

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1056
By: Morrison
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

University of Houston-Victoria (UHV) was established in 1973 when many upper-level universities were created to offer junior, senior, and graduate level programs and provided university access for students from the Coastal Bend region of Texas. When it became clear that upper-level status did not allow a university to reach its full potential in terms of enrollment and quality of learning experience, the upper-division model was abandoned nationally through the process of downward expansion, leaving only four such upper-level only universities remaining nationwide, including UHV.

All major internal and external stakeholder groups support the downward expansion of UHV. The University of Houston System board of regents chairman and the Victoria College (VC) board chairman created the Commission on Expanding Access to Higher Education to explore ways in which Victoria educational institutions could enhance student access and success in higher education in accordance with the goals identified in the state's plan for higher education, "Closing the Gaps." The 17-member commission, which included the UHV and VC presidents, the Victoria ISD superintendent, and community leaders, recommended unanimously the downward expansion of UHV. UHV and VC then created an affiliation and partnership agreement, approved by the governing boards of both institutions, that facilitates the downward expansion of UHV without adversely affecting VC and promotes ongoing partnerships between the two institutions to maximize educational opportunity for all students. UHV plans to use existing facilities and faculty and available internal resources to achieve downward expansion; no additional funds are currently being requested. Downward expansion can be achieved through a modification of UHV's enabling legislation, giving it the same status as all former upper-level universities. Such a change would enable UHV to reach its full capacity as a driver of social and economic progress for its region, stimulate growth at The Victoria College, better serve students, and help Texas fulfill the promise of access to higher education for all citizens

H.B. 1056 authorizes the downward expansion of UHV to include all undergraduate program levels.

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

H.B. 1056 amends the Education Code to expand the undergraduate course levels offered by the University of Houston-Victoria to include all undergraduate program levels rather than only the junior and senior programs to which the university currently is limited. The bill maintains the university's current offering of graduate level programs. The bill removes a provision relating to the enrollment of a student who successfully completes a minimum amount of course work at another college or university and is currently enrolled at another college or university.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.