

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.C.R. 47
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S/C on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 2000, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) issued its 15-year master plan for higher education as required by statute. *Closing the Gaps by 2015* includes four specific goals relating to increasing participation rates, achieving higher levels of identifiable student success, increasing the number of nationally recognized programs at Texas colleges and universities, and increasing the level of federal science and engineering research funding. While Texas has made some progress toward achieving the benchmarks established in *Closing the Gaps*, a July 2006 THECB progress report acknowledges recent trends that suggest it is unlikely the goals will be accomplished by 2015. The rate of growth in enrollment has been declining among most ethnic groups since the fall of 2002, and institutional enrollment targets are well short of the state's 2010 goal--by 50,000 students overall and by 100,000 for Hispanic students.

Moreover, the number of bachelor's degrees and technology-related degrees awarded fell short of the 2005 targets, and the number of mathematics and science teaching certificates awarded actually declined between 2000 and 2005. While Texas has made gains in securing federal research funding, THECB reports that the significant gap between California and New York and Texas remains essentially unchanged, both in terms of dollar amounts awarded and in the percentage of total federal funding awarded for science and engineering research and development.

The consequences of failing to meet the benchmarks established by THECB are considerable. In compiling data for its annual Global Competitiveness Report, the World Economic Forum (WEF) assigns significant value to a nation's higher education system as one of the key indicators of a country's ability to sustain growth and remain economically competitive. The WEF takes particular interest in the quality of science and mathematics education and advises that today's global economy mandates a well-educated, specially trained workforce.

Unfortunately, the 2006-2007 WEF report indicates that the United States' economic competitiveness fell significantly over the last year, with this decline due in part to low education standards. Coupled with the THECB *Closing the Gaps* progress report, this assessment from the WEF makes it clear that Texas must improve its pursuit of educational excellence to better prepare the workforce of the future and avoid a decline in its own economic competitiveness. To meet these objectives, Texas must develop a framework of state policy that encourages institutions of higher education to focus on their core missions, engage regional civic, business, and academic leaders to address local and statewide economic priorities, and establish globally recognized centers of excellence in education

RESOLVED

As proposed, S.C.R. 47 requests that the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives create a select commission on higher education and global competitiveness to draft a Texas Compact that reflects a long-term vision and step-by-step plan to attain certain goals by 2020. This resolution also provides that the commission is to examine certain issues related to global competitiveness in educational attainment. This resolution provides that the commission be composed of 15 members, with a presiding officer elected by its members, to include five members appointed by the governor, five members appointed by the lieutenant governor, and five members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives. The resolution provides that, in making appointments to the commission, efforts be made to include representatives from the business community and academia and other experts with interest in higher education and current and future workforce needs. The resolution also

provides that the commission submit a full report, including findings, recommendations, a plan and timeline for implementing the recommendations, and enabling legislation, to the governor and the legislature by November 1, 2008.