

Section 1: Executive Summary

Senate Bill 1378 of the 76th Legislature (Appendix A) directed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Board), in consultation with the Texas Department of Health (TDH), the Health Education Training Centers Alliance of Texas, and the Area Health Education Centers, to review health care and health education needs in a 43-county area along the Texas-Mexico border (Border region). Specifically, the Board would "review current methods of medical training for health care professionals" and TDH would "determine the future medical services, health care services and other needs of the Border region." The Legislature directed the Board to report the findings and recommendations for any necessary legislation not later than January 1, 2001. The results of the review and the Board's recommendations to the 77th Legislature are summarized in this report.

The report is organized in five sections -- Section 1: Executive Summary; Section 2: Health Education and Training; Section 3: Details on Recommendations for Health Education and Training; Section 4: Health Care Coordination; and Section 5: Details on Recommendations for Health Care Coordination. Sections 1-3 were prepared by the Board; Sections 4 and 5 were prepared by the TDH.

Health Education and Training Findings and Recommendations

In preparing this report, Board staff assembled and reviewed a variety of data on health education and workforce needs. Staff analyzed the results of a recent health education questionnaire that was sent to health care providers and educators in the region, interviewed academic administrators and state agency officials, and compiled enrollment and graduation data from the region's 21 two- and four-year public institutions. Staff also studied special reports and long-range plans previously prepared by the Board and by other entities.

As a result of that effort, the Board finds that:

- *Academic readiness and retention of students, insufficient program funding, migration of graduates/workers out of the area, and faculty recruitment and retention are the most frequently cited education-related factors affecting the supply of health professionals in the region.*
- *Based on questionnaire responses, the number of health-related degree programs offered in the Border region is not a major cause for the shortage of health care professionals in the 43-county area. Enrollment and graduation numbers show that, overall, the Border region appears to have benefited from the influx of new state funds and degree programs provided since 1995. Where state and regional enrollment and graduation numbers show positive change, the Border region usually shows greater increases than the state at large; where totals show negative change, the Border usually shows smaller decreases than the state at large.*

The Board makes two general and 12 specific recommendations. In general, the Board recommends that the Legislature:

- *Continue to support the major state initiatives and consider others in the region and provide new funding for selected degree programs.*

- *Fund new initiatives that will strengthen existing health programs and provide greater coordination in the delivery of these programs. These new initiatives should promote academic development, student preparation and retention, faculty and worker recruitment and retention, and Border coordination.*

Each of the following 12 recommendations is explained in more detail in Section 3 of the report. A check (✓) next to a recommendation means that the Board considers it to be a high priority.

The 77th Legislature should consider the following recommendations:

Academic Programs and Development

✓ Recommendation 1: Grant Program for Nursing Education

Establish and fund a competitive grant program to support new initiatives by Border institutions to 1) recruit and retain qualified nursing students in professional degree programs and 2) increase articulation in nursing education from the certificate level to the associate degree, from the associate degree to the bachelor's degree, and from the bachelor's degree to the master's degree. 2003-03 Estimated Amount: \$2 million.

✓ Recommendation 2: Cooperative Pharmacy Program

Fund a cooperative pharmacy program at The University of Texas-Pan American. 2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$2 million.

Recommendation 3: Continued Support of Major State Initiatives

Continue to develop four recently established major state initiatives for health instruction and training in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Coastal Bend area: South Texas Border Region Health Education Initiative; Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Academic Health Center; Laredo Campus Extension; and Coastal Bend Health Education Center. Continue to support existing health education and research activities in the Upper Rio Grande Valley and consider funding one or more initiatives that will best meet the needs of the El Paso area. 2002-03 Estimated Amount: Institutions that administer initiatives in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Coastal Bend area have requested \$153.3 million (a \$126.5 million increase). Institutions in the Upper Rio Grande Valley/El Paso area have requested \$107.25 million in new initiatives for health education and research.

