

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
88R17670 JTZ-F

C.S.S.B. 902  
By: West  
Education  
3/16/2023  
Committee Report (Substituted)

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

This bill seeks to enshrine in statute the existing Texas Leadership Scholars program operated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

This legislation sets forth specific qualifications for becoming a Texas Leadership Scholar including being eligible for automatic admission to a general academic teaching institution pursuant to Section 51.803 of the Texas Education Code, being nominated by their school district and having achieved another academic distinction recognized by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and maintaining a minimum overall grade point average at an academic teaching institutions as determined by board rule.

The bill also allows the Higher Education Coordinating Board to enter into agreements with general academic teaching institutions or other agencies of higher education for cohort learning opportunities, mentoring, research, internship opportunities, and more.

The bill also allows the Higher Education Coordinating Board to solicit, accept, and spend gifts, grants, and donations made to support the program. The legislation gives the board rulemaking authority for the Texas Leadership Scholars Program.

The Texas Leadership Scholars program was founded in 2022 by eighteen public universities as a statewide, premier leadership program designed to guide Texas high school graduates to develop their leadership skills and continue their education at a Texas university.

Cohorts of students are connected with peer and professional networks and mentors, participate in unique leadership development opportunities, and receive opportunities for undergraduate research and study abroad options through the program.

Participating institutions have welcomed the elite, high-potential scholars to their campuses, facilitating programming and ensuring through state, federal, and institutional aid that 100 percent of tuition and fees and room and board for these students is covered.

The eighteen participating universities include The University of Texas campuses at Arlington, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Tyler, and more, as well as A&M campuses at Prairie View, College Station, Commerce, Corpus Christi, and more. Sam Houston State University, Tarleton State University, Texas Women's University, and the University of North Texas are also participating institutions. For the 2022–2023 cohort, 1,332 students applied to the program, with 251 scholars selected by the institutions.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 902 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Texas Leadership Scholars Program.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.897, Education Code) of this bill.

## **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Subchapter T-3, as follows:

### **SUBCHAPTER T-3. TEXAS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

Sec. 61.891. DEFINITION. Defines "program."

Sec. 61.892. ESTABLISHMENT; ADMINISTRATION. (a) Provides that the Texas Leadership Scholars Program (program) is established to serve as a merit-based scholarship and leadership opportunity program for high-achieving, emerging leaders with financial need.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to administer the program.

(c) Requires THECB, using money appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose, to award scholarships and provide academic achievement support and leadership development to eligible students under the program.

Sec. 61.893. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY. Requires a student, to be initially eligible to participate in the program, to:

(1) have graduated from a public high school in this state;

(2) either have qualified for automatic admission to a general academic teaching institution under Section 51.803 (Automatic Admission: All Institutions) or be nominated by the student's high school for participation in the program and hold another academic distinction recognized by THECB;

(3) be enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a general academic teaching institution;

(4) be economically disadvantaged, as determined by THECB rule; and

(5) comply with any additional requirement adopted by THECB.

Sec. 61.894. CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY. Authorizes a student, after establishing initial eligibility to participate in the program under Section 61.893, to continue participating in the program only if the student:

(1) is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a general academic teaching institution;

(2) maintains a minimum overall grade point average determined by THECB rule; and

(3) complies with any additional requirement adopted by THECB.

Sec. 61.895. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. Authorizes THECB to enter into agreements with general academic teaching institutions or other institutions of higher education to provide students participating in the program with:

(1) research-based support to make satisfactory academic progress and graduate on time; and

(2) leadership development opportunities, including:

(A) program cohort learning communities;

(B) mentoring, research, and internship opportunities;

(C) networking with state government, business, and civic leaders; and

(D) statewide cohort learning institutes or seminars.

Sec. 61.896. GRANTS, GIFTS, AND DONATIONS. Authorizes THECB to solicit, accept, and spend grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private sources for the purposes of the program.

Sec. 61.897. RULES. Requires THECB to adopt rules for the administration of the program, including rules providing for the amount and permissible uses of a scholarship awarded under the program.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer Subchapter T-3, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.