

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 706
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The University of Houston--Clear Lake was created at a time when upper-division universities were thought to provide greater access to bachelor's and master's degrees by offering junior, senior, and graduate-level courses. These upper-level institutions were commuter schools by design, with undergraduate enrollment limited to transfer students from area community schools.

While the upper-level model was a good starting point, eventually it was largely abandoned through a process known as downward expansion, the lifting of restrictions for the admission of freshman and sophomore students. The upper-level model clearly does not allow the university to reach its full potential in terms of numbers of students, diversity of students, richness of learning, and efficient use of faculty and facilities. H.B. 706 expands the University of Houston--Clear Lake from an upper-division university to a four-year university.

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. 706 amends the Education Code to expand the course levels offered by the University of Houston--Clear Lake from only junior, senior, and graduate-level programs to undergraduate and graduate programs. The bill removes a provision authorizing the university, as an institution limited to offering only upper-level undergraduate and graduate programs, to enroll a student concurrently enrolled at another institution with at least 30 semester credit hours. The bill makes its provisions applicable beginning with course levels that may be offered by the university for the 2012-2013 academic year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2011.