

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R2886 JSL-F

S.B. 420
By: Birdwell
Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The 83rd Legislature authorized and funded an extension center of Texas State Technical College (TSTC) Marshall at Red Oak in Ellis County, called TSTC North Texas, at the request of the local community. The region is a fast-growth area with significant industrial expansion. TSTC North Texas is adjacent to Red Oak High School and offers dual-credit programs at the high school in addition to its regular program offerings.

Programs selected for the center were based upon an economic study and focus on meeting the area's high-tech, advanced workforce needs. They include: High-Voltage Electrical Engineering Technology; Logistics Technology; Diesel Equipment Technology; Computer Aided Manufacturing and Basic Machining; Basic and Combination Welding; Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration; and Industrial Maintenance.

The local community has made a significant investment in TSTC North Texas, contributing the land and other resources for the facility. This legislation is the result of the community's desire for the location to hold a full campus designation.

For the community, the campus designation signals the region's commitment to TSTC and vice versa. Additionally, it signals the community's commitment to economic development and to its industry partners.

For TSTC, the campus designation allows more flexibility with internal budgetary allocations. For example, with the campus designation, state appropriations can be used for utilities and physical plant expenses. For an extension center, these costs are paid with local funds. Additionally, the campus designation allows funds from the Higher Education Assistance Fund (HEAF) to be used at the North Texas location. The Texas Constitution prohibits HEAF funds from being used at extension centers. It is important to note, however, that the designation change does not increase state appropriations nor does it increase the TSTC HEAF allotment, which is set in the Texas Constitution. In other words, the campus designation change does not affect TSTC funding; it simply allows more flexibility in allocating existing funding.

The change in designation would have little functional impact outside of TSTC administration. The impact would be internal within the TSTC budget processes. The legislation would afford more flexibility in distributing funds across the various TSTC locations. The campus designation does not expand program offerings or increase operational costs at TSTC North Texas, nor does it allow TSTC to teach courses outside of its statutory mission of technical-vocational education.

As proposed, S.B. 420 amends current law relating to the creation of a campus of the Texas State Technical College System in Ellis County.

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 135.02(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Provides that the Texas State Technical College System (TSTC) is composed of:

(1)-(5) Makes no change to these subdivisions;

(6) a campus, rather than an extension center, located in the city of Red Oak in Ellis County; and

(7) Makes no change to this subdivision.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 135.04(b), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires that it be established that a public junior college is not capable of offering or is unable to offer the program before any program may be offered by the campus or extension center within the tax district of the public junior college that is operating a vocational and technical program. Authorizes the campus or extension center to offer the program, provided approval is secured from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), after it is established that a need for the program exists and that the program is not locally available. Provides that the approval of technical-vocational programs under this section does not apply to Brown, McLennan, Cameron, Ellis, and Potter counties.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.