

By: Kolkhorst

H.B. No. 2746

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to the establishment of the School of Ethics, Western
3 Civilization, and American Traditions at The University of Texas at
4 Austin.

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

6 SECTION 1. Chapter 67, Education Code, is amended by adding
7 Subchapter E to read as follows:

8 SUBCHAPTER E. SCHOOL OF ETHICS, WESTERN CIVILIZATION, AND
9 AMERICAN TRADITIONS (SEWCAT)

10 Sec. 67.81. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

11 (1) "General academic teaching institution" has the
12 meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

13 (2) "School" means the School of Ethics, Western
14 Civilization, and American Traditions established under this
15 subchapter.

16 Sec. 67.82. LEGISLATIVE INTENT. It is the intent of the
17 legislature in establishing the School of Ethics, Western
18 Civilization, and American Traditions (SEWCAT) under this
19 subchapter:

20 (1) to foster an understanding among university
21 students and members of the general public regarding the
22 intellectual origins and traditions of our government and society;

23 (2) to build on the remarkable success of the Program
24 in Western Civilization and American Institutions at the university

1 by consolidating and rendering permanent that program;

2 (3) to lay the groundwork for the future
3 implementation of a new undergraduate degree program, the Bachelor
4 of Arts in Western Civilization and American Institutions, at the
5 university; and

6 (4) to establish a model of a standard curriculum in
7 Western civilization and American traditions that fosters the
8 thoughtful development of ethical character and civic
9 responsibility to be used by other general academic teaching
10 institutions in developing similar programs of study.

11 Sec. 67.83. ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL AS INTERDISCIPLINARY
12 UNIT OF UNIVERSITY. (a) The school is established as an
13 interdisciplinary academic unit of the university devoted to the
14 study of the Western intellectual tradition from antiquity to the
15 present in conjunction with the study of American institutions,
16 values, and principles.

17 (b) The school is a part of and under the direction and
18 control of the university.

19 Sec. 67.84. PROGRAMS AND COURSES. (a) The school shall
20 develop and offer students an interdisciplinary course of study in
21 Western civilization and American institutions and practices
22 designed to foster the thoughtful development of ethical character
23 and civic responsibility, including a sequence of six three-hour
24 courses, each covering one of the following topics:

25 (1) ancient philosophy and literature;

26 (2) ideas from the Bible;

27 (3) great works from the Middle Ages;

1 (4) classics of the Renaissance and the Age of
2 Enlightenment;

3 (5) the development of Western science and technology;
4 and

5 (6) classics of the American founding and development
6 of the American Republic.

7 (b) A student who completes the sequence of courses
8 described by Subsection (a) shall be considered by the university
9 to have satisfied 18 hours of core curriculum course work in the
10 following areas:

11 (1) three hours of communications;

12 (2) three hours of additional natural science;

13 (3) three hours of humanities;

14 (4) three hours of government;

15 (5) three hours of visual and performing arts; and

16 (6) three hours of any institutionally designated
17 optional or seminar course.

18 (c) A student who completes the sequence of courses
19 described by Subsection (a) in addition to 18 hours of
20 upper-division course work in the Western civilization (WCV) field
21 of study at the university shall be considered by the university to
22 have completed an undergraduate major in Western Ethics and
23 American Tradition for a bachelor of arts degree in the
24 university's College of Liberal Arts.

25 (d) Each course offered by the school must:

26 (1) be multidisciplinary;

27 (2) be based primarily on:

1 (A) a critical reading of the primary texts that
2 have shaped the tradition of Western civilization, including works
3 spanning a significant range of genres such as literature,
4 philosophy, religion, history, art, science, and technology; and

5 (B) a study of the institutions, ideals, and
6 principles of the United States and the development of the American
7 Republic;

8 (3) focus on developing a student's understanding of
9 the primary texts described by Subdivision (2)(A) that is based
10 primarily on the student's direct reading of those texts without
11 the introduction of external sources of interpretation or theory;

12 (4) employ the Western civilization (WCV) field of
13 study at the university; and

14 (5) be designed to engage students in exploring
15 enduring fundamental questions of profound ethical and
16 philosophical significance.

