

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 276  
By: Staples  
Higher Education  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Currently, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UTHSCT) is the only one of the 15 University of Texas components that does not issue degrees. The state is not fully maximizing its investment of millions of dollars over the last 26 years. UTHSCT has collaborated with Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) since 1995-1996 in two graduate degree programs: (1) biotechnology; and (2) environmental science. In addition, UTHSCT has collaborated with Texas A&M University in a graduate degree program in public health (although this program is currently not active). UTHSCT's name is not listed on any of these diplomas.

UTHSCT also offers training in various allied health and medical programs, serving as a clinical site for nursing and allied health disciplines through agreements with other institutions of higher education. UTHSCT serves as a clinical rotation site for University of North Texas (UNT) and other medical schools, as well as with The University of Texas at Tyler (UT-Tyler) and Tyler Junior College (TJC) schools of nursing. In addition, UTHSCT offers continuing medical and nursing education programs, as well as professional development programs on-site and through distance learning. UTHSCT does not currently have the authority to grant degrees, but seeks to offer baccalaureate and graduate degrees, either through collaborations or independently. The UT System, UT-Tyler, and the local community colleges have all indicated their support of this initiative.

The UT System, UT-Tyler, SFA, and TJC combine their resources and faculty to provide administrative, financial, and instructional support for UTHSCT. Due to the dual training role, UTHSCT is pursuing joint-degree authority with collaborating institutions of higher education through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Joint degree granting authority will formally recognize UTHSCT's role in training students in the health science fields. In the future, UTHSCT is also interested in offering degrees in the allied health and related health science fields that will offer more opportunities to the citizens of East Texas, as well provide well educated and trained professionals to the health-related employers in East Texas. These professionals will also help address job shortages in certain allied health and related health science fields in this region.

As proposed, S.B. 276 authorizes the UTHSCT to offer courses and degree programs in allied health and related health sciences fields and are subject to approval by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

### **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**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 74.602, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 74.602. New heading: PURPOSES OF THE HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER; DEGREE PROGRAMS. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text.

(b) Authorizes The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler to provide education and training in allied health and related health sciences fields, and for

that purpose to prescribe courses and conduct professional or other degree programs in those fields. Authorizes the center to prescribe a course or conduct a degree program jointly or in collaboration with any other appropriate educational entity or institution.

(c) Provides that the degree programs to be offered under Subsection (b) are subject to approval by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

SECTION 2. Effective date.

**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 on the 91st day after the last day of the legislative session.