

SUBJECT: Degree-granting authority of U.T.M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — F. Brown, Farabee, J. Jones, Morrison, Uher
0 nays
4 absent — Rangel, Goolsby, E. Reyna, West

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — None
On — Dr. George M. Stancel, The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston, *Registered but not testify*: Dr. Stephen Tomasovic, The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 73.102 authorizes The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (UTMDACC) to grant degrees in certain allied health professional programs, subject to the approval of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

DIGEST: CSHB 753 would amend Education Code, sec. 73.102 to expand the degree-granting authority of UTMDACC. Specifically, CSHB 753 would authorize UTMDACC, subject to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approval, to jointly prescribe certain courses and jointly conduct certain graduate programs at the master's and doctoral levels in conjunction with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (UTHSC-H, GSBS).

This 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 753 would give UTMDACC and its faculty the formal recognition they deserve for their long-standing educational role and cooperative efforts with UTHSC-H and the GSBS. The relationship between UTHSC-H and UTMDACC and the GSBS is fundamental, symbiotic, and has been ongoing

for more than 30 years. UTMDACC shares an equal role in graduate programs at the master's and doctoral levels with the UTHSC-H, and both institutions combine resources and faculty to provide administrative, financial, and instructional support for the GSBS programs.

Despite the clear and active role of UTMDACC in the education of GSBS students, existing law does not allow it to be formally recognized as contributing to GSBS student education. CSHB 753 would address this inequity and allow UTMDACC, together with UTHSC-H, to jointly confer certain graduate degrees to students at the GSBS. CSHB 753 would be limited in scope and would neither authorize a new graduate school nor increase the size of the current GSBS. CSHB 753 would have no significant fiscal impact on the State.

CSHB 753 would allow UTMDACC to be recognized by the federal government as an upper-level degree-granting institution. Under current law, the federal government does not recognize UTMDACC as such and therefore withholds FICA taxes from graduate-student stipends. As a result, students working with UTMDACC faculty receive lower net pay than their counterparts working with UTHSC-H faculty. To equalize this disparity, UTMDACC has been adding back the difference in pay for its students in order to match the UTHSC-H stipends. CSHB 753 would relieve UTMDACC of this expense and allow students working with UTMDACC faculty to be treated the same for withholding purposes as their counterparts at UTHSC-H.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute modified HB 753 to conform to the Texas Legislative Council format.

According to the fiscal note, CSHB 753 would result in staff costs to UTMDACC in order to prepare for accreditation by the Southern Association of College and Schools. These costs may partially offset the projected savings at UTMDACC for discontinuing the process of withholding FICA taxes from graduate student stipends.