

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM X-E

Consideration and possible action to approve a resolution on the request by Barbers Hill ISD/Lee College regarding a branch campus maintenance tax election and branch campus approval

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THECB staff recommends:

1. approval of Lee College's request to establish a branch campus within Barbers Hill Independent School District (ISD) contingent upon the proposed maintenance tax receiving voter approval. This contingency is due to the branch campus funding's reliance on the maintenance tax.
2. approval of Barbers Hill ISD's request to hold a branch campus maintenance tax election.

Background Information:

Lee College District and Barbers Hill Independent School District (BHISD) jointly propose creation of a Lee College Branch Campus within the BHISD jurisdiction to be supported by a branch campus maintenance tax. BHISD will build a new, 60,000 square-foot building to house the branch campus. The campus is expected to serve about 1,000 students at full capacity.

Lee College submitted a proposal and feasibility study for the creation of a community college branch campus within BHISD in December 2022. In a December 7, 2023, report to the Commissioner, THECB staff determined that Lee College's proposal addresses all requirements of Texas Administrative Code Subchapter D¹ for formation of a branch campus. The report provided a summary overview of the petition, branch campus self-study and maintenance tax feasibility study, results of an external review committee appointed by the Commissioner that corroborated the completeness of the proposal, and findings of a site visit conducted in February 2023.

¹ 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 8.71 - .76

BHISD requested permission to hold a branch campus maintenance tax election at a rate of five percent on each \$100 valuation of all taxable property. On Thursday November 30, 2023, THECB received the certified petition that is required for approval of the Branch Campus Maintenance Tax election. The petition included a letter from the district's voter registrar certifying the signatures of registered voters who live in the Barbers Hill Independent School District as of 11/28/23. Workforce Education staff confirmed that 1008 registered voters signed the petition. There are 19,795 registered voters in the district. The 1008 signatures on the petition exceed the five percent requirement (990 signatures) for signatures of registered voters. Staff determined that the petition is complete.

Dr. Tina Jackson, Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Education, will present this item and be available for questions.

**RESOLUTION OF THE
TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
ON BARBERS HILL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT’S REQUEST TO HOLD A
BRANCH CAMPUS MAINTENANCE TAX AND LEE COLLEGE’S REQUEST TO
ESTABLISH A BRANCH CAMPUS WITHIN THE BARBERS HILL INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Date: January 25, 2024

On this date, we, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, hereby authorize the Barbers Hill Independent School District to hold a branch campus maintenance tax election at a rate not to exceed five cents on each \$100 valuation of taxable property within the Barbers Hill ISD. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in authorizing the branch campus maintenance tax election has determined that the requirements set forth in section 130.253 of the Texas Education Code have been met. Specifically:

- 1) The proposed tax does not exceed five cents on each \$100 valuation of all taxable property in Barbers Hill ISD’s jurisdiction;
- 2) Barbers Hill ISD submitted to THECB a petition for the proposed branch campus maintenance tax election that Barbers Hill ISD determined is legal and genuine and is signed by over five percent of the registered and qualified voters within Barbers Hill ISD; and
- 3) The proposed tax is feasible and desirable under Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board rules.

We further authorize Lee College’s proposed formation of a branch campus within the Barbers Hill Independent School District contingent upon the passage of the branch campus maintenance tax.

The Commissioner of Higher Education shall deliver this resolution to Lee College and the Barbers Hill Independent School District.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED BY THE TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD AS FOLLOWS:

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Signed: _____
Fred Farias III, OD, MS, FAAO
Chair, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Attested to: _____
S. Javaid Anwar, Secretary,
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Lee College Proposal to Create a Branch Campus
and
Barbers Hill Independent School District Petition to Hold a Branch Campus
Maintenance Tax Election

Lee College submitted a proposal and feasibility study for the creation of a community college branch campus within Barbers Hill Independent School District (Barbers Hill ISD) in December 2022 and requested permission to hold a branch campus maintenance tax election. On Thursday November 30, 2023 THECB received from Barbers Hill ISD a certified petition for an election to authorize a community college branch campus within the jurisdiction of Barbers Hill ISD This report provides a summary overview of the petition, branch campus self-study and maintenance tax feasibility study, results of an external review committee appointed by Commissioner Harrison Keller, and findings of a site visit conducted in February 2023. All records referenced are attached and incorporated into this report.

