

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 1600
By: Watson
Higher Education
4/30/2009
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, researchers have no easy way of knowing what their counterparts across Texas, or even across campus, are doing. This makes it more difficult for researchers with a range of perspectives and backgrounds to work together on projects, which can limit the scope of the research or hinder the completion and commercialization of that work.

C.S.S.B. 1600 relates to an interim study on the creation of a data collection to track specialized technology research projects conducted by public universities, public university research facilities, and other state institutions.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. INTERIM STUDY REGARDING TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION. (a) Provides that a select interim committee is created to study the feasibility of collecting data and maintaining a searchable electronic database, search engine, or other collection of data (data collection) relating to specialized technology research projects that are developed or conducted at public universities in this state, research facilities of public universities in this state, or other facilities operated by a state agency, in order to facilitate coordination among the universities and facilities on the projects and improve access to and awareness of the specialized research technologies developed at those institutions and facilities.

(b) Requires that the study consider:

(1) appropriate entities to administer the data collection, including nonprofit organizations, public universities in this state, or state agencies;

(2) the extent of legislative oversight required for an entity that would maintain the data collection;

(3) compliance with state and federal laws regarding access to public information; and

(4) the information the data collection would include, such as:

(A) a list of projects involving one or more of the following areas: energy research, including methods of creation, storage, distribution, and conservation of energy; biomedical science research; nanotechnology research, including nanomedicine; and other specialized technology research;

(B) for each project listed under Paragraph (A), a brief description of the project, including the field of technology involved, the entity involved with the project, and additional comments regarding the research the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) considers appropriate; and

(C) other relevant information and available resources in this state relating to specialized technology research, including expert faculty or research personnel, available technology and patents obtained, the location of and policies for the use of available research equipment, and public grants or contracts awarded.

(c) Requires that the study examine the current state of access to public information about specialized technology research projects and assess the best methods of facilitating access to the information. Requires, in addition, that the study consider what information should be accessible by the general public and what information, if any, should have restricted access.

(d) Requires that the committee be composed of representatives of the following institutions, with one member named by each institution: The University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, the University of Houston, the University of North Texas, The University of Texas at Arlington, The University of Texas at Dallas, The University of Texas at El Paso, and The University of Texas at San Antonio; and a number of members appointed by THECB as THECB considers appropriate to represent THECB, data collection providers, and the technology industry.

(e) Requires a general academic institution of higher education, research facility of a general academic institution of higher education, or other facility operated by a state agency, on the request of the committee, to provide to THECB or the advisory committee any information necessary for THECB or the advisory committee to perform its duties under this section.

SECTION 2. COMMITTEE REPORT. Requires the committee, not later than December 1, 2010, to report the committee's findings and recommendations to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the governor. Requires the committee to include in its recommendations specific legislation that the committee considers desirable to address the need for and feasibility of establishing a data collection as determined by the committee's findings.

SECTION 3. ABOLITION OF COMMITTEE. Provides that the committee is abolished and this Act expires January 16, 2011.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.