

By: Watson

S.B. No. 1772

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

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AN ACT

relating to establishing a commission to study and report on a long-range plan for higher education in this state.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter H, Chapter 51 Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.4011 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.4011. COMMISSION TO STUDY AND REPORT ON A LONG-RANGE PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. (a) A commission is established to conduct a study of issues relating to the higher education system in Texas and recommend a long-range plan for higher education that will meet the demands of a global economy and a growing and diverse population.

(b) The commission shall be composed of eighteen members as follows:

(1) a representative of each of the following entities, appointed by the commissioner of higher education not later than October 1, 2007:

(A) a representative of The University of Texas System;

(B) a representative of The Texas A&M University System;

(C) a representative of the University of Houston System;

(D) a representative of the University of North

1 Texas System;

2 (E) a representative of the Texas Tech University  
3 System;

4 (F) a representative of the Texas State  
5 University System;

6 (G) a representative of the Texas State Technical  
7 College System;

8 (H) a representative of the Texas Association of  
9 Community Colleges;

10 (I) a representative of the Independent Colleges  
11 and Universities of Texas;

12 (J) a student enrolled in a public senior college  
13 or university;

14 (K) a student enrolled in a community college in  
15 Texas;

16 (2) six other persons as follows, appointed not later  
17 than October 1, 2007:

18 (A) two members appointed by the governor who are  
19 not affiliated with a university system, at least one of whom has  
20 demonstrated leadership and success in business, with  
21 consideration for ethnic, racial, gender, and geographic  
22 diversity;

23 (B) two members appointed by the lieutenant  
24 governor who are not affiliated with a university system, at least  
25 one of whom has demonstrated leadership and success in business,  
26 with consideration for ethnic, racial, gender, and geographic  
27 diversity; and

1           (C) two members appointed by the speaker of the  
2 house of representatives who are not affiliated with a university  
3 system, at least one of whom has demonstrated leadership and  
4 success in business, with consideration for ethnic, racial, gender,  
5 and geographic diversity;

6           (3) the state demographer.

7           (c) The governor shall designate as the chair of the  
8 commission one of the commission members who is not affiliated with  
9 a university system, community college, or technical college.

10          (d) The commission may request assistance and information,  
11 other than confidential information relating to an identifiable  
12 individual, from any public institution of higher education or  
13 other state agency. An institution or other agency shall provide  
14 the assistance and information requested to the extent practicable.

15          (e) The expenses of the commission shall be paid in equal  
16 amounts from the contingent expense accounts of the senate and the  
17 house of representatives, or as otherwise agreed to by the  
18 lieutenant governor and speaker of the house. Members of the  
19 commission serve without compensation, but are entitled to  
20 reimbursement at of the member's travel expenses incurred in  
21 carrying out the commission's duties.

22          (f) The commission shall study the following issues:

23           (1) incentives and requirements for seamless student  
24 transitions between and among high schools, community and technical  
25 colleges, universities, and health-related institutions, including  
26 concurrent enrollment and dual credit;

27           (2) a method for better communication and coordination

1 between universities and the business community to create  
2 career-oriented pathways and to enhance curriculums that will  
3 benefit students and businesses and the overall economy of the  
4 state;

5 (3) the current and projected capacity concerns of The  
6 University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University in College  
7 Station, and methods for ensuring that these elite institutions of  
8 higher learning maintain their competitiveness with other flagship  
9 universities;

10 (4) the creation of additional flagship public  
11 research universities, including a method for determining where  
12 such universities should be located and ensuring that such  
13 universities admit a qualified and diverse student body. The  
14 commission shall consider a bidding process from Texas communities,  
15 including proposals from existing public or private universities or  
16 colleges, businesses, and other local entities, to determine where  
17 a new premier research, or flagship, university should be located;

18 (5) a method to identify the state universities'  
19 missions and areas of expertise and uniqueness and how universities  
20 can better coordinate with each other to further develop and  
21 enhance their respective missions;

22 (6) alternative methods of funding universities and  
23 community colleges, in particular whether and how research  
24 universities should be funded;

25 (7) review of the Texas Grant, Texas Educational  
26 Opportunity Grant, and Texas Equalization Grant programs and  
27 recommendations for a more efficient and effective system to ensure

1 that the maximum number of eligible students receive financial aid  
2 and a minimal number of students are burdened with debt when they  
3 leave higher education;

4 (8) a new component of the Texas Grant program to  
5 target students at the middle school level and ensure they commit to  
6 and succeed in a higher education program, including student  
7 contributions through work study; and

8 (g) The commission shall prepare a report, including  
9 findings, recommendations, and possible legislation, to the  
10 governor, lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house, and the  
11 coordinating board not later than October 1, 2008.

12 (h) This section expires January 1, 2009.

13 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
14 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
15 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
16 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
17 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.