This report finds that Lee College’s proposal addresses all requirements of Texas Administrative Code Subchapter D¹ for formation of a branch campus and Subchapter E² for establishment of a branch campus maintenance tax. External reviews corroborated the completeness of the proposal. Staff recommends that the Commissioner 1) approves the establishment of a branch campus maintenance tax and the holding of a branch campus maintenance tax election by Barbers Hill ISD; and 2) approve the formation and operation of Lee College’s proposed branch campus contingent upon the branch campus maintenance tax receiving voter approval.

Statutory Overview

Branch Campus Formation Approval

Section 130.251 of the Texas Education Code requires a community college to receive approval from the THECB to establish and operate a branch campus within the district’s service area. THECB rules³ require the following:

- Letter of Application to the Commissioner (Received December 12, 2022);
- Community College completion of a self-study to assess whether the proposed branch campus meets the criteria set forth in section 8.74 (Received December 12, 2022);
- THECB appointed team consisting of a majority of community college presidents review the self-study to ensure it meets THECB and SACS standards (Completed February 2022);
- Board staff completes a site visit (Completed February 23, 2023);

¹ 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 8.71 - .76

² 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 8.91-8.103

³ 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§8.74-.75

- Board staff submits to the Commissioner a report on whether the proposal meets standards outlined in section 8.74 and provides recommendation for approval or denial of the request that is not binding on the Commissioner of the Board;
- The Board shall consider the proposed branch campus and in making a decision shall consider the needs of the community college district, the needs of the community served by the proposed branch campus, the potential impact on other institutions of higher education, and the welfare of the state as a whole; and
- The Board shall enter a resolution regarding the formation of the branch campus and be provided to the community college district's governing board by the Commissioner.

Branch Campus Maintenance Tax Authorization

Section 130.253 of the Texas Education code requires the governing body of a county or school district to receive approval from the THECB to order a community college branch campus maintenance tax at a rate not to exceed five cents on each \$100 valuation of all taxable property. A school district may seek approval for such an election by submitting a petition for an election signed by not fewer than five percent of the qualified voters in the school district's jurisdiction. In reaching a decision on whether to approve the election, THECB is required to determine whether the tax rate and petition requirements are met and whether the proposed tax is feasible and desirable. THECB rules set forth the criteria for making a decision on feasibility and desirability.⁴ These criteria include: demographic and economic characteristics; potential student clientele; financial status; projected programs and services; proximity and impediments to programs and services to existing IHEs. These criteria are required to be addressed by a local steering committee study submitted to the THECB.

Summary of Request to Establish Branch Campus

Lee College District and Barbers Hill Independent School District (BHISD) jointly propose creation of a Lee College Branch Campus within the BHISD jurisdiction to be supported by a branch campus maintenance tax. BHISD will build a new, 60,000 square-foot building to house the branch campus. The campus is expected to serve about 1,000 students at full capacity.

As required by Texas Administrative Code §8.74, the college formed a steering committee to conduct a self-study to ensure that the branch campus would meet standards and criteria for instruction and support services required by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The ten-member steering committee included BHISD administrators and trustees, community leaders

⁴ 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 8.99

and officials, and two members of the Lee College Board of Regents. The steering committee in turn appointed three subcommittees:

- Programming Subcommittee to develop courses, programs, degrees and services to be offered at the branch campus;
- Finance Subcommittee to develop a financial plan supporting the branch campus;
- and Architect Subcommittee to develop plans for the facility that will house the branch campus.