Recommendation 4: Distance Education and Tele-education

Request that the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) Board finance needed infrastructure for distance education and tele-education programs in the Border region by giving priority to meritorious Border projects, especially those for continuing medical education. Provide funding to Border institutions for the associated costs of distance education and tele-education (e.g., technical support personnel, faculty development training, curricular development). Extend funding for telecommunications for educational purposes beyond 2005 (through TIF or other means). 2002-03 Estimated Amount: TIF funds already allocated (\$0); special item funding would vary from institution to institution.

Recommendation 5: Research Development

Establish and fund a new grant program for health-related research at appropriate Border institutions and entities. Research programs must focus on health problems significantly affecting the Border region (e.g., diabetes, tuberculosis). The following institutions would receive special consideration for these grants: 1) Coastal Bend Health Education Center and 2) Health-related institutions (and their satellite operations) that are located in counties bordering Mexico. 2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$6 million.

Student Preparation and Recruitment

✓ Recommendation 6: Formula Funding Bonus for Recruitment

Provide a formula funding bonus to medical and dental schools as an incentive to recruit and retain students from the state's Historically Black and Hispanic-serving colleges and universities. The funding bonus would equal one-half of the per-student appropriation for each second-year medical and dental student who was recruited through a Coordinating Board-approved educational partnership with one of these institutions. All of the Border region's universities have been designated as Hispanic-serving institutions. 2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$3.6 million.

✓ Recommendation 7: Recommended High School Program

Make the Recommended High School Program (college preparatory courses) the standard curriculum for high school students. Ensure that a sufficient number of qualified teachers are secured and retained to teach the recommended courses.

2002-03 Estimated Amount: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency are currently determining the costs of implementation.

Recommendation 8: Resident Tuition for Public Health Students from Mexico

Amend Section 54.060 of the Texas Education Code to include Texas A&M University System Health Science Center and The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston among the institutions eligible to waive, under certain circumstances, non-resident tuition for Mexican citizens who enroll in one of the public health degree programs offered by these institutions in Kingsville, Laredo, McAllen, El Paso, or Brownsville.

2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$ 0 in General Revenue.

Faculty and Worker Recruitment and Retention

✓ Recommendation 9: Migration Pilot Study

Fund a pilot study at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio's (UTHSC-SA) Center for Health Economics and Policy to determine, in cooperation with researchers located in other Border institutions, the migration patterns of health care professionals in and out of the Border region. 2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$300,000.

Recommendation 10: State Loan Repayment Program

Establish and fund a Health Professional Loan Repayment Program to enhance recruitment and retention of selected health professionals in the Border region. Through this program the state could access new federal matching dollars.

2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$1.1 million.

Recommendation 11: Border Faculty Education Loan Repayment Program

Fund the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's appropriation request to increase funding by \$888,800 for the Border Faculty Education Loan Repayment Program.

2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$988,800 (a \$880,000 increase).

Border Coordination

Recommendation 12: Border Health Coordinating Council

Establish a Border Health Coordinating Council in which institutional and agency members would share information, develop common goals, and devise solutions that address the health care and medical training needs of the Border region.

2002-03 Estimated Amount: \$0

Health Care Coordination Findings and Recommendations

In preparing this report, TDH staff compiled information about the region's population, health status, facilities, public health infrastructure, and professional workforce. It also examined coordination issues.

Health Facilities

Recommendation 1: Creation of a Health Services District

Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties should proceed with the development of a Health Services District as authorized in Senate Bill 1615, 76th Legislature.

Workforce

TDH supports the following recommendations proposed by the Statewide Health Coordinating Council in the 2001-2002 Texas State Health Plan Update: *"Ensuring a Quality Health Care Workforce for Texas"* that are particularly important for the Border region.

Recommendation 2: Financial Incentives for Health Professionals

Enhance recruitment and retention of health professionals into Health Professional Shortage Areas by expanding state financial incentives, including, but not limited to, loan repayment, loan forgiveness, scholarship, grant programs and accessing federal matching dollars through the National Health Service Corps. Financial incentive programs should be established for all health care professionals. (Strategy 3.2.1)

Recommendation 3: Expanded Use of Telemedicine

To address the maldistribution of health care professionals and increase access to health services for rural and underserved populations, Texas should pass legislation and fund programs that expand the use of telemedicine. (Strategy 3.1.1)

Public Health Infrastructure

Recommendation 4: Establishment of Epidemiology Response Teams

TDH recommends the establishment of Epidemiology Response Teams in each region to assist local health departments in detecting/tracking diseases and conducting investigations of disease outbreaks, as well as establishing an Internet-based reporting and telecommunications system to improve the state's capacity to detect diseases when they are diagnosed.

