

- SUBJECT:** Transfer of Baylor College of Dentistry to Texas A&M University System
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Rangel, Goolsby, Harris, Kamel, Moreno, Reyna, Rodriguez
0 nays
2 absent — Ogden, Gallego
- WITNESSES:** For — George Bramblott and Ruben Esquivel, Baylor College of Dentistry;
Bill Clayton, Texas A&M University System.

Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** The Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas, founded in 1905 as an affiliate of Baylor University in Waco, became an independent, nonprofit corporation with its own board of trustees in 1971. The private institution receives nearly half of its \$27.8 million operating budget from state general revenue funds. The school also is supported by foundation revenue.

Baylor offers a four-year dental program leading to a DDS degree; a two-year dental hygienist program leading to a bachelor of science degree and graduate programs. Baylor has about 470 students and graduates about 85 dentists annually, nearly one-third of the state total. Texas has two other dental schools operated by the University of Texas in San Antonio and Houston.

Texas A&M University System contains seven universities and eight agencies, having added four academic institutions since 1989.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2495 would transfer the Baylor College of Dentistry to the Texas A&M University System and name it The Texas A&M University System-Baylor College of Dentistry. The transfer would become effective September 1, 1996, pending approval of the trustees of the Baylor College of Dentistry and the board of regents of Texas A&M University System.

The Texas A&M board of regents would have all necessary authority to govern and manage the Baylor College of Dentistry, and appropriations would be transferred for use by Baylor under the Texas A&M System.

The board of regents would be allowed to enter into an agreement with an entity if necessary for operating the first class school of dentistry and make joint appointments for the A&M Baylor System and the other Texas A&M schools.

The college could continue to award degrees in the same disciplines and the same academic standing as previously. New degree programs would be subject to the same approval process as other state-supported dental schools.

All contracts and written obligations would be ratified, confirmed and validated under the Texas A&M System. Student credit hours would fully transfer and employee employment status would be unchanged except that Baylor employees would receive credit for years of service in regards to annual leave accrual rates.

The bill would express legislative intent not to create an institution of higher education entitled to funds under the Constitution, Art. 8, secs. 17 (higher education assistance fund (HEAF)) and 18 (permanent university fund (PUF).)

The bill would take immediate effect if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The merger of the Baylor College of Dentistry at Dallas with the Texas A&M University System would result in significant benefits to the citizens of Texas and would be mutually beneficial to Baylor College and Texas A&M for several reasons. Baylor College has been studying and analyzing this possible merger for several years. The two governing board have given their approval of the merger, and there has been overwhelming support from faculty and Alumni.

Baylor College of Dentistry in 1993 was named as one of the top 15 dental schools in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, one of only two private schools (Harvard was the other) to make the list. The school would keep its own independent campus, president, dean and name and retain some autonomy. Name recognition is important for both Texas A&M and Baylor. Baylor's teaching, research and community service programs would be enhanced through active collaboration with the Texas A&M University System's extensive programs in veterinary medicine and health science.

Due to the nature of the land grant mission of the Texas A&M University System, Baylor College of Dentistry and the Caruth School of Dental Hygiene would be active participants in health promotion, disease prevention and clinical care activities with the state's rural citizens. This emphasis would complement the college's significant programs aimed at serving the urban underserved populations.

The merger would complement Texas A&M's health professions schools by adding a renowned dental school. Texas A&M would also be able to offer graduate level basic science classes in Dallas. The merger would foster a continuing spirit of friendly competition between the state's two other dental schools, which are affiliated with the UT System.

Texas A&M and Baylor conducted a cost-benefit study, which was certified by the Comptroller's Office, that showed an estimated savings of \$4.4 million to the state after four years of the merger. The Legislative Budget Board estimates a savings of \$2.3 million a year to the state within five years.

The state would be gaining a prime asset to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Baylor College is the single largest provider of oral healthcare services in the DFW Metroplex to the indigent population. It offers over 105,000 patient visits per year, about 45 percent of which are low income patients; 11,000 new patients screened annually; oral healthcare services to the community, including approximately \$3.6 million in charity care annually, on-site at the College and at area hospitals, community centers and nursing homes such as the Children's Medical Center, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital and the VA Medical Center in Dallas.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute stipulated that Baylor College of Dentistry would be allowed to continue to award degrees and any new degree program must be approved like other state-supported dental schools. The substitute also clarified that Baylor's board of trustees' rules and policies would be in effect until changed by the Texas A&M board of regents.

SB 1298 by Cain et al., which also would transfer the Baylor College of Dentistry to the Texas A&M University System, passed the Senate on

April 18. During consideration of SB 1298 the Senate adopted an amendment by Sen. Zaffirini that would transfer Texas A&M International University in Laredo to the University of Texas System. (SB 11 by Zaffirini, which passed the Senate on March 13 and is pending in the Higher Education Committee, would make the same transfer.) SB 1298 has been referred to the House Higher Education Committee.