

S. Texas schools to get funds

Education board OKs \$1.8 million

By Dana Palmer

HARTE-HANKS AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN - The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recommended yesterday that \$1.8 million be shared by six South Texas universities to help them with start-up costs for new degree programs.

The approval came quickly without much debate about the amount, despite criticism from state Sen. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi.

Truan noted in his letter to board Chairman H.M. Daugherty of El Paso that the money was welcome, "however, the \$1.8 million is simply not enough to enable our universities in South Texas to begin the long process of improving their degree program inventory."

State Rep. Eddie Cavazos, D-Corpus Christi, said Higher Education Commissioner Kenneth Ashworth, who recommended the funding, is "insensitive" to the needs of South Texas and called for his resignation.

Truan, in his letter, said the universities need the extra help to overcome a history of inadequate state funding and lack of degree offerings in South Texas.

Truan urged an increase in the request, noting that in 1983, the Legislature approved \$2.2 million in program development funds only for two black universities - Prairie View A&M and Texas Southern University.

"Surely, South Texas, which has been limited for so long by our system of higher-education funding, deserves equivalent treatment," he said.

Under Ashworth's plan, Corpus Christi State University would receive a total of \$400,000 for the two years of the biennium; Texas A&I University at Kingsville, \$400,000; Pan American University at Edinburg, \$400,000; the University of Texas at San Antonio, \$400,000; Laredo State University, \$100,000; and Pan American at Brownsville, \$100,000.

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The presidents of CCSU and Texas A&I said yesterday that \$400,000 is not enough to start the new degree plans they are seeking.

B. Alan Sugg, chancellor of the University System of South Texas and president of CCSU, said the \$400,000 recommended would be a good start, but twice that amount would be more reasonable.

Several degree programs are in the development stage at CCSU, Sugg said, including a cooperative doctoral program in educational leadership with Texas A&I and master's degree programs in public administration, health care administration and mariculture.

"These are all programs we feel are within the role and scope of the university," Sugg said. "We need the funds to hire the faculty members, develop library resources and purchase laboratory equipment."

Steven Altman, president of Texas A&I, said he is seeking 26 new degree programs.

A doctoral degree in educational leadership, master's degrees in environmental engineering, industrial engineering and communication disorders, and an undergraduate degree in criminology and agribusiness were among the first programs A&I officials planned to implement, Altman said.

"This is a modest amount of money," Ashworth said, noting that it could be used by the schools for additional faculty, library additions and laboratory facilities needed for the new degree offerings.

Board members toyed with the idea of increasing the amount to as much as \$3.6 million, as long as any money not used reverted back to the state treasury.

But some members worried that the extra money would be too much of an inducement to create unneeded degree programs.

Board member Cipriano Guerra Jr. of San Antonio said a major problem is "the universities down there, instead of trying to get together and forming a critical mass that might allow them to create a first-class university down there, are all fighting for their own little turf."

And all the \$1.8 million might do is to compound that problem, he said. "I wouldn't recommend a higher number at this time," Guerra added.