

REMARKS BY DR. MILLICENT VALEK, PRESIDENT, BRAZOSPORT COLLEGE

SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE, RE: SB 2118

APRIL 19, 2017

Chairman Seliger and members of the Committee, my name is Millicent Valek. I am President of Brazosport College and testifying today on behalf the Texas Association of Community Colleges, in favor of SB 2118.

The Brazosport College Story

In 2003, Brazosport College was one of three Texas Community Colleges granted the authority to offer up to five baccalaureate degrees by the 78th Legislature. The other two colleges were Midland College (in West Texas) and South Texas College (in the Rio Grande Valley).

We first admitted upper division students in the Fall of 2005 and awarded our first baccalaureate degrees in 2007. Over the course of the past 15 years, BC has awarded over 220 degrees and we have witnessed the positive impact for students, employers and the state.

The majority of students pursuing a baccalaureate degree at Brazosport College are employed full time, have families, and can only take classes part-time. Yet, more than 80% of students retained in the program graduate within 4 years, 82% report promotions and/or significant salary increases upon graduation, and 22% of graduates complete a master's degree after graduation.

Baccalaureate graduates at Brazosport College earn a mean annual wage of \$73,470 which is 82% higher than the state baccalaureate average of \$41,464. Additionally, fewer students graduate from Brazosport College baccalaureate programs with debt. The average for Brazosport College students graduating with loans is 27% compared to the state average of 62%. (TX.Ed Pays.org This is a THECB and College Measures web based partnership that provides information on labor market outcomes)

I want to thank the Legislature for their foresight and leadership in helping us establish these strong degree programs.

Sustained Affordability

Chairman Seliger, it is my understanding that SB 2118 would grandfather the three colleges so that we may continue to sustain our programs in alignment with the business plan established

as a part of the 2003 authorization. I want to thank you for that consideration and comment on the context of the development of this model.

Working with staff from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the pilot colleges developed a revenue plan that includes a blend of state appropriations based on contact hour reimbursement at the lower division level and credit hour reimbursement at the upper division level. Another essential part of this plan is student tuition and fees, including an upper division fee for 300 and 400 level courses.

For the past 15 years, we have been able to provide a quality degree option for applied bachelor's degrees that is both affordable for students and sustainable. It is my hope that your intention as outlined in SB 2118 is to allow us to continue our work and to build on this model as you consider expansion for other colleges.

Managed Growth

As mentioned, we have the authority to offer up to five degrees and have had that authority since 2003. Today, Brazosport College offers two degrees—one in Industrial Management and one in Health Services Management. I share this information to illustrate that authority for five degrees does not mean exponential growth. Rather, it means that an institution is in a position to carefully consider workforce needs and respond as appropriate. What we have learned is that offering these degree programs does not shift enrollment from other colleges and universities. Instead, it has opened up new opportunities for students and for employers who are wishing to upscale their workforce.

It also means that the investment a college makes in order to offer bachelor's degrees can be used to support multiple degrees. Some of our early investment included seeking new accreditation status, increasing library holdings, and additions and modifications to our facilities. Having authority for up to five degrees, allows us to plan for the future and judiciously use public resources in a manner that provides more opportunity to more Texans and supports the state's progress toward the goals outlined in the 60X30TX plan.

Conclusion

TACC is grateful to the Legislature for its support of the original three colleges and commends your leadership today in efforts to make those opportunities available to other colleges, which are prepared to stand up these programs for their students and communities. Thank you again; I will happy to answer any questions you might have.