

TICUA Policy Update

April 16, 2009

Public Higher Education Governance Discussed

The administrative heads of UT, THEC, and the Board of Regents testified before the Senate Government Operations Committee concerning the future of public higher education governance. At question is the present efficiency and effectiveness of having three separate system governing boards. Although there appeared to be no preconceived ideas of what would work better, the Committee did begin the discussion to explore alternative governance options. Senator Bo Watson asked to examine the current structure in light of effectiveness and nimbleness to address societal needs.

Lottery Scholarships

The House of Representatives appear to have a greater willingness to pass lottery scholarship bills with fiscal notes. Just this week both the Higher Education Subcommittee and the full Education Committee passed bills that have rather hefty fiscal notes. During the discussion in both Committees it was noted that the bills are unlikely to survive the Finance, Ways, and Means Committee but they chose to pass them anyway. The Senate Education Committee, however, has refused to pass on any lottery bills that would expand the cost of the program. Both the House and Senate have been informed of the possible deficit in the current fiscal cycle. The Lottery Corporation testified this week before the Senate Education Committee that sales are steady but they do not expect any increase in funds transferred to the scholarship programs.

Student Affairs Bills Delayed

Senator Roy Herron has delayed consideration of his two student affairs bills until April 28th. The Senator has agreed to amend the hazing bill (SB 1782) that mandates a one-year suspension to become permissive. This allows, but does not require, colleges to adopt such a policy. The alcohol and drug parental notification bill (SB1825) is still in its original form. TICUA member Presidents and Student Affairs professionals have been communicating with the Senator to express their concerns.

TICUA has outlined its concern about the parental notification bill by emphasizing the following points:

1. We agree with the Senator that the use of alcohol and drugs is a serious issue that takes strong redemptive intervention strategies.
2. TICUA members have extensive AOD policies that allow the student affairs professionals to intervene in the lives of students in ways that appropriately fit the offense. Many times this includes contacting the parents.
3. TICUA believes that it is not in the best interest of the State nor independent colleges and universities to make laws that dictate discretionary student life policies on non-State supported campuses.

4. The passage of this bill may have the unintended consequences of campuses reconsidering the extent of their institutional policies and/or students becoming hesitant to report serious offenses in light of the mandatory parental contact.

TICUA is continuing to work with the Senator to reach an agreeable solution.