

SUBJECT: Tuition rates for excessive undergraduate hours

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Rangel, Solis, Bailey, Cuellar, Dunnam, Rabuck, E. Reyna
0 nays
1 absent — Kamel

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, Local and Uncontested Calendar, April 17 — 31-0

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: CSSB 1485 would require certain in-state residents attending state institutions of higher education to pay nonresident tuition rates, beginning in the fall 1997 semester. The bill would apply to students who had acquired more than 170 class hours but were not enrolled in two or more degree programs, a double major degree program requiring 130 or more credit hours, or a health professional degree program.

The bill would not apply to students in junior colleges and medical and dental schools. The 170-hour limit would not include hours earned more than 10 years before the current degree program began, towards a previously earned degree, for a remedial course or other course not counting toward a degree program, by examination or other non-course means, or at an out-of-state or private university.

Students who earned baccalaureate degrees and attempted no more than six hours over the minimum number required for their degree programs would be eligible for a tuition rebate of up to \$1,000. The rebates would be funded by the tuition increases charged for excessive undergraduate hours.

Schools could not require more than 120 hours for a degree program unless they demonstrated such a need to the coordinating board. Degree programs in existence on September 1, 1997, would until September 1, 1999, to comply with that provision.

CSSB would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSSB 1485 would reduce the number of “professional students” who continue to take university classes without working towards a degree. Approximately 17,000 undergraduate students have accumulated 170 or more classroom credit hours in public institutions of higher education. Since the state pays for about 80 percent of the cost of public higher education, these students are effectively killing time on the public's dollar.

Allowing these students to continue taking courses indefinitely is unfair to other students awaiting university admission who want to learn, earn their degrees, and find jobs. CSSB 1485 would provide an incentive for all students to earn a degree rather than delaying the inevitable transition to the real world.

The bill would remove an equivalent of 4,167 students from formula funding each year and save the state over \$15 million a year. Additional savings would be realized from the incentive of tuition rebates for students who minimized their number of credit hours.

CSSB 1485 would not penalize non-traditional students with special family or economic circumstances. Instead, the bill would encourage them to make the most efficient use of the credit hours they do take, saving money for the students as well as for the state. The state should not continue to subsidize “slackers” who get too comfortable in the ivory tower, refusing to get on with their lives.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSSB 1485 would be unfair to many legitimate students, such as those who accumulated many hours towards a degree, left school for economic or other reasons, and later returned to pursue a different career. Other students who change career path in mid-stream, or parents who return to school after raising families, could be penalized.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The administrative red tape created by CSSB 1485 would increase higher education administrative costs, which could offset much of the savings the bill promises to provide.

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NOTES: The committee substitute added the 120 credit hour cap on degree programs.