

# POLICY PRIORITIES

FOR THE 89<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE SESSION



## Enhance House Bill 8 Implementation

- House Bill 8 (HB 8), passed during the 88th Legislative Session, introduced a significant overhaul of state funding for community colleges, shifting from a contact-hour formula to an outcomes-based model.
- In its first year of implementation, HB 8 has already demonstrated improvements in student outcomes under its new funding formula.
- As with any major reform, certain elements of HB 8 require adjustments to improve its implementation. These include updates to definitions, qualifications, and other provisions in the funding formula and corresponding regulations.
- Currently, the State Funding Performance Tier only acknowledges transfers from community colleges to public in-state four-year institutions. Transfers to in-state private universities are not recognized under the funding formula. Proposal: Amend the funding formula to include community college students who transfer to private or independent institutions of higher education (as defined in Section 61.003(15) of the Texas Education Code) after completing at least 15 semester credit hours.
- Further, HB 8 assumes an ad valorem tax rate of \$0.05 in its Base Tier Funding Formula but does not account for colleges with a lower tax rate, effectively penalizing them for this lower tax rate. Proposal: Modify the formula to allow colleges with ad valorem tax rates below \$0.05 to use their actual tax rates in the Base Tier calculation.
- Finally, under the State Funding Performance Tier, a community college student that completes a single semester credit hour at a four-year institution prior to their transfer is disqualified from counting as a transfer student. Many community college students have previously completed courses at four-year institutions prior to their enrollment or transfer at a community college. Proposal: The definition of a transfer student needs further clarification to address students who have previously completed a small number of semester credit hours at a four-year institution prior to their enrollment or transfer at a community college.

### RECOMMENDATION

*The Blinn College District supports legislation to enhance House Bill 8 implementation as stated above, and in conjunction with, the Texas Association of Community Colleges and the Community College Association of Texas Trustees.*



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## Improve Section 51.981 of the Texas Education Code

Section 51.981 of the Texas Education Code outlines the process for employers to request certain off-campus workforce education programs with an institution of higher education. Per the statute, once an employer contacts their local higher education institution to request a specific off-campus workforce education program, that institution has six weeks to finalize an agreement with the requesting employer. If such an agreement is not reached within that time frame, the requesting employer can then approach another institution of higher education to offer the same workforce program.

While this statute has been used across the state of Texas, the application of this process has not been uniform statewide. Therefore, Blinn College recommends several updates to this statute to increase the efficiency and uniformity of its application.

First, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is responsible for coordinating all higher education activities in Texas in an effort to avoid wasteful duplication of efforts and resources.

However, based on the statutory language, THECB currently is not involved in this process. Proposal: Require THECB approval for all requests under Section 51.981 to ensure efficient use of resources and prevent overlapping efforts.

Second, the statute provides a very short timeline for an agreement to be reached between the requesting employer and the college. Many of these courses require specialized facilities, equipment, and instructors that cannot be procured in a six-week time frame. Proposal: Extend the timeline to allow adequate preparation for workforce development programs.

Finally, the statute does not designate a mechanism to resolve disputes between employers and colleges. Proposal: Authorize THECB to resolve disputes arising under Section 51.981.

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### RECOMMENDATION

*The Blinn College District supports legislation to improve Section 51.981 of the Texas Education Code by enhancing coordination, extending timelines, and resolving disputes efficiently.*



Blinn College District

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