

**SUBJECT:** The University of North Texas System and its component institutions

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 9 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Morrison, E. Reyna, Uher, West  
0 nays

**WITNESSES:** For — None  
Against — None  
On — Teri Flack, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Dr. Alfred F. Hurley, The University of North Texas System

**BACKGROUND:** According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), five public universities — the University of Texas at Dallas, the University of Texas at Arlington, the University of North Texas, Texas Woman’s University, and Texas A&M University-Commerce — serve the Dallas metropolitan area. In fall 1999, these institutions enrolled approximately 66,000 students. During the same semester, 10 independent colleges and universities in the area enrolled approximately 33,000 students.  
  
A university system center to serve southern Dallas was approved by THECB, and the center was opened by the University of North Texas (UNT) in 1999. According to Education Code, sec. 105.005, the UNT System is composed of UNT and UNT Health Science Center at Fort Worth.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 1417 would amend Education Code, ch. 105 to create a new four-year undergraduate and graduate coeducational institution of higher education known as the University of North Texas at Dallas (UNT-Dallas) to be located in the city of Dallas on property designated by the board of regents of the UNT System. UNT-Dallas would be incorporated into the UNT System.

CSHB 1417 would authorize the board of regents to accept gifts, grants, donations, and acquire land for UNT-Dallas. It also would authorize the board to plan for the development of UNT-Dallas and the academic programs offered there. CSHB 1417 would allow the board initially to operate a system center of UNT in the city of Dallas. However, once the THECB certified that the enrollment at the UNT System Center at Dallas had reached the equivalent of 2,000 full time students for one semester, UNT-Dallas would be authorized to operate as a general academic teaching institution, with its own chief executive officer (CEO), administration, and faculty.

CSHB 1417 also would establish the authorized powers and duties of the board of regents for the UNT System. The board could establish admission standards for each component institution. In accordance with THECB rules, the board could prescribe for each component institution programs and courses leading to degrees typically offered at outstanding American universities (e.g., baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral) and to award those degrees. The student-teacher ratio would be set at 30 students per classroom teacher, unless the board of regents determined that a class with more than 30 students would contribute to the educational development of the students in the class.

The board could accept donations, gifts, grants, and endowments for the system from any source. The board could make joint appointments in the component institutions of the system and apportion the salary of any person who would receive such an appointment to the appointing institution on the basis of the services provided. The board could establish a research park by one or more component institutions of the system. The administrator of the research park could use private or public entities for scientific and technological research and development in the surrounding region.

CSHB 1417 would set the venue for a suit filed solely against the UNT Health Science Center at Fort Worth or its officers or employees in Tarrant County and the venue for a suit filed solely against officers or employees of the UNT-Dallas or the UNT-Dallas in Dallas County.

Concurrent jurisdiction would be established between the security personnel at the component institutions and the police officers of the municipality

where the main campus of the component institution was located. Regular employed peace officers of the component institutions would be able to assist the peace officers of the municipality in enforcing state law and municipal ordinances at any location in the municipality. The bill also would establish guidelines for the delegation of municipal parking regulation authority from the municipalities to the component institutions.

CSHB 1417 would allow the board to establish mentoring programs at any of the component institutions of the UNT System to assist students to succeed in their education and achieve appropriate educational goals and to prepare them for the transition from being a student to becoming an independent adult member of society.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

CSHB 1417 would authorize the establishment of the first undergraduate university in the city of Dallas, UNT-Dallas. This institution would increase the availability and accessibility of higher education services to residents of southern Dallas County and northern Ellis County. The need for higher education in these areas has been exacerbated by the growth of Dallas, the limitations of its public transportation system, and increasing traffic congestion that restricts access to universities in other parts of the metroplex. None of the five public universities serving the greater Dallas area are located within the Dallas city limits, and UNT-Dallas would fill that void.

