

SUBJECT: Authorizing an intercollegiate athletic fee at UT Permian Basin

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Morrison, E. Reyna, West
0 nays
1 present not voting — Uher

WITNESSES: For — Mercedes Alvarado
Against — None
On — Dr. Charles A. Sorber, University of Texas of the Permian Basin

DIGEST: HB 120 would authorize the University of Texas System Board of Regents to impose a mandatory student fee at UT Permian Basin to fund expansion of intercollegiate athletic programs if students approved the fee in a general election. The fee could not exceed \$5 per semester credit hour for each regular semester in its first year. Subsequent increases to the fee also would require student approval. The board could prorate the fee for a summer session. This fee would not count toward the maximum student services fee (total of \$150 per semester) allowed under Education Code, sec. 54.503.

If students approved the fee in an election held after January 1, 2000, the board could impose the fee without calling for an additional election. This authorization would expire January 1, 2003.

HB 120 would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. It would apply beginning with the fall 2001 semester.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 120 would allow UT System regents to impose a beneficial fee at UT Permian Basin. Money from the fee would allow the university to add men's and women's basketball and women's soccer programs, doubling the size of the current intercollegiate athletics program.

The fee is a student-driven initiative. In an April 2000 election, 63 percent of participating students supported the fee. Thirteen percent of the student body went to the polls, a high percentage for student referenda.

The \$5-per-credit-hour intercollegiate athletics fee actually would constitute only a \$3-per-hour fee increase. UT Permian Basin has agreed that, if the new fee is imposed, the university will withdraw the \$2 portion of the current student services fee that goes to pay for intercollegiate athletics.

The new programs supported by the fee would enhance the quality of life for students at UT Permian Basin and would help to attract new students. With a growing number of younger students at the university, interest is growing in more traditional college activities such as intercollegiate athletics.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The higher fee per credit hour proposed by HB 120 would increase the cost of an education at UT Permian Basin. Some students already have difficulty paying for their education, and all would have to pay the new fee regardless of whether they participate in or support intercollegiate athletics.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 458 by Duncan, has been referred to the Senate Education Committee.