

SUBJECT: Establishing Lone Star College

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rangel, Solis, Bailey, Cuellar, Dunnam, Kamel, Rabuck, E.
 Reyna

0 nays

1 absent — Rodriguez

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Kenneth Ashworth, Glenda Barron, and Don Brown, Texas Higher
Education Coordinating Board

DIGEST: CSHB 2652 would allow the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
to establish Lone Star College as an alternative to traditional university
programs. The college could not offer any courses but could grant credit for
courses successfully completed at other institutions of higher education and
could award degrees, including associate of arts or science or bachelor of
arts, science, or general studies.

Students would be eligible for admission to the college if they had earned a
high school diploma or its equivalent and completed 30 semester credit
hours from an accredited public or private institution of higher education.
Students would be charged a fee sufficient to cover administration costs,
including the costs of evaluating the student's transcript.

The director of the college would establish a degree plan for each student
enrolled, award credit for appropriate course work completed, and determine
additional courses needed for a degree. Students could complete course
work at any accredited institution of higher education.

The college could not offer credit for anything other than collegiate course work or accept or grant credit for physical education, orientation, or remedial courses.

The coordinating board would designate an institution of higher education to govern the college. The institution's board of regents would direct and control the college and could accept and administer gifts, grants, and donations on behalf of the college. The institution would conduct annual performance audits of the college and report findings to the coordinating board.

The board of regents could not acquire land or other real property or incur debt on behalf of the college nor use formula funds appropriated to or bond proceeds received from an institution of higher education. Unless accredited by a recognized agency by August 31, 2003, the college would be abolished.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2652 would provide a practical alternative for individuals whose economic, family, or other situations require a more flexible, self-paced college program. The college would provide means by which students who have accumulated credits from several institutions without being able to meet graduation requirements could obtain a degree.

CSHB 2652 would recognize the recent trend in higher education toward non-traditional degree plans and educational experience. For a variety of reasons, individuals may have completed course work in several different schools without being able to obtain a degree. The bill would allow these individuals the opportunity to have their course work analyzed, and any deficiencies identified, so that they may more quickly earn a degree. The Lone Star College would be patterned in part after several successful colleges in the northeast, including Regent's College in New York. These institutions have proved invaluable for students who are well educated but lack the required concentration of hours in a single institution.

The Lone Star College would be extremely beneficial to members of the military and their families, whose jobs force them to continually move.

These individuals are providing a valuable public service to the state and the nation, and their service should not interfere with their pursuit of higher education. Some have expressed interest in a Lone Star College degree as a means of becoming public school teachers. Student with a considerable number of hours in history, for example, could obtain a Lone Star bachelor of arts degree and enroll in one of the state's alternative certification programs. Students could also obtain Lone Star degrees as a precursor to attending graduate or professional schools.

With no campus or course offerings, Lone Star College would not require any state appropriation. The coordinating board would be authorized to charge fees that would cover any administrative costs. An established university would be designated to handle administrative matters. Students could pay a fee for consultation and evaluation of their transcripts and a maintenance fee until they received their degrees, and the fee levels would be set high enough to cover the costs.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Despite the good intentions behind Lone Star College, the state has never established an institution of higher education that did not eventually require some contribution of state dollars for its continued operation. At a time when dollars for higher education are being stretched ever tighter, it may be unwise to create a new institution at an undisclosed future cost to the state.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

A degree from Lone Star College might be of dubious distinction. Without the planning and cohesion of study program provided by a regular accredited university, potential employers or graduate schools may view graduates as lacking an essential component of the higher education experience. The degree could give students a false sense of security, while placing them at a competitive disadvantage compared to students from traditional schools.

NOTES:

The committee substitute authorized rather than required the coordinating board to establish the college, and allowed the board of regents to accept gifts, grants, and donations on its behalf.