

**SUBJECT:** Expanding eligibility for the Governor's University Research Initiative

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 10 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, Frullo, P. King, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker, Raney, J. Turner

0 nays

1 absent — C. Turner

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 13 — 31-0

**WITNESSES:** No public hearing.

**BACKGROUND:** The Governor's University Research Initiative, enacted in 2015, helps Texas public institutions of higher education recruit distinguished researchers through a program of matching grants paid on a cost-reimbursement basis. Education Code sec. 62.161(1) defines a "distinguished researcher" as a Nobel laureate or a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, or the National Academy of Medicine.

**DIGEST:** SB 1525 would expand the definition of a "distinguished researcher" for purposes of awarding grants for the recruitment of distinguished researchers under the Governor's University Research Initiative. The bill would include as a distinguished researcher an individual or a group of researchers who had attained a highly prestigious national academic recognition as defined by rule of the Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office within the Office of the Governor. The commissioner of higher education would have to recommend to the governor's office the types of national academic recognitions that were considered to be highly prestigious.

SB 1525 would repeal duplicative language in the Education Code establishing the research initiative but would retain a provision for an

advisory board to assist the governor's office with reviewing, evaluating, and making recommendations for the funding of grant proposals.

The bill would apply only to a grant applications submitted to the governor's office on or after the effective date of the bill.

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, 2021.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 1525 would expand on the success of the Governor's University Research Initiative (GURI) by broadening the use of the program's grant funding. While the governor's office has approved \$62.2 million in GURI matching funds to bring 19 distinguished researchers to five Texas universities, there is an opportunity to bring promising mid-career researchers to eligible higher education institutions. These individuals could pave the way for more universities to be recognized as significant research institutions, which would benefit the state's system of higher education and the Texas economy.

**CRITICS  
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

**NOTES:**

The House companion bill, HB 3625 by Parker, was considered by the House Higher Education Committee in a public hearing on April 15, reported favorably as substituted on April 19, and sent to the House Calendars Committee.