

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 596
By: Estes
Higher Education
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas Woman's University (TWU) built its current student union in 1969. The university student population at that time was less than 6,000. The university currently has over 15,000 students and needs to expand the student union facility to meet its current needs. Universities generally charge a student union fee each semester to defray expenses associated with the facility. TWU currently has a fee cap of \$40 and charges an actual fee of \$38. This fee allowance is much lower than most universities in Texas. For example, the University of North Texas has a cap of \$167 a semester, while Texas A&M University has a cap of \$125. This legislation would allow TWU to raise the fee cap to \$75 a semester (\$35 per summer term). The bill further allows the fee to be an amount not to exceed \$150 a semester if the increase is approved by a majority of students voting at an election called for that purpose. If approved, the university may continue to charge a fee at that rate until retirement of any bonds used to improve the student union facility.

S.B. 596 amends current law relating to the imposition of the student centers fee at Texas Woman's University.

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 54.525, Education Code, by amending Subsections (a) and (c) and adding Subsection (d), as follows:

(a) Authorizes the board of regents (board) of Texas Woman's University to levy a regular, fixed student fee of not less than \$25 or more than \$75, rather than \$40, per student for each semester of the long session and of not less than \$12.50 or more than \$35, rather than \$20, per student for each term of the summer session, as the board determines is just and necessary for the purpose of financing, improving, operating, maintaining, and equipping student centers and acquiring or constructing additions to student centers.

(c) Requires that revenue from a fee imposed under this section be deposited to the credit of an account known as the "Texas Woman's University Student Center Fee Account" under the control of the university's student fee advisory committee (committee). Requires the committee to annually submit to the president of the university its recommendation for any change to the amount of the fee and a complete and itemized budget for the student center together with a complete report of all student center activities conducted during the past year and all expenditures made in connection with those activities. Requires the president to submit the budget to the board of regents as part of the university's institutional budget. Authorizes the board of regents to make changes in the budget that the board determines are necessary.

Deletes existing text requiring the board to keep fees collected under this section in an account apart from the educational and general funds of the university. Deletes existing

text requiring the board to deposit the fees in a depository bank designated by the board and to secure the deposits as required by law.

(d) Authorizes the board, notwithstanding Subsection (a), to increase the amount of the fee for a semester or summer session to an amount that does not exceed \$150 if the increase is approved by a majority vote of those students participating in a general election called for that purpose. Prohibits the increased amount under this subsection from being charged after the fifth academic year in which the increased amount is first charged unless, before the end of that academic year, the institution has issued bonds payable from the fee, in which event the increased amount may not be charged after the academic year in which all such bonds, including refunding bonds for those bonds, have been fully paid.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

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