

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

H.B. 1325  
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Higher Education  
5/12/2009  
Engrossed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Texas State Technical College (TSTC) Harlingen desires to offer an associate of science (AS) degree to complement its legislated mission to offer advanced and emerging associate degrees for areas of need in the State of Texas and to facilitate maximum upward articulation of TSTC--Harlingen graduates to bachelor of science (BS) degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines at Texas universities. Approval of this request builds the capacity for state and national STEM graduates in designated high-growth, high-demand job disciplines.

Currently the Texas Education Code, in Chapter 135 (Texas State Technical College System), restricts TSTC--Harlingen so that it can only provide associate of applied science (AAS) degrees and certificate offerings. Even though TSTC satisfies the academic requirements for offering an AS degree and could do so without any additional cost, it is precluded from offering the AS degree simply due to the apparent restrictions in Chapter 135. The state's accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), has confirmed that TSTC--Harlingen possesses the academic course inventory and the credentialed faculty necessary to effectively and economically offer such degrees. According to SACS, under the standards applied to all higher education institutions in Texas, TSTC--Harlingen is authorized to offer all levels of associate degrees but needs to obtain approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The THECB does not dispute SACS's position on TSTC--Harlingen's qualifications but interprets Chapter 135 to be a restriction on the AS offering.

H.B. 1325 amends current law relating to the degrees awarded by the Texas State Technical College System.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 135.011, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 135.011. DEFINITIONS. Defines in this chapter, rather than section, "board," "coordinating board," "system," "faculty research," "campus," "extension center," and "extension program."

SECTION 2. Amends Section 135.51, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 135.51. CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMAS, AND ASSOCIATE DEGREES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text.

(b) Authorizes the board of regents of the Texas State Technical College System to offer and award an associate of science degree in a field of study at Texas State Technical College--Harlingen campus if the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board determines that the degree in that field of study is appropriate to the role and mission of the system; and meets the educational or workforce needs of the region in which the campus is located.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.