



Texas Governor Rick Perry asks college leaders to shift their thinking

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AUSTIN – Gov. Rick Perry exhorted state university and college leaders Wednesday to fundamentally alter higher education by shifting how public money is spent, how professors are rewarded and how success is graded.

Mr. Perry spoke to about 60 regents, all of whom he appointed, and touted an accountability system that would basically shift power from tenured faculties and university institutions and put more emphasis on performance, such as demonstrated teaching skills, how much research money is brought in and how many students are taught and graduated.

The governor introduced a similar proposal during the last legislative session, but his initiatives failed to gain momentum with lawmakers. On Wednesday, he took the ideas to the people heading universities who owe their positions to him.

"We have the opportunity as a state to not just lead this state and lead this nation, but I will suggest to you that there is not a more important set of reforms, there is not a more influential amount of public policy that can change the world," he said.

The summit of regents and chancellors was hosted by the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative think-tank, which invited other speakers and handed out reading materials that suggested great American universities have been blunted by intellectuals and left-leaning doctrine.

Among the ideas suggested were stripping universities of state-funded scholarships and giving the money directly to qualified students, who could spend the money attending any public or private university.

The overall concept is to have public money to follow schools that offer the best education and results.

Mr. Perry said such changes would move universities toward research that produces real products, encourage students to graduate quicker and eventually create wealth, jobs and ideas.

The summit suggested such efficiencies could help curtail the mushrooming costs of a college education. In Texas, largely based on college tuition deregulation supported by Mr. Perry, tuitions have increased an average of 39 percent in four years.

The university executives showed various levels of enthusiasm for the ideas, but most promised to explore them.

University of Texas System board of regents chairman H. Scott Caven Jr. said he was receptive, particularly to "rewarding those who are doing the best research and best teaching."