.

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 A, Chapter 130, Education Code, by adding Section 130.0012, as follows:

Sec. 130.0012. PILOT PROJECT: BACCALAUREATE DEGREE PROGRAMS. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) 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. Provides that participation in the pilot project does not otherwise alter the role and mission of a public junior college.

(b) Requires THECB to operate the pilot project at certain public junior colleges.

(c) Requires a public junior college participating in the pilot project to meet all applicable accreditation requirements of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

(d) Prohibits a public junior college participating in the pilot project from offering more than five baccalaureate degree programs under the project at any time. Provides that the degree programs are subject to the continuing approval of THECB. Requires the junior college and THECB, in determining what baccalaureate degree programs are to be offered, to consider certain factors.

(e) Requires each public junior college that offers a baccalaureate degree program under the pilot project to enter into an articulation agreement with one or more general academic teaching institutions to ensure that students enrolled in the degree program have an opportunity to complete the degree if the public junior college ceases to offer the degree program. Authorizes THECB to require a general academic teaching institution that offers a comparable degree program to enter into an articulation agreement with the public junior college as provided by this subsection.

(f) Requires THECB, in its recommendations to the legislature relating to state funding

for public junior colleges, to recommend that a public junior college receive substantially the same state support for junior-level and senior-level courses offered under the pilot project as that provided to a general academic teaching institution for substantially similar courses. Requires THECB, in determining the contact hours attributable to students enrolled in a junior-level or senior-level course offered under the pilot project used to determine a public junior college's proportionate share of state appropriations under Section 130.003, to weigh those contact hours as necessary to provide the junior college the appropriate level of state support to the extent state funds for those courses are included in the appropriations. Provides that this subsection does not prohibit the legislature from directly appropriating state funds to support junior-level and senior-level courses offered under the pilot project.

(g) Requires each public junior college participating in the pilot project to prepare a biennial report on the operation and effectiveness of the junior college's baccalaureate degree programs offered under the project and to deliver a copy of the report to THECB in the form and at the time determined by THECB.

(h) Requires THECB, not later than January 1, 2009, to prepare a progress report on the pilot project. Requires THECB, not later than January 1, 2011, to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the pilot project, including any recommendations for legislative action regarding the offering of baccalaureate degree programs by public junior colleges. Requires THECB to deliver a copy of each report to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chair of the standing committee of each house of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher education.

(i) Prohibits a public junior college, unless the authority to continue offering the baccalaureate degree programs is continued by the legislature, from performing certain acts.

(j) Requires 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 its limited duration, and the articulation agreement entered into under Subsection (e) for the student's degree program.

(k) Provides that this section expires January 1, 2020.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2003.