

SUBJECT: Strategies to reflect the state population in higher education

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rangel, Cuellar, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Morrison,
E. Reyna

0 nays

1 absent — Wohlgemuth

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: HB 1678 would instruct the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop and annually update a uniform strategy to identify, attract, retain, and enroll a student body that reflects the population of Texas. Each institution of higher education would implement the uniform strategy. Each institution would report annually to the coordinating board on how it has implemented the uniform strategy. The board would develop the uniform strategy by January 1, 2000.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

SUPPORTERS
SAY: HB 1678 would establish a working plan to encourage colleges and universities to make sure, within the constraints of current law and court rulings, that the population of college and university students reflects the population of the state.

HB 1678 would require the coordinating board to develop a uniform strategy to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse student body. Each public higher education institution would have the ability to tailor the plan to its individual needs. However, the uniform plan would create certain guidelines for institutions to follow.

It is crucial that Texas actively provide educational opportunities to all of its citizens, especially populations that traditionally have been under-served by

the educational system and that are well on their way to becoming the majority.

Low rates of college participation among a growing African-American and Hispanic population eventually will make Texas less competitive economically because the work force will lack educational requirements to attract cutting edge industries. Texas is likely to lose new jobs, especially in high technology, to states and nations where populations are better trained. HB 1678 would lay the foundation for keeping Texas competitive in a global economic marketplace.

The *Hopwood v. Texas* decision barring affirmative action programs in Texas higher education institutions has had the effect of discouraging minority student applications and enrollment at Texas institutions and put Texas at a severe competitive disadvantage with out-of-state schools in recruiting students that reflect the broad diversity of the state. When the best students of all backgrounds leave the state to seek better educational opportunities elsewhere, they often do not return, to the detriment of the entire state. *Hopwood* did not prohibit the state from promoting a diverse student body reflecting the state's population, and the coordinating board could develop a uniform strategy to implement this important goal while remaining within *Hopwood* restrictions.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Higher education institutions should give no special consideration to race or ethnic background. HB 1678 would use money appropriated for higher education to attempt to develop a plan to do just that. This is yet another attempt to seek methods for getting around federal court decisions on admissions to public universities.

Instead, institutions should concentrate on offering the best education available so that Texans are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow. Anyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, willing to meet the standards of higher education has the opportunity to work for a university degree.