17 Sec. 67.85. SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF. The school may
18 recruit, hire, and supervise:

19 (1) postdoctoral teaching fellows, lecturers,
20 assistant instructors, and visiting and adjunct professors to teach
21 courses at the school in addition to the university's regular
22 tenure-track professors; and

23 (2) any necessary support staff.

24 Sec. 67.86. SPECIAL EVENTS AND OUTREACH. The school may
25 host events and other opportunities for students and faculty of the
26 university and members of the public to learn more about the
27 heritage of Western civilization and American history, including

1 lecture series, conferences, workshops, book clubs, student
2 organization activities of a scholarly, literary, and
3 philosophical nature, and summer institutes for graduate,
4 undergraduate, and high school students and for middle school and
5 high school teachers.

6 Sec. 67.87. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR; QUALIFICATIONS. The
7 university shall appoint a director for the school. To serve as
8 director, a person must have:

9 (1) earned the rank of full professor at the
10 university or another distinguished public or private institution
11 of higher education;

12 (2) significant, demonstrated expertise and a
13 national reputation in one or more fields relevant to the school;

14 (3) at least 20 years of experience as a highly
15 regarded undergraduate instructor;

16 (4) extensive experience in academic administration;

17 (5) a proven record of:

18 (A) fund-raising success;

19 (B) junior faculty mentorship; and

20 (C) academic innovation and leadership; and

21 (6) significant experience in curriculum design.

22 Sec. 67.88. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF DIRECTOR. (a) The school's
23 director has the rights and privileges of a dean of the university.

24 (b) The director shall oversee:

25 (1) the establishment of the school's curriculum;

26 (2) the evaluation of the school's course offerings;

27 (3) the hiring of school faculty; and

1 (4) the school's fund-raising activities.

2 (c) The director shall:

3 (1) report directly to the university's provost; and

4 (2) on request, be available to report personally on
5 the progress and activities of the school to any standing committee
6 of the Texas Legislature with jurisdiction over higher education
7 matters.

8 (d) The director may:

9 (1) hold an affiliation with another academic
10 department of the university in addition to the position of
11 director; and

12 (2) elect to continue as an instructor or be relieved
13 of teaching responsibilities.

14 Sec. 67.89. QUARTERLY REPORT. The university's provost
15 shall review the school's activities quarterly and make a report of
16 the provost's findings to the chair of each standing committee of
17 the Texas Legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher
18 education matters.

19 Sec. 67.90. STEERING COMMITTEE. The university's provost,
20 in consultation with the school's director, shall appoint a
21 steering committee for the school. Once appointed, the steering
22 committee may add additional members to the committee.

23 Sec. 67.91. ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDS. The school may solicit and
24 accept funds, including gifts and grants, from any public or
25 private source for the purpose of the school.

26 SECTION 2. Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is
27 amended by adding Section 51.977 to read as follows:

1 Sec. 51.977. FEASIBILITY STUDY REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF
2 PROGRAM OF STUDY IN ETHICS, WESTERN CIVILIZATION, AND AMERICAN
3 TRADITIONS. (a) In this section, "general academic teaching
4 institution" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

5 (b) Each general academic teaching institution shall
6 conduct a study regarding the feasibility of establishing a program
7 of study in ethics, Western civilization, and American traditions
8 at the institution using a curriculum modeled on the curriculum
9 established under Subchapter E, Chapter 67, for the School of
10 Ethics, Western Civilization, and American Traditions at The
11 University of Texas at Austin.

12 (c) Not later than December 1, 2010, each general academic
13 teaching institution shall submit to each standing committee of the
14 Texas Legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher education
15 matters a written report of the institution's findings and
16 recommendations regarding the feasibility of establishing a
17 program of study in ethics, Western civilization, and American
18 traditions at the institution. Based on the findings and
19 recommendations received, the committees shall recommend whether
20 legislation is needed to implement the program at each general
21 academic teaching institution.

22 (d) This section expires September 1, 2011.

23 SECTION 3. Not later than October 1, 2009, The University of
24 Texas at Austin shall appoint a director of the School of Ethics,
25 Western Civilization, and American Traditions established under
26 Subchapter E, Chapter 67, Education Code, as added by this Act.

27 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives

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1 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
2 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
3 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
4 Act takes effect September 1, 2009.