

TACRAO LEGISLATIVE ISSUES COMMITTEE

81st LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY

July 2009

During the legislative session, a record 7,000+ bills were filed. Several hundred of those dealt with education issues. Below you will find a list of bills that may affect TACRAO members in their day-to-day jobs. We look forward to the discussions that will ensue at the summer meetings, on the listserv, and at the annual conference in an attempt to best deal with the challenges and opportunities that these new laws will bring.

HB 101 by F. Brown Relating to the formula funding for public institutions of higher education for certain credit hours that do not count toward a degree

HB 101 exempts from excessive hours calculations, those courses taken before graduating from high school and used to satisfy high school graduation requirements.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with changes to be reflected beginning in the 2011-2012 academic year.

HB 269 by Lucio Relating to course credit for certain students at a public institution of higher education

HB 269 requires institutions of higher education to grant course credit to honorably discharged military veterans for any physical education course requirement and course credit for up to twelve non-major or minor elective hours.

HB 269 also requires the Coordinating Board, in consultation with institutions of higher education, to establish fees for courses taken as part of an ROTC program, establishes limitations on tuition charged for courses taken as part of an ROTC program, and establishes the counting of coursework taken as part of an ROTC program in determining full-time status of students.

Effective Date: For granting of course credit, immediate effect; and for ROTC fee and determination of full-time status, immediately with application to students currently enrolled.

HB 746 by F. Brown Relating to expanding the availability of classrooms and other facilities for use by public colleges and universities

HB 746 authorizes institutions of higher education to make available underutilized space to public junior colleges requesting space to teach core curriculum or continuing education courses.

Institutions may charge the requesting institution a rate not to exceed that determined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Effective Date: Effective immediately.

HB 1096 by Vo Relating to the provision of notice regarding the availability of higher education textbooks through multiple retailers

HB 1096 requires institutions of higher education to provide written (hard-copy or electronic) notice to current or prospective students of the availability of required or recommended textbooks at university-affiliated and other non-university retailers, including online retail sellers. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall prescribe implementation procedures and adopt necessary rules.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, beginning with the fall 2009 semester.

HB 1568 by Gonzales Relating to authorizing an exemption from tuition and fees charged by a junior college district for employees of the district

HB 1568 authorizes a community college district to exempt district employees from all or part of tuition and fees for courses taken at the community college district.

Effective Date: Effective immediately.

HB 2013 by Keffer Relating to tuition and laboratory fee exemptions at public institutions of higher education for certain volunteer firefighters enrolled in fire science courses.

HB 2013 extends the tuition and fee exemption applicable to firefighters to certain members of organized volunteer fire departments in Texas. It also establishes academic progress requirements to maintain eligibility for the exemptions.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with the changes to the exemptions for firefighters and the extension to volunteer firefighters beginning in the fall 2009 semester.

HB 2347 by Thibaut Relating to tuition and fee exemptions at public institutions of higher education for certain peace officers enrolled in criminal justice or law enforcement course work and for certain educational aides

HB 2347 provides for a clarification of tuition and laboratory fee exemptions for firefighters employed by a political subdivision of the state.

HB 2347 also establishes an exemption from tuition and laboratory fees for peace officers who are enrolled in undergraduate courses and are employed by the state or political subdivision. It establishes academic progress requirements and imposes limitations on the number and type of courses for which a peace officer may be eligible for exemption.

HB 2347 requires the institution of higher education, instead of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, at which an educational aide seeking an exemption is enrolled to certify the person's eligibility. It also requires the institution to make the determination of eligibility and give notice of its determination to the applicant and to the school district employing the applicant as an educational aide.

SB 1798 contains the same provision.

Effective Date: Effective September 1, 2009; the change to the exemptions for firefighters and the addition of the peace officer exemption applies beginning in the 2011 fall semester, and the change to the exemption for educational aides applies beginning in the 2009 fall semester.

HB 2425 by Morrison Relating to engineering recruitment programs at public or private institutions of higher education and to certain degree programs at public junior colleges

HB 2425 authorizes private and independent colleges and universities to participate, along with general academic institutions, in a recruitment engineering program currently administered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

HB 2425 also requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to conduct a study of the success of baccalaureate degree programs currently authorized at certain public junior colleges and of the feasibility of expanding the baccalaureate degree offerings at other public junior colleges. The study shall be submitted by November 15, 2010.

Effective Date: Effective immediately.

HB 2480 by Hochberg Relating to agreements with public junior colleges for courses for joint high school and junior college credit

HB 2480 authorizes public community colleges to enter into agreements with high schools that are outside the public community college's service area to offer courses that cannot be offered to the satisfaction of the district by a community college in the school district's area.

Effective Date: Effective immediately.