Institutional Background

Lee College is an open-admissions, two-year lower-division undergraduate institution established in Baytown, Texas, in 1934. The college's 2,258 square-mile service area includes portions of Harris, Chambers, and Liberty counties. The college's main campus is in Baytown, with off-campus instructional centers in Baytown and Liberty, Texas. The service area comprises 12 high schools, eight prison units, and one state jail. In fall 2021, the college's unduplicated enrollment in credit courses totaled 9,947.

The college has a nationally recognized Honors Program and national champion Debate Society. Lee College has been an Achieving the Dream Leader College since 2011 and a Leader College of Distinction since 2019. The college was ranked in the top 10% of community colleges for two consecutive years by the Aspen Institute.

BHISD, the college's partner in branch campus formation, includes nine campuses with a total 2020-2021 enrollment of 6,410. BHISD received an "A" state accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency in 2020-2021.

Branch Campus Self-Study

The branch campus self-study provides evidence that the proposed branch campus will meet the requirements of the five criteria outlined in TAC §8.74(b)(1-5):

1. Role and Mission; Purpose
2. Programs and Courses
3. Staffing
4. Funding
5. Regional Higher Education Council Review and Certification

Branch Campus Role, Mission, and Purpose. The college documents that its role and mission conform to the four requirements set forth in Texas Education Code Section 130.0011, and that the college's purpose is consistent with nine requirements of TEC 130.003.

Role and Mission:

1. A two-year institution serving its local tax district and service area, and offering vocational, technical, and academic courses for certificates and associate degrees: the Lee College branch campus will offer certificates and associate

- degrees in service to its taxing district and service area. It will be centrally located in Mont Belview and close to several independent school districts.
2. Provision of continuing education, remedial, and compensatory education and offering counseling and guidance to students: the branch campus will offer continuing education vocational programs and developmental and co-requisite programs. It will support a continuing program of guidance and counseling that includes general academic counseling, disability services, veterans advising, and job placement services.
 3. Excellence in instruction, research and public service: Lee College cites its mission statement, which incorporates the three areas.
 4. Support for faculty research: Lee College cited grants supporting research, including a Title V grant to develop and measure effectiveness of the college's first-year students, and faculty participation in the Community College Research Fellows program. The branch campus will be included in institution-wide research projects. Branch campus faculty will be encouraged to pursue discipline-appropriate research.

Purpose (§8.74(b)(1)(A-I)):

- A. Technical programs up to two years in length leading to associate degrees or certificates: the branch campus will offer AAS degrees in Respiratory Therapy and Sonography and a certificate in Pharmacy Technology.
- B. Vocational programs leading to employment in skilled and semi-skilled occupations: the branch campus will offer certificates in Sterile Processing Technology and Drone Operator.
- C. Freshman and sophomore courses in arts and sciences, including the state-mandated core curriculum: Lee College lists over thirty courses spanning nine core curriculum component areas and institutional requirements to be offered at the branch campus.
- D. Continuing adult education programs for occupational or cultural upgrading: the branch campus will offer linked courses for adults enrolling in academic courses, adult travel programs, and senior day trips.
- E. Compensatory education programs: the branch campus will offer developmental and co-requisite programs in English and mathematics.
- F. A continuing program of counseling and guidance: the branch campus will offer a continuing program of counseling and guidance designed to assist students in achieving their educational goals.
- G. Workforce development programs to meet local and statewide needs: see purpose B above.
- H. Adult literacy and other basic skill programs: the branch campus will offer adult basic education course, high school equivalency programs, and English as a Second Language courses.

- I. Other programs prescribed by the Coordinating Board or local governing boards: the college provides support for basic student needs and supports student activities to encourage campus engagement.

