

By: Rose

H.B. No. 2650

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation and administration of the teacher,  
engineer, or professional nurse undergraduate education  
scholarship program.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding  
Subchapter FF to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER FF. TEACHER, ENGINEER, OR PROFESSIONAL  
NURSE UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Sec. 61.9831. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Professional nursing" has the meaning assigned by  
Section 301.002, Occupations Code.

(2) "Professional nursing program" means an  
educational program for preparing students for initial licensure as  
registered nurses.

Sec. 61.9832. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; AMOUNT OF SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) In accordance with this subchapter and board rules, the board  
shall establish and administer a program to award scholarships to  
students who:

(1) are enrolled at institutions of higher education  
in any of the following undergraduate programs:

(A) educator preparation programs;

(B) professional nursing programs; or

(C) programs leading to a degree in engineering;

1 and

2 (2) agree to be employed in this state for a specified  
3 period:

4 (A) as teachers in public schools;

5 (B) as engineers; or

6 (C) in the field of professional nursing.

7 (b) The amount of a scholarship under this subchapter for an  
8 academic year is equal to the total amount of tuition and mandatory  
9 fees that the institution of higher education in which the  
10 scholarship recipient is enrolled charges the recipient for that  
11 academic year for semester credit hours for which the recipient may  
12 use the scholarship to pay tuition and mandatory fees as provided by  
13 Subsection (c).

14 (c) A student may use a scholarship under this subchapter  
15 only to pay tuition and mandatory fees for a semester credit hour  
16 that is required for completion of the degree program in which the  
17 student is enrolled.

18 Sec. 61.9833. ELIGIBILITY. (a) To be eligible to receive  
19 a scholarship under this subchapter, a person must:

20 (1) have graduated with a cumulative grade point  
21 average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent  
22 from:

23 (A) a public high school in this state; or

24 (B) a private high school in this state that is  
25 accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization;

26 (2) be enrolled at an institution of higher education  
27 in one of the following undergraduate programs:

1           (A) an educator preparation program accredited  
2 by the State Board for Educator Certification;

3           (B) a program with an engineering or related  
4 science curriculum described by Section 1001.302(a)(1)(A) or (B),  
5 Occupations Code; or

6           (C) a professional nursing program approved by  
7 the board or the Board of Nurse Examiners; and

8           (3) enter into an agreement with the board as provided  
9 by Section 61.9834.

10           (b) If in any year the amount of money available for  
11 scholarships under this subchapter is insufficient to award a  
12 scholarship to each eligible applicant or if there are more  
13 eligible applicants than the number of scholarships authorized by  
14 this section, the board shall establish criteria to determine which  
15 eligible applicants will be granted scholarships as the board  
16 determines appropriate to further the purposes of this subchapter.

17           Sec. 61.9834. AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS. (a) To qualify for a  
18 scholarship under this subchapter, a person must enter into a  
19 written agreement with the board as provided by this section. The  
20 agreement must:

21           (1) specify the conditions the person must satisfy to  
22 receive the initial scholarship award for the first academic year  
23 the person is enrolled in a degree program described by Section  
24 61.9833(a)(2);

25           (2) specify the conditions the person must satisfy to  
26 receive the scholarship award in any subsequent academic year the  
27 person is enrolled in the degree program, including requiring the

1 person to:

2 (A) complete at least 75 percent of the semester  
3 credit hours attempted by the person in the most recent academic  
4 year, for a total of 24 semester credit hours or more; and

5 (B) maintain a cumulative grade point average of  
6 at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on all  
7 coursework attempted at institutions of higher education, if the  
8 person is enrolled in any academic year after the person's first  
9 academic year;

10 (3) require the person to remain continuously enrolled  
11 at an institution of higher education in a degree program described  
12 by Section 61.9833(a)(2);

13 (4) require the person to earn a baccalaureate degree  
14 at an institution of higher education through completion of a  
15 degree program described by Section 61.9833(a)(2);

16 (5) require the person to obtain, within the period  
17 prescribed by board rule, appropriate certification or licensure to  
18 be employed in this state, as applicable:

19 (A) as a teacher;

20 (B) as an engineer; or

21 (C) in the field of professional nursing;