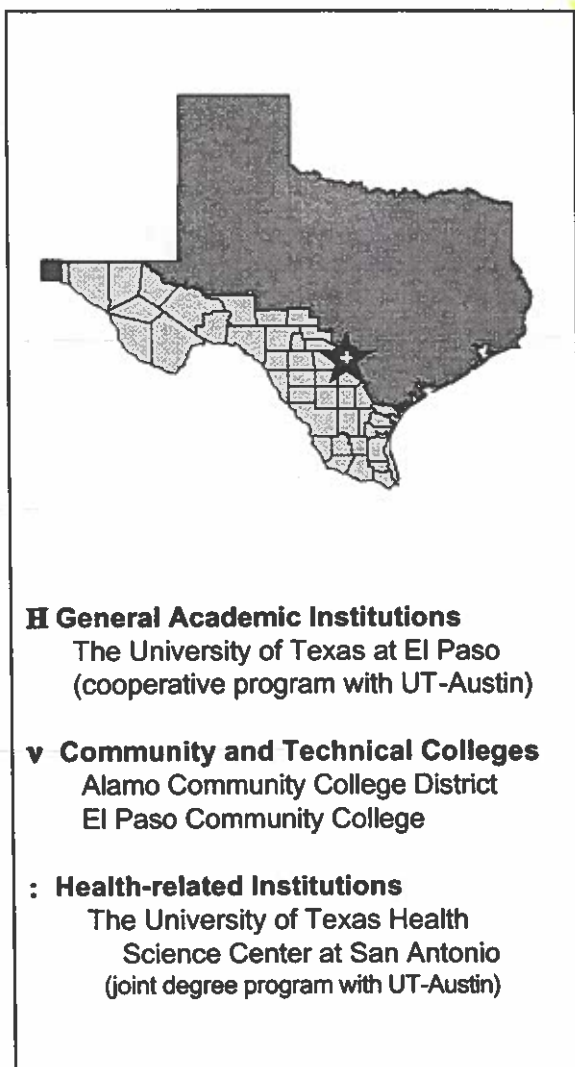
Recommendation 5: Health and Human Services Commission Consolidated Colonias Initiative

TDH highlights the Texas Health and Human Services Commission Consolidated *Colonias* Initiative appropriations request that provides *colonia* residents with access to state-funded programs in ways that are tailored to the unique conditions of their environment.

Acknowledgements

Coordinating Board staff is grateful to the many contributors to this report and to those individuals who commented on its content in writing and at public meetings.

Staff also acknowledges that these recommendations are limited in their effect on the health education and public health status of the Border region. Issues affecting access to health care services and health education are numerous and complex. Many of these issues can be linked to socio-economic factors that go beyond the scope of this report.



Discipline 8: Pharmacy

(See also Recommendation in Section 3, page 41)

Table 1 (page 14) shows increases in the number of students who enrolled and graduated from programs that prepare them for careers as *pharmacists* (professional degree), and *pharmacy technicians* (certificate). There are no pharmacy schools in the Border region; however, the enrollment and graduation numbers shown in Table 1 include approximately 30 students who graduate each year from The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) Pharmacy School in a joint program with UTHSC-SA.

Enrollment figures also show approximately 12 students admitted in 1998 and 1999 to a new cooperative degree program UT-Austin and The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). The remaining numbers represent students at two pharmacy technician programs at two community colleges.

Border Statistics on Pharmacy

- Two joint/cooperative professional degree programs are offered by UT-Austin with UTHSC-SA and UTEP.
- Two pharmacy technician programs are offered at Alamo Community College District and El Paso Community College.

Population-to-Pharmacist Ratio

	<u>Border region</u>	<u>Border region (Excluding Bexar Co.)</u>	<u>State</u>
Pharmacists	1,770:1	2,229:1	1,339:1

Source: Texas Department of Health, August 2000. For more pharmacist workforce data, see Section 4, page 96.

