

- SUBJECT:** Automatic admission of certain junior college transfer students
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Goolsby, F. Brown, Dawson, Harper-Brown, J. Jones, Rose
0 nays
3 absent — Morrison, Gallego, Giddings
- WITNESSES:** For — Dwight Harris, Texas Federation of Teachers; Don Hudson, Texas Association of Community Colleges
Against — None
On — Catherine Parsonault, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, ch. 51, subch. U governs the state’s uniform admission policy for higher education. Sec. 51.803 requires state general academic teaching institutions to admit undergraduate applicants who graduated with a grade point average (GPA) in the top 10 percent of a graduating class in one of two school years prior to the academic year for which they applied for admission. Such a student must have graduated from an accredited public or private high school in Texas or a high school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense.

The institution may require a student who needs additional preparation for college-level work or would benefit from inclusion in a retention program to enroll during the summer immediately after the student is admitted to participate in an enrichment course or orientation program. Sec. 51.803 does not prohibit a student who was not determined to need such additional coursework from nevertheless enrolling voluntarily during the summer immediately after the student is admitted.
- DIGEST:** HB 64 would establish guidelines for the automatic admission of undergraduate transfer students that have associates degrees or certificates. The bill would require institutions to admit undergraduate transfer students if, in the year prior to the academic year for which they applied for admission, they received a degree or certificate from a public junior

college or technical institute in a program requiring at least 42 semester credit hours and they completed the program with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent.

Applicants for undergraduate transfer would have to submit their applications before expiration of any application filing deadline established by the institution. Admission to specific institutions would be contingent upon available space. Also, an institution's admission requirements for a particular program or school would be based on the requirements of the institution.

The bill would allow institutions to review the applicant's record and any other factors considered appropriate to determine whether additional preparation for college-level work was required or whether the student would benefit from a retention program. The institutions could require any student who needed such preparation to enroll in such courses during the summer immediately after admission. Students who were not determined to need additional preparation still voluntarily could enroll in such courses during the summer immediately following admission.

The bill would not apply to admissions to a public upper-level institution or any institution if, for the academic year in which the transfer student applied for admission, the institution already had filled through the automatic admission requirements of sec. 51.803 at least 50 percent of the spaces available for entering undergraduate students.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005, and would apply beginning with admissions for the 2006 fall semester. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and each institution would be required to adopt rules or policies relating to the admission of these undergraduate transfer students by February 1, 2006.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By facilitating junior college transfers to public universities, HB 64 would provide more options for outstanding junior college students. It would provide incentives for students to get good grades and complete their studies at a public junior college or technical institute with assurances that successful performance would allow them to transfer to a public university. The bill would ease enrollment pressures at some universities because students would be encouraged to complete their first two years of study at community colleges before transferring to the universities.

The bill would be limited in scope and would not increase automatic admissions to universities that are feeling the strain of other automatic admissions requirements. Universities that have filled 50 percent of available slots through admissions required by the Top 10 Percent Law would be exempt from HB 64. The bill would make admissions contingent upon the institution having space available for additional students and would allow universities to maintain their own admission policies for particular programs or schools.

HB 64 would not lower the academic standards of students admitted as transfer students because studies have shown that students who transfer from junior colleges to universities as juniors have higher graduation rates, higher GPAs, and lower dismissal rates than students who start out at four-year institutions. The bill would ensure the automatic admission to state universities of students with proven track records of academic success at the college level.

The bill would be consistent with the principles and goals outlined in THECB's "Closing the Gaps" plan because it would increase student participation, retention, and graduation rates. As a result, more students ultimately would complete their studies and become active and productive contributors to the Texas economy. It would save the state money by encouraging students to take their basic and lower tier courses at the junior college level, thus enabling the state to educate more students at a lower cost.

HB 64 also would help ensure geographic, socioeconomic, and ethnic diversity in the state's public universities by drawing from community colleges around the state. Many minority students begin their higher education at the junior college level, often for financial reasons. The assurance given by the bill would give students an incentive to excel at the junior college level and to further their studies at a four-year institution.

In response to concerns regarding the transferability of students with a degree or certificate from a technical institute, the author plans to offer a floor amendment to address this issue.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 64 would mandate a statewide admissions policy that would be better left to individual institutions. The state's universities should retain the authority to make such decisions and implement the policies that best suit their individual needs, goals, and student bodies.

Requiring the admission of students who may not be prepared academically for the rigors of college-level course work would affect graduation rates, remediation, and retention. Besides, there already are avenues for community college students to transfer to four-year institutions because many institutions in Texas are open-enrollment.

Including automatic admissions from technical and certificate programs would pose a problem because courses required in many technical programs and certificate programs may not transfer into academic programs. For example, there currently is no administrative structure for a student with a certificate in diesel mechanics to make the transition to an academic program. HB 64 at least should be limited to students in academic degree programs.