22 (6) require the person to accept, not later than the  
23 first anniversary of the date the person obtains the appropriate  
24 certification or licensure, an offer of full-time employment in  
25 this state, as applicable:

26 (A) to teach in a public school in this state;

27 (B) to work as an engineer; or

1                   (C) to engage in professional nursing;

2                   (7) beginning on the date the person first becomes  
3 employed in the field after obtaining the appropriate certification  
4 or licensure, require the person to complete five consecutive years  
5 of full-time employment in this state, as applicable:

6                   (A) as a teacher in a public school;

7                   (B) as an engineer; or

8                   (C) in the field of professional nursing;

9                   (8) provide that any scholarship award the person  
10 receives under this subchapter constitutes a loan until the person:

11                   (A) subject to Section 61.9835, satisfies the  
12 requirements of Subdivision (7) and any other applicable conditions  
13 of the agreement; or

14                   (B) is excused from the repayment obligation in  
15 accordance with law; and

16                   (9) require the person to sign a promissory note  
17 acknowledging the conditional nature of the scholarship award  
18 received and promising to repay the full amount of that assistance  
19 plus applicable interest and reasonable collection costs if the  
20 person does not satisfy the applicable conditions and is not  
21 excused from the repayment obligation in accordance with law.

22                   (b) The board shall determine the terms of the promissory  
23 note required by Subsection (a)(9). To the extent practicable, the  
24 terms must be the same as those applicable to state or federally  
25 guaranteed student loans made at the same time.

26                   Sec. 61.9835. EXCEPTIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP OBLIGATIONS. (a)  
27 A person is not considered to be in violation of the course load and

1 continuous enrollment obligations in the agreement described by  
2 Section 61.9834 if the person is unable to complete the appropriate  
3 percentage or number of semester credit hours, remain continuously  
4 enrolled in the person's degree program, or remain continuously  
5 employed as required by Section 61.9834(a)(7) solely because of a  
6 hardship or other good cause, as determined by the board, including  
7 for a reason specified by Subsection (b)(2) or (3).

8 (b) A person is not considered to be in violation of the  
9 employment obligation in the agreement described by Section 61.9834  
10 during any period in which the person:

11 (1) is pursuing a full-time course of study:

12 (A) related to the field of teaching,  
13 engineering, or professional nursing, as applicable;

14 (B) offered by a public or private institution of  
15 higher education in this state; and

16 (C) approved by the appropriate certification,  
17 licensing, or higher education authority;

18 (2) is serving on active duty as a member of the armed  
19 forces of the United States, including as a member of a reserve  
20 force or National Guard called to active duty;

21 (3) is temporarily totally disabled for a period not  
22 to exceed 36 months as established by the affidavit of a qualified  
23 physician;

24 (4) is unable to secure employment for a period not to  
25 exceed 12 months because of care required by a disabled spouse or  
26 child;

27 (5) is seeking and unable to find, for a single period

1 not to exceed 12 months, full-time employment in the applicable  
2 field; or

3 (6) satisfies the provisions of any other employment  
4 exception adopted by the board.

5 (c) A person is excused from the repayment obligation in a  
6 promissory note described by Section 61.9834 if:

7 (1) the person becomes permanently totally disabled as  
8 established by the affidavit of a qualified physician; or

9 (2) the board waives repayment in the case of extreme  
10 hardship to the person.

11 Sec. 61.9836. GRANTS, GIFTS, AND DONATIONS. In addition to  
12 money appropriated by the legislature, the board may solicit and  
13 accept grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private  
14 source for the purposes of this subchapter.

15 Sec. 61.9837. RULES. (a) The board shall adopt rules to  
16 administer this subchapter, including rules:

17 (1) providing for the manner in which a student may  
18 apply for a scholarship; and

19 (2) providing for notification of the scholarship  
20 program under this subchapter to students enrolled at an  
21 institution of higher education in a program described by Section  
22 61.9833(a)(2).

23 (b) The board shall distribute a copy of the rules adopted  
24 under this section to each institution of higher education  
25 providing a program described by Section 61.9833(a)(2).

26 SECTION 2. Not later than December 31, 2007, the Texas  
27 Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules for the

1 undergraduate education scholarship program under Subchapter FF,  
2 Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act.

3 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
4 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
5 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
6 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
7 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.