

# Legislative Update



A Publication of the **TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**  
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## HB 1 Promotes “College Readiness” as 80th Regular Session Approaches

After several well-publicized failures, the 79th Legislature in May—under a court-ordered deadline—revamped the state’s system of financing public schools. A principal component of the election year package of new laws involves reductions in school property taxes in exchange for new taxes on businesses and cigarettes.

The taxing authority of community colleges was not directly affected by the new plan, in spite of portentous discussions in the Capitol of “capping” revenue raised by local governments.

Educators in higher education are very interested, however, in Article 5 of HB 1, which addresses the subject of “High School Success and College Readiness.”

### HB 1, Article 5—In Brief

HB 1 requires the State Board of Education to tighten graduation requirements for students entering ninth grade in 2007-08 and after. Students will be required to take four years each of core subjects to earn “recommended” (which is the default) or “advanced” diplomas. Categorically, math and science requirements will jump to four years each by law.

According to press reports, public school officials are currently wondering how they will find additional qualified math and science faculty—not to mention how the new requirements will squeeze other courses in the daily curriculum.

Under the new law, the commissioner of education and the Coordinating Board will devise ways to align the public school curriculum with college readiness standards to create strategies that prepare students to perform college level course work. Implementation will be effected using “vertical teams” of public school educators and higher education faculty. The education commissioner and Coordinating

Board will establish the composition and duties of the teams.

The intent of the statute is to reduce the necessity of developmental education in college and to support the Closing the Gaps initiative.

### Dual Credit Gains Momentum

HB 1 also requires each school district to “...implement a program under which students may earn the equivalent of at least 12 semester credit hours of credit in high school. On request, a public institution of higher education in this state shall assist a school district in developing and implementing the program.”

It is unclear how this mandate will affect current practices at two-year colleges. Presumably universities could be named “on request” by school districts, in addition to dual credit programs already in force at the local community college.

Dual credit is increasingly viewed by policy makers as an ideal strategem for “seamless” education and student success. Controversy about the program persists, however, particularly among faculty. TCCTA plans to provide a forum on this subject during the Fall Conference for Faculty Leaders in Austin, October 6-7.

### Board Recommends Funding “Full Formula”—Minus Tuition

Following the lead of Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes, the Coordinating Board this summer urged a major increase in funding for community and technical colleges by the 80th Texas Legislature.

The Board recommended funding at “full formula,” minus tuition and fees. The result would peg the state’s share at 71 percent of formula—near the 75 percent recommended by the Formula Advisory Committee, which consists of college officials and faculty.

“This is certainly welcome news,” said TCCTA State President Danita McAnally, Amarillo College. “But the Legislature determines the funding level each biennium, and it is currently only funding the instructional formula at 52 percent.”

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## What You Can Do

by **Beaman Floyd**  
TCCTA Lobbyist



It is a great privilege to represent the interests of two-year college educators, as legislators face their constituents after the historic Special Session. I genuinely believe in the social good of your profession, and promise to continue engaging lawmakers and their staffs urgently and constructively.

Naturally, when visiting with clients, I am often asked, “What can I do?”

First, you can join TCCTA. Your association is respected in Austin, and policy makers pay attention when your professional voices speak in unison, from every campus—and legislative district—in Texas.

Another great advantage of TCCTA is the respect it garners from other organizations. The association worked with college presidents and students to organize Community College Day at the Capitol in 2005, which had a positive and constructive impact on lawmakers. I am still getting positive reactions from this historic event.

Watch for the repeat February 22!

Next, get informed. Pay attention to the abundant information and commentary TCCTA provides. Read the *Messenger*. Visit the Web site. Pay particular attention to e-mail *Updates* from the state office.

These communications are indispensable.

Third, get to know your representative and senator now, while they are “at home.” Follow the *Guide to Political Participation* published by TCCTA (and available in printable form under “Publications” at [www.tccta.org](http://www.tccta.org)). It’s the best document of its kind, anywhere.

And finally, participate in TCCTA events—especially the Fall Conference for Faculty Leaders on October 6-7, and the annual convention on February 22-24. Both are in Austin.

