

SUBJECT: Making Prairie View A&M eligible for research development funding

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Branch, Castro, Alonzo, Berman, Cohen, D. Howard, McCall, Patrick, Rose

0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 1 — 29-0

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: The 77th the Legislature in 2001 established the Texas Excellence Fund and the University Research Fund (URF) to promote increased research capacity and to develop institutional excellence at certain institutions of higher education. Each fund had its own allocation formula. The TEF was available to institutions eligible for Higher Education Fund (HEF) funding, was based on the number of Ph.D.s awarded per year in certain restricted fields, and was divided among 21 institutions.

The URF was distributed among eight PUF-eligible institutions. Funding was based on the number of Ph.D.s awarded in any field and the amount of restricted research expenditures expended. Texas A&M University, Prairie View A&M University, and The University of Texas at Austin were excluded from URF funding.

The 78th Legislature in 2003 repealed the Texas Excellence Fund and the University Research Fund. In their place, the Research Development Fund was established to promote increased research capacity at eligible institutions. Funds are allocated to eligible institutions based on the average amount of restricted research funds expended by each institution for the three preceding fiscal years. Faculty receive the funds for individual projects and laboratory and equipment upgrades. All general academic teaching institutions except The University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, and Prairie View A&M University are eligible to receive funding.

DIGEST: SB 2007 would make Prairie View A&M University eligible to participate in the Research Development Fund (RDF) formula allocations.

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, 2009.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Prairie View A&M currently is the only public institution that is not allocated funding for the enhancement of research. Prairie View A&M is not on a level playing field with Texas A&M and The University of Texas at Austin, but is forced to compete with those institutions for research enrichment dollars available from the Available University Fund. Prairie View has been excluded from eligibility to receive funding from any of the research funds that have been established.

Even though the institution receives funding from the AUF, it must compete with Texas A&M University for funding, and that has resulted in a significant inequity. Allowing the institution to receive funding based on research expenditures would allow it to begin to build its research capacity, upgrade laboratories, and support its research faculty.

OPPONENTS SAY: If enacted, the bill would authorize Prairie View A&M to be the only general academic teaching institution eligible to receive funding from both the Permanent University Fund and the Research Development Fund.