

SUBJECT: Partnership between Texas A&M-Texarkana and Texarkana College

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Goolsby, J. Jones, West

0 nays

4 absent — Farabee, Morrison, E. Reyna, Uher

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, ch. 51, subchapter N governs the state's partnerships between public community/junior colleges and upper-level universities or centers. Sec. 51.662 authorizes the governing boards of institutions located in the same state uniform service region to enter into a partnership agreement for the purpose of improving the continuity, quality, and efficiency of educational programs and services. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board must approve any partnership agreement.

Texas A&M University-Texarkana (formerly East Texas State University at Texarkana), established in 1971 as an upper level university, serves junior, senior, and graduate students. Texarkana College is a two-year public community college.

DIGEST: CSHB 2840 would amend Education Code, sec. 87.571 to permit Texas A&M University-Texarkana (TAMU-Texarkana) to enter into a partnership agreement with Texarkana College in a manner authorized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board under Education Code, ch. 51, subchapter N. It would allow students enrolled at Texarkana College to be simultaneously enrolled at the university as long as they meet the enrollment requirements at the university.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

CSHB 2840 would provide a mutually beneficial mechanism for TAMU-  
Texarkana and Texarkana College to meet the growing demand for higher  
education in Texarkana and use the best of both institutions. The university  
is located on the campus of Texarkana College and utilizes some of the  
same facilities, including library and recreation center. Such a partnership  
would eliminate costly and unnecessary duplication of administrative and  
support offices and services. It would maximize taxpayer investment by  
making more efficient use of facilities and personnel. It would provide for  
innovative ways to assist learning, while preserving the mission of the  
community college by maintaining the separate identify of Texarkana  
College.

By allowing students to register at both institutions at one time, the bill  
would allow students at the community college who choose to continue  
their higher education to have a seamless transfer between the two  
institutions once they complete their studies at the community college. It  
would give them the added assurance that the time and money spent on  
courses at the community college were well spent. Community colleges  
cater to first-time students because they are close to home and accessible.  
Allowing the ease of transfer would encourage interest in continuing  
education.

Texarkana Mayor James Bramlett formed a committee to study the higher  
education needs in Texarkana last year. The committee recommended a  
closer relationship between the two institutions. Texarkana and the  
surrounding area have been interested in having the presence of a four-year  
university for over thirty years. Establishing this partnership would be the  
next best thing. The bill would not mandate a partnership between the two  
institutions, but would be permissive and allow them to explore options for  
moving forward with a partnership agreement, subject to review and  
approval by the coordinating board.

The partnership model envisioned in Texarkana would be similar to the one  
now utilized at the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) and Texas  
Southmost College (TSC). The two institutions share the same campus and  
office space, allowing students to get services in one location. TSC offers  
lower-divisions, occupational or technical courses not offered at UTB. This  
allows UTB to be a low-cost, open-enrollment institution with vocational-

technical programs. CSHB 2840 also would serve as a model for other institutions in Texas who wish to address accessibility issues in higher education.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute modified the original bill by removing the provision that authorized TAMU-Texarkana to offer freshman or sophomore programs under certain circumstances.