



Written Testimony for the Senate Committee on Higher Education
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Charge 5#: Cost Efficiencies

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Panel #4: Community College Baccalaureate Degree Programs

- I. Review and approval of new academic programs is one of the significant authorities granted to the THECB.**
- a. One of the Coordinating Board's most exercised authorities is the review and approval of new degree programs in the state.
 - b. All new programs are required to meet clearly defined Coordinating Board standards for new degree programs
 - c. First, all new Baccalaureate programs must be justified on the basis of need.
 - i. The Coordinating Board requires an institution seeking a new program to provide evidence of short and long-term workforce needs.
 - ii. The Coordinating Board also requires an institution to demonstrate that there is a level of student demand that justifies the program.
 - d. Second, the Coordinating Board requires an institution seeking a new program to demonstrate a high level of academic quality.
 - i. The Coordinating Board examines the required coursework and curriculum for the proposed degree program.
 - ii. The Coordinating Board examines the background and education of all faculty and support faculty that will serve the proposed program.
 - iii. The Coordinating Board considers other resources, such as libraries, facilities and other considerations that will help support prospective students in the program.
 - e. Finally, the Coordinating Board looks closely at the cost and funding for proposed programs.
 - f. All new program offerings must certify compliance with all standards and requirements outlined by the Coordinating Board.

II. A select group of community colleges were authorized an opportunity to offer baccalaureate programs by the 78th Texas Legislature (2003).

- a. The Legislature established a pilot project for Midland College, Brazosport College, and South Texas College to examine the feasibility of such institutions offering baccalaureate programs.
- b. In subsequent sessions, the pilot status of the program was removed authorizing the three community colleges to offer up to five (5) baccalaureate degrees in applied science and applied technology.
- c. The statute authorizing these programs established clear conditions for approval and continued operation.
 - i. First, the new programs will not alter the role and mission of the community college;
 - ii. Second, the colleges will receive the appropriate accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; and
 - iii. Third, consideration of need and connection to existing programs in the region to avoid duplication of program offerings.
- d. In addition to the statutory conditions, the approval of the baccalaureate programs are subject to the Coordinating Board's regular review and approval process for such programs.

III. The Coordinating Board has been charged with evaluating the success of the programs offered at the select community colleges.

- a. The 81st Texas Legislature mandated the Coordinating Board to study the progress of these programs as well as the feasibility of expanding similar programs to other community colleges in the state.
- b. In fall 2009, the Coordinating Board and a team of external consultants conducted site visits to each of the community colleges to conduct their evaluation.
- c. The consultants concluded that each of the institutions were "impressive in their commitment" to the programs and their quality.
- d. However, it was also noted that because the programs only produced graduates beginning in 2007, it was difficult to collect the longitudinal data necessary to fully determine the programs' success.
- e. Coordinating Board staff members have worked closely with the three institutions and stakeholders throughout the development of the study and we continue to do so. In October, my colleagues and I will travel to South Texas to meet with representatives from South Texas College, The University of Texas-Pan American, Texas State Technical College-Harlingen, members of the chamber of commerce, and members of the McAllen Economic Development Corporation to discuss the economic needs of that community and ways in which higher education can better serve its residents.

IV. The Coordinating Board today, as it was when founded in 1965, is wary of the unnecessary duplication of programs and maintaining a focus on student success.

- a. At a time of increased fiscal pressures at the state and local levels, the state must be especially critical of expanding program offerings at all institutions.
- b. The Coordinating Board has also long been concerned about duplication of programs and the misalignment of resources.
- c. And most importantly, the Coordinating Board is focused on improving student success among existing programs before expanding programs.
- d. For example, at each of these three community colleges we have experienced a decline in the three-year graduation rates since 2000 as follows:
 - i. Brazosport College: 2000—16.3%, 2008—13.4%
 - ii. Midland College: 2000—14.6%, 2008—11.8%
 - iii. South Texas College: 2000—17.4%, 2008—13.0%
- e. Statewide, the three-year graduation has increased slightly during this same timeframe.
- f. While none of these institutions are performing much worse than the state overall, we must ask critical questions about whether these colleges should focus more on improving the outcomes of their core missions before expanding to other missions.
- g. Moving forward, the state should look at identifying cooperative mechanisms among community colleges and universities to deliver these programs with high quality and at less cost than starting new BA programs.

V. Recommendations from DRAFT Feasibility Study

a. For community colleges:

- i. Current baccalaureate offering community colleges should work with the Coordinating Board to develop a system of performance measures and expectations that can be used in future assessments
- ii. If there is expansion of baccalaureate degrees to other community colleges, then the current ones should work with the Coordinating Board to develop Principles of Good Practice
- iii. Baccalaureate programs at additional community colleges, if the program is expended, should have to show:
 - 1. Evidence of significant, long-term workforce need that can only be filled by baccalaureate graduates
 - 2. Evidence that university programs in the area are at capacity or not interested in offering the degree
 - 3. Evidence that online and off-campus programs offered by universities are not adequate
 - 4. Proposed programs must be applied in nature and within the scope of the original legislation

5. Evidence that it will not divert institution from core mission of lower-division education and workforce development and developmental ed
6. Assurance of adequate resources
7. Assurance that program is comparable to similar programs at universities
8. Assurance that program will be flexible in order to appeal to working adults
9. Evidence that the institution is adequately responding to the area's certificate and Associate degree demands.

b. For Texas:

- i. Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission should provide community colleges and universities with workforce need and projections so institutions can plan programs accordingly.
- ii. State should play a greater role in facilitating lower-division curricula with baccalaureate degree curriculum like we have done with Mechanical Engineering Transfer Compact and are doing through the Tuning process
- iii. Coordinating Board should promote the development of online degree programs for high-need/high-demand areas.
- iv. State should encourage adults with a significant number of completed semester credit hours and no bachelor's degree to return to college and complete degree. We will be doing this through the development of a transcript audit web portal and marketing campaign that is being funded through our College Access Challenge Grant (CACG). We have also set aside some CACG scholarship money for students near completion.