

[Print This Article](#)

Thursday, May 22, 2008

Posted on Thu, May. 22, 2008

# University regents hear ideas for change

By R.A. DYER

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

AUSTIN -- Measuring teacher efficiency, requiring evidence of teacher skill for tenure, and taking money allocated for universities and redirecting it instead to student scholarships -- these were among some of the higher education changes floated Wednesday during a meeting of regents of the state's major universities.

Called by Gov. Rick Perry and organized by an Austin-based conservative think tank, the regents' summit at a downtown Austin hotel could set the stage for legislative changes in 2009 and possibly internal changes at Texas universities.

"Today, we started a conversation that will move us toward a frank assessment of those approaches that can improve our university systems' overall effectiveness, increase the degree of accountability, provide students with a superior learning environment and, most importantly, give Texas students the chance to compete in the global marketplace," Perry said in a statement.

The governor shied away from talking specifics during brief off-the-cuff remarks to the gathered regents. He also veered away from any substantive discussion of the increasing college costs resulting from tuition deregulation legislation he signed in 2003.

But David Guenther, a spokesman for the Texas Public Policy Foundation sponsoring the summit, said he believed that Texans are more concerned about accountability issues -- about how money gets spent at universities and whether students get a good deal for their dollars.

Under one proposal floated by his group, the state would redirect money for university programs to scholarships. Students qualifying for in-state tuition would get a scholarship for that amount.

"Monies currently used to subsidize undergraduate and graduate education would fund the scholarships," the foundation said in a report released to regents.

Under another proposal, the state would split research and teaching budgets. The organization also called for compiling information about teachers, including numbers of students taught and student satisfaction ratings, and posting that information prominently on campus.

Among the invited speakers was former U.S. Rep. Dick Arme y, a Republican from North Texas and one-time House majority leader. Arme y has also taught economics at the University of North Texas, and now is reportedly affiliated with a free-market advocacy group.

Arme y told the regents that when making tough changes, they might not make friends. Nonetheless, he said, the regents must soldier on even in the face of opposition from newspaper editorial boards and their own faculty members.

"Put faculty in their place," he said. "They are hired hands."