

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 4018
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There are concerns that institutions of higher education have different policies regarding the transfer of course credit, which may lead to students attending school for a longer period than they intended. C.S.H.B. 4018 seeks to address these concerns by simplifying and standardizing the core curriculum.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 4018 amends the Education Code to decrease the minimum semester credit hours earned by a student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at an institution of higher education that triggers the requirement to file a degree plan with the institution from 45 credit hours to 30 credit hours. The bill changes the deadline by which the degree plan must be filed as follows:

- for a student who begins the student's first semester or term with the applicable minimum number of credit hours, from not later than the end of the student's second regular semester or term at the institution to after the 12th class day but before the end of that semester or term; and
- for other students, from not later than the end of the second regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned the applicable minimum number of credit hours to after the 12th class day but before the end of that semester or term.

The bill requires a student who is enrolled in a dual credit course at public institution of higher education but who is not enrolled in a degree program to file a degree plan with the institution not later than:

- the end of the second regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 15 or more semester credit hours of course credit for dual credit courses successfully completed by the student; or
- if the student begins the student's first semester or term at the institution with 15 or more semester credit hours of course credit for dual credit courses successfully completed by the student, the end of the student's second regular semester or term at the institution.

The bill makes conforming changes to a provision relating to a student enrolled in a

multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established at a junior college. The bill replaces the authorization for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of provisions relating to the required filing of a degree plan with a requirement to do so and requires the coordinating board to use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under the Negotiated Rulemaking Act in adopting those rules.

C.S.H.B. 4018 requires each public institution of higher education to develop at least one recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution and requires each recommended course sequence to:

- identify all required lower-division courses for the applicable certificate or degree program;
- include for each course, if applicable, the course number or course equivalent under the common course numbering system approved by the coordinating board;
- be designed to enable a full-time student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within two years for an associate degree or certificate program and four years for a baccalaureate degree; and
- include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the applicable time frame.

The bill requires each such institution to include such recommended course sequences in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's website and to submit the recommended course sequences to the coordinating board as provided by coordinating board rule. The bill requires the coordinating board, in adopting such rules, to consult with institutions of higher education.

C.S.H.B. 4018 authorizes each general academic teaching institution to enter into an articulation agreement with a lower-division institution of higher education for a certificate or degree program for which students transferring from the lower-division institution to the general academic teaching institution receive transfer credit. The bill authorizes such an agreement to use fields of study curricula developed by the coordinating board and authorizes a general academic teaching institution to extend an existing articulation agreement entered into under that provision to another lower-division institution of higher education with respect to the transfer of courses from that lower-division institution of higher education to the general academic teaching institution, on request by that lower-division institution of higher education. The bill requires such an articulation agreement to enable a transfer student to receive up to 60 semester credit hours for courses completed at the lower-division institution of higher education. The bill establishes that a general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement under these provisions does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

C.S.H.B. 4018 requires each student enrolled at a public institution of higher education in an associate or bachelor's degree program or in a dual credit course to declare a meta major degree after the 12th class day but before the end of the semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 15 or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including transfer courses, international baccalaureate courses, dual credit courses, and any other course for which the institution has awarded the student college course credit, including course credit awarded by examination. The bill defines "meta major" as a collection of programs of study or academic disciplines that share common foundational skills. The bill requires the coordinating board, in consultation with public institutions of higher education, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of these provisions and requires the board to use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under the Negotiated Rulemaking Act in adopting those rules.

C.S.H.B. 4018 adds representatives of university systems to the advisory committees required to assist the coordinating board in developing a certain recommended core curriculum and specifies that the members of the advisory committees are designated by the applicable institution of

higher education or university system. The bill removes the requirement for an institution to consult with faculty before recommending or nominating a person to the board to serve as a representative on an advisory committee. The bill requires the recommended core curriculum developed under statutory provisions relating to the transfer of credits to have the following components:

- a general core curriculum of at least 24 semester credit hours that includes certain credit hours in specified fields; and
- for certain designated meta majors, an academic discipline core curriculum of not more than 18 semester credit hours specific to that meta major and that includes certain credit hours in specified fields.

The bill requires the coordinating board to develop a recommended academic discipline core curriculum for certain designated meta majors.

C.S.H.B. 4018 requires the core curriculum adopted by each institution of higher education to include a general core curriculum, and for each meta major, an academic discipline core curriculum and provides for the transfer of the block of courses associated with a general core curriculum or academic discipline core curriculum and for the transfer of certain credits toward an institution's general core curriculum or academic discipline core curriculum, as applicable. The bill sets out certain requirements for each public institution of higher education relating to:

- providing information in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's website relating to certain course offerings that fulfill certain core curriculum course requirements and relating to the meta major with which each degree or certificate program is associated;
- providing the institutions general core curriculum and academic discipline core curriculum to the coordinating board in accordance with board rule; and
- advising students regarding the importance of taking coherent sequences of courses in the core curriculum that are aligned with the student's academic and career goals.

The bill sets out the coordinating board's responsibilities to provide certain information to assist each institution of higher education in providing such advice. The bill requires the coordinating board, in adopting rules regarding the recommended core curriculum, to use negotiated rulemaking procedures under the Negotiated Rulemaking Act.

C.S.H.B. 4018, except as otherwise provided, applies its provisions beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year. The bill's provisions relating to recommended course sequences, the transfer of credit from certain institutions and articulation agreements, the declaration of a meta major, and a general core curriculum and academic discipline core curricula apply beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year. The bill requires the coordinating board, not later than May 31, 2021, to develop a recommended core curriculum that conforms to the requirements of the bill's provisions.

C.S.H.B. 4018 repeals Section 51.9685(c-1), Education Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 4018 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes provisions relating to degree plan filing deadlines, including a conforming repealer.

The substitute revises the requirements for the development and submission of a recommended course sequence by each public institution of higher education.

The substitute does not include a requirement for each general academic teaching institution to identify certain lower-division institutions of higher education. The substitute changes the requirement for each general academic teaching institution to enter into a certain articulation agreement with an authorization to do so and revises provisions relating to such agreements.

The substitute requires certain students to declare a meta major.

The substitute includes provisions relating to the composition of certain advisory committees to the coordinating board.

The substitute revises provisions relating to the general core curriculum and academic discipline core curricula. The substitute includes provisions making these curricula transferrable.

The substitute includes certain requirements for an institution of higher education relating to providing information and advising students on these curricula and sets out the coordinating board's responsibilities for assisting the institution in providing such advice.

The substitute requires the coordinating board to use negotiated rulemaking procedures in adopting certain rules.

The substitute changes the effective date provision and the applicability of certain provisions.