

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2198
By: Flores
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Community colleges provide an invaluable service by offering educational opportunities to their local communities at an accessible distance and affordable cost. They serve to strengthen the economy by responding to the workforce training needs of their respective local industries through many outstanding associate degree programs. However, the technology growth and demands of today's industrial workplace have created a disparity between the need and supply of workforce education programs.

During the 78th legislature, HB 1544 was passed, creating a pilot project to allow select public junior colleges to offer limited baccalaureate degrees in applied Science and Technology, providing the opportunity to examine the effectiveness and feasibility of a permanent program. Since that time, South Texas College, Brazosport College, and Midland College have invested substantial financial resources to meet the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation standards and now are accredited as Level II baccalaureate degree granting institutions. The three pilot institutions have made long-term financial investments including an expansion of library resources, and hiring of doctorate level faculty to teach the requisite courses. Lastly, all three colleges have provided all reports and assessments as required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The program has allowed students to build upon their technical background and move forward to managerial and first line supervisory positions.

The purpose of the bill is to remove the pilot status of the schools and make the granting of baccalaureate degrees in applied Science and technology permanent. It also will allow the coordinating board to authorize additional public junior colleges, if they meet all the stated prerequisites, to participate in the baccalaureate degree program.

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: Section 130.0012 of the Education Code is amended by eliminating existing language and adding additional language relating to baccalaureate degree programs.

Removes the pilot project status of the three junior colleges that previously had participated in the program and makes it permanent. Authorizes the coordinating board, upon meeting of the criteria established, to add additional public junior colleges to the baccalaureate degree program if it is in the best interest of the state. Creates conforming language.

SECTION 2: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall establish the application process required, as added by this Act, not later than January 1, 2009.

SECTION 3: Effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2007.

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