TDH reports that the region's population-to-pharmacist ratio is 32 percent higher than the state ratio. El Paso County has a ratio of 2,509:1 and urban counties in the Valley (Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb) have ratios from 2,232:1 to 2,761:1.

Other Information/Key Issues for Pharmacy

Pharmacists (professional degree) were the second most frequently mentioned occupation needing degree expansion in the Border region, according to survey respondents. (Results of *2000 Health Education Questionnaire*, July 2000)

The University of Texas-Pan American has requested that the state provide \$2 million in start-up funds to develop a cooperative professional program in conjunction with the UT-Austin. The program would be modeled after the cooperative program at UTEP; students would complete four years of the six-year pharmacy program in the Border region.

✓ **Recommendation 2: Cooperative Pharmacy Program**

Fund a cooperative pharmacy program at The University of Texas-Pan American.

Background

Texas has four colleges of pharmacy which offer the six-year Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D) degree: The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Southern University, University of Houston, and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at its facilities in Amarillo. Of the four colleges, The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) has been the most active in the Border region, offering a joint pharmacy degree with The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio for over 30 years, and since 1990, partnering with local practitioners in more than eight cities to train pharmacy students in community-based settings. In 1997, UT-Austin also began a cooperative Pharm.D program with The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). The model for that cooperative program is comprised of two years of pre-pharmacy instruction at UTEP, two-years of pharmacy instruction at UT-Austin, and two final years of distance education from UT-Austin with on-site training and internships in El Paso.

The University of Texas-Pan American (UT-PA) and UT-Austin would like to use the UT-Austin/UTEP model for a similar Pharm.D program in South Texas. Both institutions believe the cooperative program has many advantages for the state and South Texas communities:

- The cooperative model would maximize the use of existing resources at both institutions.
- Because students would return to South Texas to complete the clinical portion of the degree program, the model would encourage graduates to stay and practice in a region where there appears to be a significant shortage of pharmacists.
- The proposed program would complement other planned academic and research components of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academic Health Center in Harlingen and Edinburg.

The University of Texas System has made an early commitment to the program. UT-PA redirected \$200,000 of special item funding originally intended for a distance learning initiative in law, and The University of Texas System Board of Regents approved \$5 million in Permanent University Funds for construction of pharmacy facilities as an extension of the biomedical sciences building in Edinburg. For the 2002-03 biennium, UT-PA has requested \$2 million in special item funding to operate the Edinburg facility, which is expected to accommodate 72 students, and support a regional assistant dean, 10 pharmacy faculty, and four staff.

UT-PA and UT-Austin plan to enroll 12 students from the Rio Grande Valley each year beginning in fall 2001 and graduate their first class in 2007. Students completing the program would receive a diploma designation showing that "The University of Texas at Austin in cooperation with The University of Texas-Pan American awards the degree of Doctor of Pharmacy."

Analysis

The Texas Higher Education Board has collected information that supports the need for a Pharm.D program in South Texas.

- *A recent Board survey showed that pharmacists were the second most frequently mentioned health education occupation needing degree expansion in the Border region.*
- *The Texas Department of Health reports that the 1999 population-to-pharmacist ratio was 32 percent higher in the Border region than for the state (1,770:1 in the Border region compared to 1,339:1 for the state. Urban counties in the Valley -- Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb -- have population-to-pharmacist ratios from 2,232:1 to 2,761:1).*

Some of the factors contributing to the shortage of pharmacists in South Texas include: 1) a rapidly expanding population with relatively high health care needs, 2) a relatively constant number of graduates from the four schools in the state, and 3) difficulty in recruiting and retaining pharmacists in the region.

Recommendation to Legislature

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board believes that there is sufficient evidence to show a need for a cooperative Pharm.D program in South Texas and supports UT-PA's funding request to develop the program.

Cost of Implementation

The Board recommends \$2 million in special item funding for the 2002-03 biennium.

Impact

The program will prepare students from the Rio Grande Valley for pharmacy careers in South Texas.