

SUBJECT: Establishing an undergraduate medical academy at Prairie View A&M

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Morrison, F. Brown, Giddings, J. Jones, Mercer, Nixon

0 nays

2 absent — Chavez, Smithee

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Nancy W. Dickey, M.D., Texas A&M University Health Science Center; James Guckian, M.D., University of Texas System

BACKGROUND: The 77th Legislature in 2001 enacted HB 42 by McClendon, allowing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), assisted by the Texas A&M University Board of Regents, to evaluate the feasibility of an affiliation or coordinating agreement between the board of regents and any higher education institution to provide the clinical education to support a doctor of medicine program at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU).

DIGEST: CSHB 85 would establish the Undergraduate Medical Academy at PVAMU to prepare undergraduate students for medical school. To qualify for admission to the program, a student would have to complete at least one year of college-level courses approved by the academy as well as basic science and mathematics courses required for medical school admission. Students would have to have a demonstrated interest in a medical career and would have to meet academic achievement standards established by the academy.

The academy would have to provide academic and career counseling, faculty mentorship, enriched undergraduate courses designed to strengthen academic preparation, assistance in preparing for standardized tests, and long-distance educational technology to allow interactive participation with medical schools, as appropriate. The academy also would have to offer opportunities

for students to visit medical schools and for medical school faculty to visit the academy to provide academic enrichment.

A student admitted to the academy would have to enter into an agreement with the university to maintain eligibility for continued enrollment and to repay any stipend or scholarship to the academy if the student failed to apply to medical school in Texas or declined an offer to attend a Texas medical school and enrolled in a medical school outside of Texas.

The academy would have to consult with Texas medical schools to ensure that its curriculum and practices were consistent with current medical needs and requirements. The school would have to enter into cooperative programs, as appropriate, with Texas medical schools. PVAMU would have to enhance the facilities as necessary to achieve the program's goals.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 85 would help encourage minority students to attend and succeed in medical school and would expand the "pipeline" of minority students attending medical school and practicing medicine in Texas. Minority students, particularly African-Americans and Hispanics, are severely underrepresented in Texas' medical schools. About 12 percent of the state's medical students are Hispanic, and only 4 percent are African-American. Medical schools point to a lack of "qualified" minority applicants for medical school. Minority students often do not receive the encouragement and support to complete the undergraduate courses required for medical school or to succeed on standardized admissions tests.

In its study evaluating the feasibility of establishing a medical school at PVAMU, THECB recommended that the state concentrate more efforts at lower grade levels to increase the pool of underrepresented applicants. CSHB 85 would respond to this recommendation by establishing at PVAMU a program designed specifically to prepare students to apply for and succeed in medical school. Even though the university is a historically black institution, the program would be open to any student. It would have to provide a range of student support services, including academic and career counseling, enriched undergraduate courses, test preparation, and faculty mentorship for each student.

CSHB 85 would support Texas medical schools by preparing undergraduates to enter medical school in Texas, which, in turn, would increase the likelihood that they would remain in the state to practice medicine.

The program would not take away resources from other efforts to establish medical schools and programs in other underserved parts of the state. It would be modeled after a successful partnership between UT-Pan American and the Baylor College of Medicine to encourage minority students from the Rio Grande Valley to pursue medical careers. Rather than diverting resources, it would provide support for efforts to increase the availability of medical care throughout the state.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

As a first step toward establishing a possible future medical school at PVAMU, CSHB 85 could divert scarce state resources to support new medical schools from other parts of the state where the need for medical schools and teaching hospitals is more pressing. The Houston area, where PVAMU is located, already has more than its share of medical schools and health-care institutions.

NOTES:

The bill's fiscal note projects implementation costs totaling about \$1.9 million during fiscal 2004-05 and \$1.2 million in each of the following three years.

The committee substitute would add provisions requiring students to enter into an agreement with the university to maintain eligibility for enrollment and to repay stipends or scholarships if the student did not apply for or enroll in a Texas medical school.

The companion bill, SB 1009 by West, was reported favorably as substituted by the Senate Education Subcommittee on Higher Education on April 23.