CSHB 1417 would boost college-going rates in the southern sector of Dallas County, which are lower than those in other areas of the city and state. According to THECB, only 17 percent of the residents in this area hold bachelor's degrees, compared to a state average of 25 percent. CSHB 1417 would expand the higher education presence in the area, enhance area efforts to improve public education, and increase the college-going rates and degree completion rates of area residents, particularly among under-represented minorities. CSHB 1417 also would contribute to economic development in the southern sector of Dallas County and northern Ellis County.

CSHB 1417 only would allow for the official establishment of UNT-Dallas once a sufficient level of enrollment — 2,000 full-time students for one semester — was reached. This level would be adequate, especially considering the tremendous population growth that is expected in the traditional college-going population (15-34 age group) in this area.

According to THECB, the Metroplex area is the most highly-populated region of the state, with about 5.3 million people in the region in 1998. The population is expected to increase by another 2.4 million by 2015. Of this increase, 630,000 people are expected to be in the 15-34 age group. Not only is the Dallas Metroplex expected to have the largest numeric and percentage increases in total population between 1998 and 2015, it also is expected to have the largest increase in public institution enrollment among all the regions in the state.

CSHB 1417 would have no fiscal impact on the state for the biennium. Although there would be long-term costs associated with the development of the university, the benefits obtained by establishing the institution would far outweigh the costs. According to the Comptroller's Office, every dollar invested in our state's higher education system pumps more than five dollars into our Texas economy. In addition, according to the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation, higher levels of education correlate to higher median earnings, lower unemployment, and lower poverty rates.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Insufficient demand for higher education services exists in Dallas to support a four-year public undergraduate and graduate university. According to THECB, the UNT System Center in Dallas had approximately 222 full time equivalent students enrolled in spring 2001. State resources should be provided to meet the actual demand for higher education services, rather than anticipated enrollment growth.

Modest levels of demand should be met through off-campus and distance education courses and programs. Higher levels of demand should be met through the establishment of multi-institution teaching centers and university system centers. According to THECB, a new higher education institution only should be established when the enrollment at a system center is sustained at the equivalent level of 2,500 full-time students for at least two fall semesters. This level of enrollment would demonstrate substantial,

ongoing student demand that could be sustained through normal enrollment fluctuations over time.

A threshold enrollment of 2,000 full-time students for one semester would be too low a level to establish a public university. UNT-Dallas would have difficulty supporting a sufficiently wide range of degree programs to provide the breadth of educational opportunity to meet the area's needs and to generate additional enrollment. In addition, UNT-Dallas would not be able to operate as efficiently as larger institutions.

Finally, the creation of a new university would require a significant investment in information technology, both for administrative purposes and for academic programs. According to the LBB, the estimated beginning cost to the general revenue fund for the creation of a new university in Dallas would be \$5.1million in fiscal year 2004.

NOTES:

Among other changes to the filed version, the committee substitute added that UNT-Dallas would not be authorized to operate as a general academic teaching institution until enrollment at the UNT System Center at Dallas had reached the equivalent of 2,000 full time students for one semester, and until then, the board would retain the authorization to operate a system center of the UNT in the city of Dallas.

The companion bill, SB 576 by West, et al., passed the Senate by 29-0 on March 28 and was reported favorably, without amendment, by the House Higher Education Committee on April 10, making it eligible to be considered in lieu of HB 1417. The key difference between SB 576 as passed by the Senate and CSHB 1417 is that SB 576 would not authorize UNT-Dallas to operate as a general academic teaching institution until enrollment at the UNT System Center at Dallas had reached the equivalent of 2,500 full time students for one semester, rather than 2,000 as called for in CSHB 1417. The two bills also have differing provisions regarding the component institutions' concurrent jurisdiction with municipal police and their assistance to municipal police.

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HB 1210 and HB 1211, both by Garcia, would establish a school of law and a school of pharmacy, respectively, at the UNT. Both bills are pending in the House Higher Education Committee.