

- SUBJECT:** Student enrollment calculation for Texas A&M-Central Texas
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Morrison, McCall, F. Brown, Alonzo, Aycock, D. Howard, Patrick, Rose
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Giddings
- WITNESSES:** For — Terri Batschelet; Connie J. Green, City of Killeen, City Manager; Maureen J. Jouett; William H. Parry, III, Central Texas University Task Force; Robert M. Shoemaker; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ellen Marie Aycock; Diane Connell; John Crutchfield, Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce; John Fisher, Central Texas University Task Force; Robert W. Hoxworth; Patton Kaufman; Marisa Martin, Scott and White; Marc Nigliazzo; Terry Tuggle)
- Against — None
- On — Carol Raney, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; David Rejino, Texas A&M University System
- BACKGROUND:** The Tarleton State University System Center-Central Texas (Tarleton-CT) was established in 1999 in Killeen to help meet the area's higher education needs. Under Education Code, sec. 87.861, Tarleton-CT will be upgraded from a system center to a university — Texas A&M University - Central Texas (TAMU-CT) — when student enrollment reaches 1,000 full-time students for one semester.
- DIGEST:** HB 589 would amend Education Code, sec. 87.861(d) to allow Texas A&M University-Central Texas to operate as a stand-alone academic institution when the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) certified that enrollment at the Tarleton State University System Center - Central Texas in Killeen had reached a full-time student enrollment equivalent of 1,000 for an academic year. The enrollment for an academic year would be calculated based on the semester credit hours generated during the fall and spring semesters and the summer session.

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, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 589 would require the THECB to revise the method for counting full-time equivalent students and would expedite allowing the Tarleton State University System Center – Central Texas to become a stand-alone institution as Texas A&M University – Central Texas. Texas needs to get serious about making higher education accessible and affordable and allowing this stand-alone institution to be established is one way to accomplish it. The bill is necessary because of the nontraditional nature of students at Tarleton-CT, who tend to be older than average students, female, employed, and minority, and often on financial assistance.

Computing student enrollment based on an academic year more accurately would reflect the student attendance patterns at the school. It would allow the semester credit hours generated during three semesters to be counted when determining the full-time student equivalent. Using this calculation, Tarleton has exceeded the 1,000 full-time equivalent threshold for the last three years. The bill would allow the hours needed to achieve “full-time” status to be split among fall, spring, and summer sessions and would accommodate attendance patterns of nontraditional students, who often attend throughout the year, compared to traditional students, who often attend during the fall and spring semesters but not the summer.

Tarleton-CT was the first university system center to be created by the state using a “supply/demand pathway mode” to meet the higher education needs of the area because there is not another state-supported university within 100 miles of Killeen that has uncapped enrollment.

More than 600 acres of Fort Hood land has been set aside for the stand-alone university and it is a high priority for soldiers and their families. It is hoped that the institution might eventually become a leading military-specific research and development institution. Higher education is one of the most important quality-of-life factors to military families living in Killeen. Fort Hood is the number one job-creator in the area, and many of the retirees, families, and survivors want to pursue higher education. Establishing a new university where there is real need would address an integral part of Closing the Gaps, the state’s higher education plan that calls for significantly more students by 2015.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

By revising the enrollment threshold calculation, HB 589 effectively would allow Tarleton State University System Center-Central Texas to become a stand-alone institution as Texas A&M University – Central Texas, which at this time would be costly to the state and would set a bad precedent for the future.

The established supply/demand pathway is the most effective and efficient way to determine when and where to establish new universities.

Enrollment is calculated based on the semester credit hours generated during one semester. The proposed 1,000 full-time equivalent student enrollment would not demonstrate the continuing demand necessary to support a range of high-quality programs and services with an appropriate economy of scale required to support a stand-alone institution.

Tarleton-CT has not experienced significant growth during the last four years, and student enrollment has remained relatively constant during this period. If it were to become a stand-alone institution at this time, it would not generate sufficient formula funding to sustain an institution of high quality.

The Center was established to meet the higher education needs in the Killeen area and currently provides area residents with access to a range of courses and programs. It offers upper-division coursework leading to 25 bachelor's degree programs and 14 master's degree programs. About 85 percent of Bell County's adult population has at least a high school diploma, which is a higher rate than the state average of 76 percent. The stable enrollment indicates that the Center serves area student demand but has limited potential for growth at this time, and no evidence suggests that the Center is not meeting the needs of the community.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

If the bill were to be enacted, the system center would become a university effective September 1, 2007. Because the bill does not include a mechanism for ensuring that appropriations would flow to the new university, a transition period should be included with an effective date of fall 2009.

NOTES:

HB 1668 by Aycock, authorizing the Texas A&M University System to issue tuition revenue bonds for facilities at Texas A&M University-Central Texas when the THECB certifies that enrollment at the Tarleton State University System Center-Central Texas in Killeen has reached 1,000 full-time students, also is today's General State Calendar.

The companion bill, SB 211 by Frasier, was reported favorably, as substituted, by the Senate Education Committee on April 12.