

SUBJECT: Establishing a pharmacy school at Texas A&M University-Kingsville

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Uher, West

0 nays

2 absent — Morrison, E. Reyna

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Dr. Don W. Brown, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Dr. Mauro E. Castro and Marc Cisneros, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

DIGEST: CSHB 1640 would allow the board of regents of the Texas A&M University System to establish a school of pharmacy at Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMU-K). The board would be permitted to prescribe courses leading to degrees offered by other leading American pharmacy schools and award those degrees.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) would have to prepare an impact statement examining the initial implementation. The statement would be delivered to the board of regents and to the chair of the standing committee of each house of the Legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher education.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2001.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Texas has a shortage of pharmacists that is even more acute in the border region. CSHB 1640 would help alleviate the Texas pharmacist shortage. A 2000 joint report by the Texas Department of Health and THECB, *Texas-Mexico Border Health Education Needs: A Report to the 77th Legislature*, indicated that the border region has a population-to-pharmacist ratio of 1,770:1, which is 32 percent higher than the statewide ratio. In May 2000,

Texas pharmacy schools reported 315 Doctor of Pharmacy (“Pharm. D”) graduates. Projected increases in the number of graduates are not expected to meet the state’s demand for pharmacists, anticipated by the Texas Workforce Commission to be 430 job openings per year through 2008.

The difficulty in recruiting and retaining pharmacists and a decrease in the number of pharmacy school graduates in Texas contribute to the pharmacist shortage. Texas has only four pharmacy schools offering the six-year Pharm. D degree required to obtain a license and practice pharmacy: University of Texas at Austin, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at Amarillo.

The shortage of pharmacists is particularly acute in the border region, where continued rapid population growth is anticipated. However, there currently are no public pharmacy schools in the border region, though several schools offer a pre-pharmacy program to prepare students for pharmacy school. A school offering the Pharm. D degree would allow students in the border region to attend pharmacy school closer to home. The pharmacy school would be the first professional school in the border region.

TAMU-K would be able to fill a Pharm. D class. In addition to the students enrolled in pre-pharmacy programs, the border region has numerous students pursuing an education in chemistry, biology, or another science field who have been identified as likely candidates for pharmacy school. This is similar to future medical school students, some of whom pursue a pre-med degree, and some of whom pursue other studies prior to entering medical school. A pharmacy school at TAMU-K would draw students from inside and outside of the border region, just as the other Texas pharmacy schools currently do.

TAMU-K has the experience necessary to create a quality pharmacy school. The university has been in operation since the 1920s. It currently offers a range of graduate programs, including an engineering school. While the average faculty salary is comparatively low, TAMU-K realizes that it would need to pay higher salaries to attract top pharmacy faculty. The chemistry and biology departments have strong faculty and recently have recruited three new faculty members. TAMU-K currently has a well developed pre-pharmacy curriculum, offering the two years of pre-pharmacy courses

required for a Pharm. D. The next three years of pharmacy education focus on didactic education, including basic biomedical sciences, basic pharmaceutical sciences, preclinical pharmacy sciences, and advanced general education courses. TAMU-K's current course offerings easily could be tailored to address these needs, as they are focused in biomedical sciences.

TAMU-K would be able to arrange a sufficient number of final year precepts, which are clinical placements that expose students to aspects of pharmacy practice. Students generally spend three months in a retail setting, three months in a hospital, and three months in a specialized placement. Each placement must be supervised by a pharmacist who is also licensed to be a preceptor. TAMU-K has received more than 20 commitments from pharmacists licensed as preceptors who would be willing to obtain a license to serve as a preceptor for TAMU-K. Many of these commitments are from border region pharmacies, hospitals, and medical offices, which would enable TAMU-K students to remain close to TAMU-K while in their precept year.

Local placements would assist many students financially, could help students to find employment after they receive the Pharm. D. degree, and would help students to develop a professional network in the border region. This also could benefit the border region, because current pharmacists note that pharmacy students often remain in the area near their pharmacy school or precept after graduation.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 1640 would establish an expensive new pharmacy school at TAMU-K even though there may not be enough pharmacy-oriented students currently at TAMU-K to support such a school. Also, the average faculty salary at TAMU-K is relatively low, so the state would need to appropriate sufficient salary funds to attract high quality faculty. Finally, TAMU-K may have difficulty establishing a sufficient number and variety of clinical sites for precepts for pharmacy students.

NOTES:

The committee substitute would authorize the board to establish a pharmacy school. The bill as filed would have required the board to establish a pharmacy school. The substitute also removed a provision from the bill as

filed that would have made establishment of the pharmacy school contingent on legislative appropriation of money for that purpose.

According to the fiscal note, establishing a pharmacy school at TAMU-K would cost \$4,960,558 in fiscal 2003-04, with costs in fiscal 2004 of \$4,305,279, \$4,555,279 in fiscal 2005, and \$6,961,349 in fiscal 2006.

The Art. 11 “wish list” in the Senate-passed version of SB 1 by Ellis, the general appropriations bill for fiscal 2002-03, includes \$350,000 for start-up funding to begin curriculum design and the accreditation process for a school of pharmacy at TAMU-K, contingent on enactment of legislation establishing the school.