Branch Campus Programs and Courses. The college documents that all courses, programs, and degrees will be offered in the name of the parent district (college) and will meet the criteria set forth in TAC §8.74(b)(2)(A-C):

- A. Courses and programs at the branch campus will meet the role, mission, and purposes described in the previous section. Programs at the branch campus will include technical, vocational, transfer, continuing education, and compensatory education programs, along with guidance and counseling programs, workforce programs, and adult basic education programs. Courses for the branch campus have been selected to support the programs.
- B. Courses and programs will be developed and operated with the ongoing assistance and involvement of the parent district faculty and staff. The Lee College Curriculum and Academic Affairs Committee (CAAC), a faculty-led committee, is responsible for course and program development on the main campus and off-campus instructional sites. The CAAC is developing the Branch Campus instructional program. The branch campus administration will report directly to the main campus administration.
- C. Branch campus faculty credentials, full-time/part-time faculty ratios, teaching loads, faculty performance evaluation and effectiveness, and student access to faculty will follow the same policies as those in effect for the main campus. The policies are reviewed regularly to ensure that they contribute to the quality of courses and programs.

Branch Campus Staffing. The college documents that there will be sufficient academic and student support staff to meet the needs of faculty and students on the branch campus (TAC §8.74(b)(3)). The branch campus is expected to serve 750 students, 60 Allied Health technical students, and 100 vocational/workforce and adult education students.

Staffing for transfer courses will include 15 full-time faculty in mathematics and science courses, nine full-time faculty in Allied Health programs, and adjunct instructors for vocational/workforce, adult literacy, and basic education programs.

Fourteen student services staff will serve in academic advising, services coordination, tutoring, and testing center and library support.

The self-study's branch campus organizational chart includes executive leadership, information technology, student services, academic affairs, and workforce/community development staff positions.

Branch Campus Funding. The branch campus will be supported by a branch campus maintenance tax if approved by the Coordinating Board. State aid will be earned consistently with appropriated formula funds. Accounting oversight for the branch campus will comply with generally accepted accounting principles, and financial

reports will be submitted as required for community college districts (TAC §8.74(b)(4)(A-D)).

Regional Higher Education Council Review and Certification of the Branch Campus §8.74(b)(5). The college states that the branch campus will not require review by the Regional Higher Education Council because the branch campus will be located in BHISD. BHISD is contained entirely within the college's service area and is not shared with another college district.

External Evaluators' Review

Commissioner Keller appointed three college presidents to serve on the external evaluator review team. The external review committee consisted of Dr. Richard Rhodes, Austin Community College; Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Amarillo College; and Dr. Christina Ponce, Temple College. Rule §8.74 requires Coordinating Board staff to review the external team's recommendations.

The three committee members agreed unanimously that Lee College's self-study successfully addressed each criterion, including the role, mission and purpose of the community college; programs and courses, and staffing plans, including sufficient academic and student support staff. The committee also agreed that the branch has met the requirement to provide technical programs up to two years in length leading to associate degrees or certificates and vocational programs leading directly to employment.

The reviewers also agreed that the core curriculum, adult education, adult literacy, and workforce development programs designed to meet the local and state-wide needs will be offered to students at the branch campus.

Committee member Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart shared one comment to ask Lee College how the two communities and institutions will communicate to support the branch campus. Dr. Lowery-Hart suggested implementing a local non-governance advisory committee to inform and connect with the Lee College administration.

College President External Review Team

Dr. Richard Rhodes, Austin Community College. Under Dr. Rhodes leadership, ACC earned Achieving the Dream Leader College status. Success initiatives led by Dr. Rhodes include an innovative redesign of ACC's developmental math curriculum, including the successful implementation of MATD 0421 Developmental Mathematics, and the opening of the nation's largest computerized learning lab. During Dr. Rhodes' tenure, the college has established new campuses in the City of Elgin, Hays County, and the refurbished Highland Mall in central Austin. Bond packages approved in 2014 will allow continued revitalization of ACC Highland and expanded career-technical training facilities.

Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, President for Amarillo College since 2014. Amarillo College was named a 2021 Top Five Institution and Rising Star for the Aspen Prize for

Community College Excellence. Under Dr. Lowery-Hart's leadership, Amarillo College developed the systemic Culture of Caring targeting removal of poverty barriers that was featured in *The Atlantic* (June 2018) by Marcella Bombardieri and in a documentary on Amazon Prime, *The Antidote*, by Oscar-nominated and Emmy Award winning directors Kahane Cooperman and John Hoffman.

Dr. Christina Ponce became Temple College's 11th president in January 2019. Prior to becoming president of Temple College, Dr. Ponce held positions with Austin Community College, El Paso Community College, Lee College, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Under Dr. Ponce's leadership, the Temple College Board of Trustees asked Temple voters to approve a \$124.9 million bond issue to fund an expansion of the college's Health Sciences Center and the construction of three new buildings.

Site Visit Findings

Dr. Tina Jackson, Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Education, conducted a site visit to Lee College on February 23, 2023. The following Lee College executive team participated; President Dr. Lynda Villanueva; Dr. Doug Walcerz, Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs; Annette Ferguson, Vice President of Finance and Administration; Gilbert Santana; Chair of Lee College Board of Regents; and Barbers Hill ISD district staff members Ashley Boothe, CTE Coordinator, and Tammi Prothro, Director of Curriculum.

During the site visit Dr. Jackson provided an overview of the site visit agenda and shared that in compliance with Rule 8.74, THECB staff are required to conduct a site visit and submit a report to the Commissioner indicating whether criteria have been met and making recommendations for approval or denial for the establishment of the proposed branch campus.

Dr. Villanueva presented an overview of the self-study, which included sharing a Google map view of the site showing that Barbers ISD schools are located within 15 minutes' drive of the proposed branch campus. There were also several businesses in the area that could become possible sites for work-based learning opportunities, making this a prime location for dual credit programs and work-based learning internships and apprenticeship programs. President Villanueva also shared information about Lee College's 10-member Steering Committee. The Steering Committee appointed three subcommittees:

Programming Subcommittee, responsible for developing the courses, programs, credentials, and services to be provided at the branch campus;

Finance Subcommittee, responsible for developing the financial plan to support the branch campus; and

Architect Subcommittee, responsible for developing plans for the branch campus facility.

Programs offered on the branch campus will focus on Health Care, Allied Health, Cybersecurity, and Cloud computing.

Upon the conclusion of Lee Colleges overview Dr. Jackson shared an overview of the external review committee's findings supporting approval of Lee College's Branch campus proposal. Dr. Jackson also shared the suggestion made by Committee member Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart for implementing a local non-governance advisory committee to inform and connect with the Lee College administration. Lee College's President and Executive committee were supportive of this suggestion and believes it will assist the college with sustaining communication with Lee College and the Barbers Hill ISD Community.

Recommendation

Based on the information provided, THECB staff recommends approval of Lee College's request to establish a branch campus within Barbers Hill ISD contingent upon the proposed maintenance tax receiving voter approval. This contingency is due to the branch campus funding's reliance on the maintenance tax.

Summary of Request to Hold a Branch Campus Maintenance Tax

Barbers Hill ISD has requested to hold a branch campus maintenance tax at a rate of INSERT on each \$100 valuation of all taxable property in Barbers Hill ISD to support the proposed branch campus.

Summary Overview of Maintenance Tax Feasibility Study

The maintenance tax feasibility study provides evidence that requirements have been met for the five criteria set forth in TAC §8.99(b)(1-5) for approval to levy a branch campus maintenance tax:

1. Demographic and economic characteristics of the jurisdiction seeking to establish the maintenance tax;
2. Potential student clientele;
3. The financial status of the proposed jurisdiction to be taxed and the state a whole;
4. Projected programs and services for the proposed jurisdiction based on economic and population trends; and
5. Proximity and impediments to programs and services to existing institutions of higher education.