I hope to see you there!



**Community College  
Day at the Capitol  
February 22, 2007**

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### Governor and LBB Order Cuts

In the wake of the recent Special Session, Gov. Perry and the Legislative Budget Board have ordered state agencies to assume a ten percent cut when they make budget requests for the coming Regular Session.

"It is a valuable step for agencies to go through in re-examining what their priorities are and how they would spend tax dollars," said Kathy Walt, spokesperson for Gov. Perry. "An important thing for everyone to remember is that this is just a first step in a year-long process."

### Benefits "Proportionality" Dormant ...But Could Rise Again

The protracted struggle to remove "proportionality" in funding group benefits for community colleges ended favorably in the final appropriations bill during the last Regular Session of the Legislature. However, the concept could surface again. In fact, the bill passed in 2005 contains the following language: "It is the intent of the Legislature that during fiscal years 2006 and 2007 the Legislative Budget Board use the funds appropriated by this Act to be in a position to implement proportionality for public community colleges starting in the 2008-09 biennium."

In 2005 TCCTA was instrumental in adding "proportionality" to the vocabulary of community college personnel all over Texas, providing a mechanism for successful "grass roots" opposition.

### TCCTA Supports Retirement Plans

During the recent Special Session devoted to school finance, TCCTA testified in favor of two bills designed to improve the long range financial landscape of the Texas Teacher Retirement System.

TRS is fundamentally healthy, but prohibited from adding benefits until the fund achieves

long term "actuarial soundness." In recent years the state has contributed the constitutional minimum of six percent of salary.

TCCTA Lobbyist Beaman Floyd, on April 24, testified in favor of SB 13, by Sen. Robert Duncan (R-Lubbock), praising the senator for thinking constructively about the long term health of the TRS fund by proposing an increase in the state's contribution to 6.4 percent.

Also, TCCTA president Danita McAnally, Amarillo College, and Dr. Gail Platt, South Plains College, wrote a joint letter to the editors of the Amarillo *Globe-News* and Lubbock *Avalanche-Journal*, respectively, thanking Sen. Duncan before his "home" audience.

The joint letter was published in both newspapers, stating, in part: "...For several years now, Senator Duncan has pursued a statesman-like course in taking responsibility for the long-term health of the retirement fund.

...In a time when the Legislature often succumbs to the temptation of shifting costs to others, Senator Duncan's willingness to balance recent benefit changes with new state money is a good model for how the Legislature should approach public policy issues."

Mr. Floyd also testified in favor of HB 73, by Rep. Craig Eiland (D-Galveston), which would have boosted funding automatically to make the TRS fund actuarially sound each year, starting in 2007.

Neither TRS bill advanced past the committee stage since the subject was not enumerated in the official "call" by Gov. Perry for the Special Session.

Similarly there were no measures related to the Optional Retirement Program, as the Special Session dealt foremost with public school finance and taxes. The annual TCCTA analysis of ORP and TDA offerings and programs will be discussed online ([www.tccta.org](http://www.tccta.org)) in August and in the September *Messenger*. ☆

### GO ONLINE FOR FORUM AND "TALKING POINTS"

Legislative developments and other topics can be discussed via the "Forum" feature on the TCCTA Web site.

From this site members can also access *Texas Legislature Online*, by far the most comprehensive free source of valuable material regarding the legislative process, statutory language, and constituency profiles.

A convenient "Who Represents Me?" link is provided under "State Agencies."

The TCCTA "Talking Points" for legislators are under "Publications."

[www.tccta.org](http://www.tccta.org)

### Plan Now to Attend

**TCCTA Conference for Faculty Leaders**  
**October 6-7**  
**Austin**

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**Annual Convention**  
**February 22-24, 2007**  
**Renaissance Austin Hotel**

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**If you wish to make a tax-deductible contribution** to TCCTA's foundation, please send separate check to the TCCTA state office, payable to the Foundation for Professional Excellence in the Community College. \$ \_\_\_\_\_