

By: Morrison

H.C.R. No. 159

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating  
2 Board (THECB) issued its 15-year master plan for higher education  
3 as required by statute; *Closing the Gaps by 2015* includes four  
4 specific goals relating to increasing participation rates,  
5 achieving higher levels of identifiable student success,  
6 increasing the number of nationally recognized programs at Texas  
7 colleges and universities, and increasing the level of federal  
8 science and engineering research funding; and

9 WHEREAS, While Texas has made some progress toward achieving  
10 the benchmarks established in *Closing the Gaps*, a July 2006 THECB  
11 progress report acknowledges recent trends that suggest it is  
12 unlikely the goals will be accomplished by 2015; the rate of growth  
13 in enrollment has been declining among most ethnic groups since the  
14 fall of 2002, and institutional enrollment targets are well short  
15 of the state's 2010 goal--by 50,000 students overall and by 100,000  
16 for Hispanic students; and

17 WHEREAS, Moreover, the number of bachelor's degrees and  
18 technology-related degrees awarded fell short of the 2005 targets,  
19 and the number of mathematics and science teaching certificates  
20 awarded actually declined between 2000 and 2005; while Texas has  
21 made gains in securing federal research funding, THECB reports that  
22 the significant gap between California and New York and Texas  
23 remains essentially unchanged, both in terms of dollar amounts  
24 awarded and in the percentage of total federal funding awarded for

1 science and engineering research and development; and

2 WHEREAS, The consequences of failing to meet the benchmarks  
3 established by THECB are considerable; in compiling data for its  
4 annual Global Competitiveness Report, the World Economic Forum  
5 (WEF) assigns significant value to a nation's higher education  
6 system as one of the key indicators of a country's ability to  
7 sustain growth and remain economically competitive; the WEF takes  
8 particular interest in the quality of science and mathematics  
9 education and advises that today's global economy mandates a  
10 well-educated, specially trained workforce; and

11 WHEREAS, Unfortunately, the 2006-2007 WEF report indicates  
12 that the United States' economic competitiveness fell  
13 significantly over the last year, with this decline due in part to  
14 low education standards; coupled with the THECB *Closing the Gaps*  
15 progress report, this assessment from the WEF makes it clear that  
16 Texas must improve its pursuit of educational excellence to better  
17 prepare the workforce of the future and avoid a decline in its own  
18 economic competitiveness; and

19 WHEREAS, To meet these objectives, Texas must develop a  
20 framework of state policy that encourages institutions of higher  
21 education to focus on their core missions, engage regional civic,  
22 business, and academic leaders to address local and statewide  
23 economic priorities, and establish globally recognized centers of  
24 excellence in education; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas  
26 hereby requests that the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the  
27 speaker of the house of representatives create a select commission

1 on higher education and global competitiveness to draft a Texas  
2 Compact that reflects a long-term vision and step-by-step plan to  
3 attain the following goals by 2020:

4 (1) educating the population of Texas to levels  
5 comparable to the highest performing competitor states and nations;

6 (2) achieving global recognition for Texas public  
7 colleges and universities for excellence in their core missions and  
8 for innovations that strengthen the state's economy and improve the  
9 quality of life for its citizens; and

10 (3) serving different regions of Texas in ways that  
11 respond to each region's unique higher education needs; and, be it  
12 further

13 RESOLVED, That the commission examine the following issues  
14 related to global competitiveness in educational attainment:

15 (1) current trends in educational attainment in Texas  
16 and competitor states and nations and the potential impact of those  
17 trends on the state's long-term economic competitiveness and  
18 quality of life;

19 (2) objectives and accountability measures related to  
20 the state's educational attainment goals, including performance  
21 benchmarks comparing the best performing programs in Texas with the  
22 best performing programs in competitor states and nations;

23 (3) enhancing regional support for higher education  
24 and strengthening the link between higher education and regional  
25 economic development goals;

26 (4) improving the number of Texas adults attaining  
27 postsecondary credentials and strengthening the role and

1 performance of Texas' community colleges;

2 (5) structuring higher education funding to reward  
3 student and institutional outcomes that are aligned with state and  
4 regional priorities;

5 (6) increasing the quantity, quality, and  
6 commercialization of university-based research;

7 (7) assessing long-term higher education capacity  
8 needs and creative approaches to meeting those needs;

9 (8) creating a policy research mechanism to track,  
10 analyze, and make recommendations to state policy makers based on  
11 the state's progress in achieving goals with respect to educational  
12 attainment and economic competitiveness; and

13 (9) the effect of tuition deregulation and higher  
14 tuition rates on participation in higher education, and whether  
15 tuition deregulation and higher tuition rates have adversely  
16 affected participation in higher education by minority or rural  
17 students; and, be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the commission be composed of 15 members, with  
19 a presiding officer elected by its members, to include:

20 (1) five members appointed by the governor;

21 (2) five members appointed by the lieutenant governor;

22 and

23 (3) five members appointed by the speaker of the house  
24 of representatives; and, be it further

25 RESOLVED, That in making appointments to the commission,  
26 efforts be made to include representatives from the business  
27 community and academia and other experts with interest in higher

1 education and current and future workforce needs and to include  
2 representatives that reflect the demographic diversity of this  
3 state; and, be it further

4       RESOLVED, That the commission submit a full report, including  
5 findings, recommendations, a plan and timeline for implementing the  
6 recommendations, and enabling legislation, to the governor and the  
7 legislature by November 1, 2008.