The information presented on the five criteria includes the results of a community survey and community focus groups that examined the need, potential student clientele, and financial ability of the jurisdiction, and other data required by TAC §8.95. The community survey and community focus groups were conducted by an independent marketing research firm in November 2022. The survey, available in English and Spanish, received nearly 1,000 responses. All respondents self-identified as living within the boundaries of BHISD. Twenty individuals participated in the community focus groups. Separate sessions were conducted for community members, school district parents, employers, and students.

Demographics and Economic Characteristics of Barbers Hill ISD (TAC §8.99(b)(1)(A-C))

Demographic and economic characteristics of BHISD include three components:

- A. Population trends by age group;
- B. Economic development trends and projection; and
- C. Employment trends and projection (i.e., supply-demand data).

The college documents demographics and economic characteristics for each of the three components.

- A. Population Trends by Age Group: BHISD has a total population of 23,439 with a median household income of \$122,083. 68% of respondents identified as white, 22% as Hispanic, and 6% as black. 31.6% hold bachelor's or graduate degrees, and 42.8% have some college or an associate degree.
 - a. The school district has experienced growth every year for the past three decades. Lee College currently enrolls approximately 350 alumni of BHISD each semester and 375 alumni from five school districts in close proximity to BHISD. Student population projections for BHISD show an increase from 7,364 students for the 2022-2023 school year to 13,689 students for 2031-2032.
- B. Economic Development Trends and Projections: job recovery has been steady since mid-2020. Employment was projected to be at pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022. Oil prices have rebounded, with prices topping \$100 per barrel. The end of pandemic restrictions and international events have contributed to the rise. Precedence Research has projected up to 5% growth annually through 2030. The regional housing market shows signs of stabilizing after a post-shutdown surge in summer 2020.
- C. Employment Trends and Projections: unemployment has dropped from 14.2% in April 2020 to 6.8% in December 2021, which is close to the pre-pandemic level of 6.5% in March 2020.

The largest program at the Lee College branch campus will be the transfer program for students pursuing a bachelor's degree. The national employment rate for 25-34 year-olds holding bachelor's degrees was 86% in 2021, compared with 75% for those with some college and 68% for high school graduates. The study asserts that higher levels of employment and higher wages show the continuing demand for workers with bachelor's degrees.

The branch campus will also focus on Allied Health programs. The study provides U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data to show that the number of job openings in Allied Health fields exceeds the number of students currently completing programs each year, indicating a strong labor market for Allied Health graduates. Figures are based on the assumption that the number of Allied Health job openings in the Houston Metro Area is approximately 25% of related Texas openings, given that the Metro Area comprises about one quarter of the state's population.

Potential Student Clientele

Potential student clientele data required for TAC §8.99(b)(2)(A-B) include the following:

- A. Educational levels by age group; and
- B. College-bound data.

The maintenance tax feasibility study does not present these specific data. Instead, the maintenance tax steering committee commissioned a community survey and series of focus groups to gather stakeholder input on the need for a branch campus, potential student clientele, financial ability of the jurisdiction, and other data required under TAC §8.95.

704 of 936 respondents to the study's potential student clientele survey indicated that they or their children would be interested in taking courses at a branch campus in Mont Belvieu. 141 respondents indicated "Maybe," and 91 said no. A majority of respondents identified affordability, class availability, scheduling flexibility, and proximity to home as factors that would encourage them to attend college locally.

See Demographics and Economic Characteristics of Barbers Hill ISD for student population trends by age group.

Focus groups to assess interest in a branch campus and the perceived need for a branch campus showed that community members, parents, students, and employers believed there would be many benefits in development of a branch campus at Mont Belvieu for both traditional and nontraditional students. Participants also believed the branch campus would provide multiple educational opportunities leading students to better employment opportunities.

Financial Status of the Proposed Jurisdiction to be Tax and the State as a Whole

Financial status data required for TAC §8.99(b)(3)(A-B) include the following:

- A. Projected growth or decline in the tax base; and
- B. Trends in state appropriations for community colleges and other institutions of higher education.

