

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
87R27136 KJE-D

C.S.H.B. 981  
By: Dutton (Miles)  
Higher Education  
5/19/2021  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Texas Southern University has played an important role in higher education in Texas for more than 90 years. While the school currently offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs in numerous schools, it does not have a divinity program or a school of religion.

H.B. 981 creates a study by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) on the feasibility of establishing a divinity program that offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at Texas Southern University. THECB would submit the report to the legislature's higher education committees and the board of regents at Texas Southern University by December 1, 2022. This section would expire September 1, 2023.

The committee substitute changes the term "divinity program" to "religious studies program" to address constitutional issues.

C.S.H.B. 981 amends current law relating to a study by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board on the feasibility of establishing a religious studies program at Texas Southern University.

### **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 Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.06695, as follows:

Sec. 61.06695. STUDY ON RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM AT TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to conduct a study on the feasibility of establishing a religious studies program that offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at Texas Southern University (TSU).

(b) Requires THECB, not later than December 1, 2022, to submit to each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education and the board of regents of TSU a report on the results of the study.

(c) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2023.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.