HB 2504 by Kolkhorst Relating to requiring a public institution of higher education to establish uniform standards for publishing cost of attendance information, to conduct student course evaluations of faculty, and to make certain information available on the Internet

HB 2504 requires institutions of higher education, except medical and dental units, to post on the institution's website for each undergraduate classroom course offered for credit: a course syllabus; departmental budget, if available; and curriculum vitae of each regular instructor. The information must be easily accessible to the public not later than seven days after the academic term begins, must be updated as appropriate and must be maintained for two years.

HB 2504 also requires these institutions of higher education to conduct end-of-course student evaluations of faculty and develop a plan to make these evaluations available on-line.

HB 2504 also requires all institutions of higher education to establish and maintain an online list of work-study employment opportunities and ensure that the list is easily accessible through the institution's website. This provision can also be found in SB 305.

HB 2504 also requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to prescribe uniform standards to ensure that information regarding the cost of attendance at institutions of higher education is available to the public in a consumer friendly and readily understandable format. It also requires standards to address all the elements that constitute the total cost of attendance and requires the information to be displayed on an institution's website. This provision can also be found in SB 1764.

Effective Date: Effective immediately: with on-line access to course information available to the public beginning the fall 2010 semester; and the work-study employment opportunity listing as soon as practicable.

HB 3951 by C. Turner Relating to requiring a public institution of higher education to designate or employ a person trained in student financial assistance programs for military veterans and their families

HB 3951 requires each institution of higher education to ensure that at least one person employed by the institution is trained to assist military veterans or their families to understand state and federal financial aid programs. It also requires that these trained individuals be available during the business hours at the financial aid office or other office where assigned.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with the person trained as required to be available no later than January 1, 2010.

SB 43 by Zaffirini Relating to tuition and fee exemptions at public institutions of higher education for students who have been under the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services¹⁵

SB 43 extends to 25 years of age the maximum age limit for a student who has been in foster care or other residential care under Department of Family and Protective Services conservatorship to enroll in an institution of higher education and receive a tuition and fee exemption and allows such a student to enroll in dual credit courses to meet the program criteria.

Effective Date: Effective immediately.

SB 93 by Van de Putte Relating to tuition and fee exemptions for certain military personnel and their dependents

SB 93 provides for tuition and fee exemptions for certain military veterans who entered the service at a location in Texas, declared Texas as a home of record, or would be determined to be a resident for tuition purposes at the time the person entered military service. SB 93 removes the requirement that a person must have resided in Texas for at least 12 months before the date of registration and have been a citizen of Texas at the time they entered the service. The tuition and fee exemptions are applicable to certain qualified dependents of eligible veterans.

SB 93 also requires the refund of tuition and fees paid by eligible students for the fall 2009 semester who are now eligible for an exemption.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with the exemption applicable in the fall 2009 semester.

SB 175 by Shapiro Relating to limitations on the automatic admission of undergraduate students to general academic teaching institutions

SB 175 provides reforms to the automatic admissions law at The University of Texas at Austin specifically and provides other measures to increase enrollment of resident high school graduates in the top 10 percent of a graduating class. The reforms authorized in SB 175 begin with the 2011-2012 academic year and are not authorized after the 2015-2016 academic year. It provides for extensive reporting by UT Austin and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

SB 175 also provides for automatic admission to any public general academic institution by a resident student who graduated in the top 10 percent of their graduating class and completed the core curriculum at a community college with a grade point average of at least a 2.5. To be eligible for automatic admission under this provision, the applicant must seek admission as a transfer student to an institution where he or she previously applied.

SB 175 also establishes a scholarship program for students graduating in the top 10 percent of a high school graduating class. A student is not eligible to receive a scholarship if the student was admitted to UT Austin under the reformed automatic admissions law.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with the reformed automatic admission policy to UT Austin beginning in the 2011-2012 academic year; the automatic admission of top 10 percent students who complete the core curriculum at a community college beginning in the spring 2010 semester; and the scholarship program beginning not sooner than the 2010-2011 academic year.

SB 297 by Van de Putte Relating to resident tuition rates and fees at public institutions of higher education for certain veterans and their spouses and children

SB 297 provides a waiver of non-resident tuition and fees for veterans and their spouses and children without regard to the length of time they have resided in Texas. It also provides an exemption from payment of resident tuition for dependent children of active duty members of the armed forces during a term or semester when the member is engaged in combat operations outside the United States.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with tuition exemption and waiver beginning in fall 2009.

SB 1798 by Zaffirini Relating to certifying the eligibility of certain educational aides to receive an exemption from tuition and fees charged by public institutions of higher education

SB 1798 requires the institution of higher education, instead of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, at which an educational aide seeking an exemption is enrolled to certify the person's eligibility. It also requires the institution to make the determination of eligibility and give notice of its determination to the applicant and to the school district employing the applicant as an educational aide.

HB 2347 contains the same provision.

Effective Date: Effective immediately, with the exemption applicable for the fall 2009 semester.