- A. The study documents sustained growth in taxable values for the past ten years and projects similar growth through the 2028 tax year. Based on a 5% maintenance tax estimate with adjustments for certain exemptions, Lee College Branch Campus tax revenue is estimated to grow from \$8.28 million in FY 2024 to \$10.37 million in FY 2029. Estimated costs are \$8.28 million for FY 2024 and \$9.58 million for FY 2029 with a capital investment of \$1.4 million in FY 2025.

The draft operating budget for the branch campus begins at \$8.28 million for FY 2024 and increases to \$9.58 million for FY 2029.

- B. The study cites the work of the Commission on Community College Finance (CCCF) as a positive trend in state appropriations and expresses optimism that the majority of the commission's recommendations will be accepted. Under the current funding model, a majority of funding is generated by tuition and

property taxes. The study notes the wide variation in property tax rates adopted by community colleges and in taxable property values.

In the current biennium, state formula funding for community colleges is about \$1.8 billion, distributed through an allocation methodology that considers how colleges perform in relation to one another. The formula is based primarily on property tax values and THECB-identified success points. Recommendations of the CCCF would generate more consistent base levels of funding and ensure that small and rural-serving colleges with lower property tax values will see increased revenues to serve students. The study cites CCCF Recommendations 1.1 through 3.3.

As part of its report on the financial status of the proposed jurisdiction, the study reports on focus group discussions with community members, parents, and employers that included the possibility of a maintenance tax. Respondents discussed the low tax rates they currently pay and understood the possible value of a branch campus maintenance tax. A parent stated they would accept a tax if the branch campus were going to be of high quality and improve the community's way of life. One employer opposed a maintenance tax.

The study notes additionally that focus groups consulted supported tuition discounts in addition to indicating openness to a maintenance tax. An employer noted that, while Mont Belvieu is seen as an affluent area, there are economically disadvantaged communities within and around the area that would benefit from tuition discounts.

This section of the feasibility study concludes that "Barbers Hill ISD is fortunate to have a large and growing tax base that is more than sufficient to support the proposed Branch Campus, as shown by the projected operating budget. Future trends suggest continued growth in the tax base, and changes in the state funding model that will benefit community colleges. Results of a Community Survey and Focus Groups indicate strong support for a Branch Campus, even though it will require a maintenance tax, and highlighted the importance of controlling college costs for students and their families."

Projected Programs and Services for Barbers Hill ISD Based on Economic and Populations Trends (TAC §8.99(b)(4))

Project programs and services for the branch campus are supported by economic trends showing strong demand for workers in Allied Health professions and workers with bachelor's degrees. Populations trends cited in the study show that 25% of the adult population has no college education and would benefit from adult basic education and vocational programs.

The following programs and services will be offered at the Branch Campus:

Technical programs

- AAS in Respiratory Therapy
- AAS in Sonography
- Certificate in Pharmacy Technology
- Certificate in Drone Operation

Vocational programs

- Sterile Processing Technology
- Drone Operator

Freshman and sophomore courses are part of the state-mandated core curriculum. The complete list of courses is provided in the branch campus self-study portion of the proposal.

Continuing adult education programs

- Linked courses for adults who wish to enroll in academic courses
- Adult travel programs including both domestic and international destinations
- Senior day trips in the local area

Developmental and co-requisite courses for math and English using the same placement process as that used on the main campus.

A tutoring center with tutors in math, English, and other disciplines will provide additional support to all students who may benefit from one-on-one academic instruction.

Counseling and guidance services including:

- General academic advising and counseling
- Advising for veterans
- Disability services
- Transfer services for students transferring to another college or university
- Placement services for students seeking employment

Adult Basic Education courses and High School Equivalency courses as needed to meet local demand.

Support for student basic needs, including a food pantry, clothing closet, gas cards, childcare subsidies, and emergency aid.

Student activities to encourage engagement with the campus through student clubs, special events, and recreation.

