

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1234
By: Zaffirini
Higher Education
Committee Report (Amended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The state's *Closing the Gaps by 2015* plan seeks to increase participation by Texas residents in higher education, success rates for degrees granted, the number of nationally recognized services and programs, and the amount of federal science and engineering research funding for Texas institutions of higher education. In order to support such ambitious goals, the state must develop a strategic plan that will make the most effective use of limited state resources, foster cooperation among all institutions, and include input from all relevant stakeholders.

The current statutory requirement of a five-year master plan only has general language regarding strategies and implementation of the five-year plan, relating to the powers and duties of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

S.B. 1234 requires that THECB's master plan be geared toward preparing Texas college students for participating in the public affairs of the state as well as the global economy. This bill requires the master plan to define the missions and roles of public institutions of higher education in a way consistent with state needs and goals; establish more effective methods for funding higher education; establish a coherent long-term financial aid strategy that takes into account both needs and merit; strengthen collaboration between two-year and four-year institutions; and develop and institutionalize long-term collaboration between primary, secondary, and higher education.

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 Sections 61.051(a-1) and (a-2) of the Education Code. Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop a master plan for higher education in Texas for a period of years determined by THECB rather than a five year plan to ensure that students enrolled at institutions of higher education are sufficiently prepared to meet the challenges associated with participation in the public affairs of the state and in the global economy. Requires the plan to take into account the resources of private or independent institutions in Texas and requires it to include certain information, considerations, analyses, and recommendations. Makes conforming changes.

SECTION 2: Amends Sections 61.059(a) and (i-1) of the Education Code, to make conforming changes.

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.

EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENTS

Committee Amendment number 1 strikes "and" in SECTION 1, in added Subdivision (12), Subsection (a-1), Section 61.051 of the Education Code and adds "requirement" in SECTION 1, in added Subdivision (13), Subsection (a-1), Section 61.051 of the Education Code. Provides additional language requiring the consideration of the effectiveness of existing family asset-building programs related to higher education, including individual college savings plans, prepaid tuition plans, and universal children's savings accounts, and the degree to which such a programs contribute to each of certain factors provided in relation to study at a public or private institution of higher education.