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Perry to sign bill today at UT-Dallas to encourage creation of major research universities

BY GENE TRAINOR
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Gov. Rick Perry is scheduled to travel to the University of Texas at Dallas to sign a bill today that will encourage creation of more major research universities in Texas.

The bill sets up incentives for the state's seven designated "emerging" universities to become Tier 1 schools with the expectation that the research produced will spin off jobs. The presidents of at least three of those schools — James Spaniolo of the University of Texas at Arlington, Gretchen Bataille of the University of North Texas in Denton and David Daniel of UT-Dallas — are expected to attend the signing ceremony.

The University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University in College Station and Rice University in Houston are Texas' only Tier 1 schools.


"I am extremely pleased that the governor has decided to sign the bill," Daniel said. "I think that if the Legislature can sustain its commitment, it will truly be transformative for Texas higher education."

Voters will go to the polls in November to decide whether to redirect money in the largely untouched Higher Education Fund to creating Tier 1 schools. If the measure is approved, about \$425 million will be available, state Rep. Dan Branch, R-Dallas, has said.

Other funding programs would bring the total money available to \$680 million, said Branch, who helped write the bill that Perry plans to sign.

Spaniolo said today will be "a historic day for Texas."

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"Over the next decade and beyond, the citizens of Texas will reap the benefits — a stronger, more diversified economy, more good jobs and attractive opportunities for students," he wrote in an e-mail. "We look forward to competing for incentive funding . . . to build on the rapid progress UT-Arlington has achieved in recent years toward this goal."

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