Proximity and Impediments to Programs and Services to Existing Institutions of Higher Education (TAC §8.99(b)(4)(A-G))

Required sections for this rule include the following:

- A. Identification of institutions that could be affected by a new branch campus;
- B. Documentation of existing programs and services:
 - a. on the campuses of nearby institutions of higher education;
 - b. available to citizens within a 50-mile radius of the proposed jurisdiction;and
 - c. offered in the proposed jurisdiction by existing institutions of higher education;

- C. Financial limitations on existing institutions of higher education inhibiting the offering of programs and services in the proposed jurisdiction;
- D. Availability of facilities, libraries, and equipment for institutions to offer classes in the proposed jurisdiction;
- E. Distance and traffic patterns to existing institutions of higher education;
- F. Effect on enrollments of existing institutions of higher education; and
- G. Effect on financing of existing institutions of higher education.

The study addresses each of these criteria in turn, as summarized below, and concludes that the branch campus will have a negligible impact on other regional colleges within a 50-mile radius. Enrollment at the branch campus will be small compared to enrollments in nearby colleges and universities. Regional traffic patterns and distances to campus pose an impediment to travel to more distant institutions.

- A. Identification of institutions that could be affected by new branch campus: community colleges potentially affected include Alvin, Brazosport, Galveston, Houston, Lone Star and San Jacinto colleges, as well as College of the Mainland and Wharton County Junior Colleges. Houston area four-year institutions include University of Houston, the University of Houston Downtown, the University of Houston Clear Lake, Rice University, Texas Southern University, Houston Baptist University, and the University of St. Thomas. The committee believes that universities are unlikely to be affected because their offerings are dissimilar.
- B. Documentation of existing programs and services within a 50-mile radius: all nine community colleges in the region offer transfer programs. Many offer Allied Health programs, and all have services similar to those that will be offered at the branch campus. No other institutions of higher education (IHE) offer programs and services in Barbers Hill ISD (BHISD).
- C. Financial limitations on existing IHEs inhibiting the offering of programs and services in the proposed jurisdiction: limitations on existing community colleges in offering programs and services in BHISD are statutory and not financial. State law prohibits community colleges from operating in the service areas of other community colleges. BHISD sits wholly within the Lee College service area.
- D. Availability of facilities, libraries, and equipment: the new branch campus facility will include classrooms, computer labs, science labs, allied health labs, advising and counseling offices, a Learning Hub with library and tutoring services, and faculty and staff offices.
- E. Distance and traffic patterns to existing IHEs: the San Jacinto River and lakes and bays connecting to Trinity Bay and Galveston Bay form a natural barrier and significant traffic barrier. San Jacinto College, Houston Community College, and Lone Star College are 25, 30, and 42 miles from BHISD, respectively. Heavy traffic from the district to the institutions creates a barrier, as do the bridges between BHISD and Houston.

- F. Effect on enrollments of existing IHEs: Lee College is significantly smaller than its three closest neighbors. San Jacinto College has an enrollment of 28,000, Houston Community College enrolls 69,000, and Lone Star College in Kingswood enrolls about 70,000. By comparison, Lee College enrolls about 8,000 students, and the branch campus will have a capacity of about 1,000 students.
- G. Effect on the financing of existing IHEs: effects on the financing of existing IHEs will be negligible because of the relatively small enrollment at the branch campus.

Summary of Petition

On Thursday November 30, 2023, THECB received the certified petition that is required for approval of the Branch Campus Maintenance Tax election. The petition included a letter from the district's voter registrar certifying the signatures of registered voters who live in the Barbers Hill Independent School District as of 11/28/23. Workforce Education staff confirmed that 1008 registered voters signed the petition. There are 19,795 registered voters in the district. The 1008 signatures on the petition exceed the five percent requirement (990 signatures) for signatures of registered voters. Staff has determined that the petition is complete.

Recommendation,

Staff finds that all required criteria have been met pertaining to Barbers Hill ISD request for THECB approval to hold a branch campus maintenance tax election. As such, THECB staff recommends approval.