

By: Watson

S.B. No. 185

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to establishing a commission to prepare and recommend 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 RECOMMEND LONG-RANGE PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. (a) In this section:

(1) "General academic teaching institution" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003, except that the term does not include a public state college.

(2) "Institution of higher education," "medical and dental unit," "public junior college," "public state college," "public technical institute," and "university system" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) A commission is established to conduct a study of issues relating to the higher education system in this state and to recommend for that system a long-range plan to meet the demands of a global economy and a growing and diverse population.

(c) The commission is composed of 20 members as follows:

(1) 11 persons appointed by the commissioner of higher education as follows:

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

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

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

5                   (D) a representative of the University of North  
6 Texas System;

7                   (E) a representative of the Texas Tech University  
8 System;

9                   (F) a representative of the Texas State  
10 University System;

11                   (G) a representative of the Texas State Technical  
12 College System;

13                   (H) a representative of the leading association  
14 of Texas junior and community colleges;

15                   (I) a representative of the leading association  
16 of independent colleges and universities in Texas;

17                   (J) a student enrolled at a general academic  
18 teaching institution; and

19                   (K) a student enrolled at a public junior  
20 college;

21                   (2) six persons who are not affiliated with a  
22 particular university system, appointed as follows, with  
23 consideration given to providing for ethnic, racial, gender, and  
24 geographic diversity among the members of the commission:

25                   (A) two persons appointed by the governor, at  
26 least one of whom has demonstrated leadership and success in  
27 business;

1           (B) two persons appointed by the lieutenant  
2 governor, at least one of whom has demonstrated leadership and  
3 success in business; and

4           (C) two persons appointed by the speaker of the  
5 house of representatives, at least one of whom has demonstrated  
6 leadership and success in business;

7           (3) two members of the Texas Higher Education  
8 Coordinating Board appointed by the chair of the coordinating  
9 board; and

10           (4) the state demographer.

11           (d) Appointments to the commission under Subsection (c)  
12 shall be made not later than October 1, 2009.

13           (e) The governor shall designate as the presiding officer  
14 of the commission a member of the commission who is not affiliated  
15 with a particular university system or public or private  
16 institution of higher education.

17           (f) The commission may request from any institution of  
18 higher education or other state agency assistance or information  
19 and, to the extent permissible under state and federal law and to  
20 the extent practicable, the institution or agency shall provide the  
21 assistance or information requested.

22           (g) The expenses of the commission shall be paid in equal  
23 amounts from the contingent expense accounts of the senate and the  
24 house of representatives, or as otherwise agreed to by the  
25 lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of  
26 representatives. Members of the commission serve without  
27 compensation but are entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses

1 incurred in carrying out the commission's duties.

2 (h) The commission may study any issue the commission  
3 determines to be important to the future of higher education in this  
4 state, including:

5 (1) incentives, including concurrent enrollment and  
6 dual credit courses, and related requirements to facilitate  
7 seamless student transitions between and among high schools, public  
8 junior colleges, public technical institutes, public state  
9 colleges, general academic teaching institutions, private and  
10 independent institutions of higher education, and medical and  
11 dental units;

12 (2) methods to improve communication and coordination  
13 between institutions of higher education and the business community  
14 to:

15 (A) create pathways to careers for students; and

16 (B) enhance curricula in a manner that will  
17 benefit students, businesses, and the overall economy of the state;

18 (3) concerns regarding current and projected student  
19 enrollment and enrollment capacity at The University of Texas at  
20 Austin and Texas A&M University in College Station and methods for  
21 ensuring that those elite institutions remain competitive with  
22 other public and private flagship institutions of higher education;

23 (4) the creation of additional public flagship  
24 research institutions of higher education, including studying  
25 methods for:

26 (A) selecting the locations of those  
27 institutions, including consideration of the feasibility of

1 selecting the locations through:

2 (i) a bidding or other competitive process  
3 among communities in this state; or

4 (ii) solicitation of proposals from  
5 existing public or private institutions of higher education,  
6 businesses, or other appropriate entities; and

7 (B) ensuring that those additional flagship  
8 institutions admit a qualified and diverse student body;

9 (5) methods:

10 (A) that can be used to identify the mission,  
11 areas of specialization, and unique attributes of each institution  
12 of higher education; and

13 (B) that the institutions can use to better  
14 coordinate among themselves and to further develop, enhance, and  
15 promote their respective missions;

16 (6) criteria for establishment of new graduate  
17 programs;

18 (7) alternative methods of funding institutions of  
19 higher education, with emphasis on studying how research  
20 universities should be funded; and

21 (8) the TEXAS grant, Texas educational opportunity  
22 grant, tuition equalization grant, and other financial aid  
23 programs, including whether to add to the TEXAS grant program a  
24 component that targets students at the preschool and primary and  
25 secondary school levels to encourage those students to commit to  
26 and succeed in higher education programs and that may include a  
27 work-study requirement.

1       (i) Based on the commission's study under Subsection (h),  
2 the commission shall prepare a report, including findings,  
3 recommendations, and any proposed legislation the commission  
4 determines would be beneficial to further the commission's  
5 recommendations. The report must include recommendations for  
6 improving financial aid programs to ensure that the maximum number  
7 of eligible students receive financial aid and that a minimum  
8 number of students are burdened with debt as a result of attending  
9 institutions of higher education. Not later than October 1, 2010,  
10 the commission shall submit the report to the Texas Higher  
11 Education Coordinating Board and to the governor, the lieutenant  
12 governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the  
13 presiding officer of each legislative standing committee or  
14 subcommittee with jurisdiction over higher education.

15       (j) This section expires January 1, 2011.

16       SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
17 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
18 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
19 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
20 Act takes effect September 1, 2009.