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H.B. No. 1544

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a pilot project to allow select public junior colleges to offer certain baccalaureate degrees.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 130, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 130.0012 to read as follows:

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

(b) The coordinating board shall operate the pilot project at the following public junior colleges:

(1) Brazosport College;

(2) El Centro College of the Dallas County Community College District;

(3) Midland College;

(4) North Harris Montgomery Community College District; and

(5) South Texas Community College.

(c) A public junior college participating in the pilot project must meet all applicable accreditation requirements of the

1 Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and
2 Schools.

3 (d) A public junior college participating in the pilot
4 project may not offer more than five baccalaureate degree programs
5 under the project at any time. The degree programs are subject to
6 the continuing approval of the coordinating board. In determining
7 what baccalaureate degree programs are to be offered, the junior
8 college and the coordinating board shall consider:

9 (1) the need for the degree programs in the region
10 served by the junior college;

11 (2) how those degree programs would complement the
12 other programs and course offerings of the junior college;

13 (3) whether those degree programs would unnecessarily
14 duplicate the degree programs offered by other institutions of
15 higher education; and

16 (4) the ability of the junior college to support the
17 program and the adequacy of the junior college's facilities,
18 faculty, administration, libraries, and other resources.

19 (e) Each public junior college that offers a baccalaureate
20 degree program under the pilot project must enter into an
21 articulation agreement with one or more general academic teaching
22 institutions to ensure that students enrolled in the degree program
23 have an opportunity to complete the degree if the public junior
24 college ceases to offer the degree program. The coordinating board
25 may require a general academic teaching institution that offers a
26 comparable degree program to enter into an articulation agreement
27 with the public junior college as provided by this subsection.

1 (f) In its recommendations to the legislature relating to
2 state funding for public junior colleges, the coordinating board
3 shall recommend that a public junior college receive substantially
4 the same state support for junior-level and senior-level courses
5 offered under the pilot project as that provided to a general
6 academic teaching institution for substantially similar courses.
7 In determining the contact hours attributable to students enrolled
8 in a junior-level or senior-level course offered under the pilot
9 project used to determine a public junior college's proportionate
10 share of state appropriations under Section 130.003, the
11 coordinating board shall weigh those contact hours as necessary to
12 provide the junior college the appropriate level of state support
13 to the extent state funds for those courses are included in the
14 appropriations. This subsection does not prohibit the legislature
15 from directly appropriating state funds to support junior-level and
16 senior-level courses offered under the pilot project.

17 (g) Each public junior college participating in the pilot
18 project shall prepare a biennial report on the operation and
19 effectiveness of the junior college's baccalaureate degree
20 programs offered under the project and shall deliver a copy of the
21 report to the coordinating board in the form and at the time
22 determined by the coordinating board.

23 (h) Not later than January 1, 2009, the coordinating board
24 shall prepare a progress report on the pilot project. Not later
25 than January 1, 2011, the coordinating board shall prepare a report
26 on the effectiveness of the pilot project, including any
27 recommendations for legislative action regarding the offering of

1 baccalaureate degree programs by public junior colleges. The
2 coordinating board shall deliver a copy of each report to the
3 governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of
4 representatives, and the chair of the standing committee of each
5 house of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher
6 education.

7 (i) Unless the authority to continue offering the
8 baccalaureate degree programs is continued by the legislature, a
9 public junior college may not:

10 (1) enroll a new student in a baccalaureate degree
11 program under the pilot project after the 2011 fall semester;

12 (2) offer junior-level or senior-level courses for
13 those degree programs after the 2015 fall semester, unless the
14 coordinating board authorizes the college to offer those courses;
15 or

16 (3) award a baccalaureate degree under the pilot
17 project after the 2015 fall semester, unless the coordinating board
18 approves the awarding of the degree.

19 (j) The coordinating board shall prescribe procedures to
20 ensure that each public junior college that offers a degree program
21 under the pilot project informs each student who enrolls in the
22 degree program of:

23 (1) the nature of the pilot project, including the
24 limited duration of the project; and

25 (2) the articulation agreement entered into under
26 Subsection (e) for the student's degree program.

27 (k) This section expires January 1, 2020.

1 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
2 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
3 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
4 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
5 Act takes effect September 1, 2003.