

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
81R2394 JSA-D

S.B. 172
By: Shapiro
Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many students in Texas are interested in studying in particular fields, but too many times, they are forced to look elsewhere because a specific academic program they seek has a stronger reputation at an institution outside the state. The state should reward the development of areas of excellence by using incentives to encourage institutions to create premier programs that are recognized nationally and even internationally.

This bill betters those in-state reputations, keeping bright minds in Texas and developing academic areas of excellence so that they are the first choice for Texas' college bound students. Texas institutions can designate the specialty to recognize. Academic experts from outside the state will establish benchmarks of success to help the institutions reach top status in the programs they designate. When an academic area attains successive benchmarks, an increasing incentive award will be granted.

As proposed, S.B. 172 amends current law relating to financial incentives and other assistance to develop and maintain excellence in specific programs and fields of study at public institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.059, Education Code, by adding Subsection (o), as follows:

(o) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in addition to the other funding recommendations required by this section, to biennially determine the amount that THECB considers appropriate for purposes of providing funding under Section 61.0596 in the following state fiscal biennium to carry out the purposes of that section and to make recommendations to the governor and the Legislative Budget Board for funding those programs in that biennium. Authorizes THECB, to the extent THECB considers appropriate, to include funding to be provided under Section 61.0596 in the formulas established under this section.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0596, as follows:

Sec. 61.0596. INCENTIVE FUNDING FOR EXCELLENCE IN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND FIELDS. (a) Requires THECB to administer this section to encourage and assist institutions of higher education to develop and maintain specific programs or fields of study of the highest national rank or recognition for that type of program or field.

(b) Requires THECB, from money available for the purpose, to award incentive grants to institutions of higher education THECB considers to have demonstrated the greatest commitment to success in developing or improving a designated program or field of study toward attaining the highest national rank or recognition. Requires an institution to use money received under this section to

develop, improve, or maintain the quality of the program or field for which the grant is awarded.

(c) Authorizes an institution of higher education to designate only one program at a time for consideration for new funding under this section and to change its designation with the consent of THECB. Authorizes the institution, if THECB determines that an institution has met all applicable benchmarks for its designated program or field of study, to designate another program or field of study for consideration for new funding under this section.

(d) Requires THECB to establish a series of benchmarks applicable to each program or field of study designated by an institution of higher education under this section. Provides that the institution becomes eligible for funding for each benchmark THECB determines it has met. Requires THECB to establish the amount of funding for each benchmark met in a manner that provides an effective incentive and reasonable financial support to assist the institution of higher education in continuation of its efforts to meet the remaining benchmarks for its designated program or field.

(e) Requires THECB, unless THECB determines that a different number of benchmarks is appropriate, to establish three benchmarks for each designated program or field of study. Requires THECB to employ or contract with one or more persons who have relevant expertise and do not reside in this state to assist with the establishment of benchmarks and associated funding levels for each type of program or field of study designated by an institution of higher education under this section.

(f) Requires THECB to provide an appropriate amount of additional money, in addition to supporting the programs designated by institutions of higher education for consideration to receive funding under this section, from money available for the purpose, to assist institutions in maintaining the excellence of programs or fields of study that have achieved the highest national ranking or recognition for that type of program or field.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.