

**SUBJECT:** Curriculum requirements for automatic undergraduate admission

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Morrison, F. Brown, Chavez, Goolsby, Mercer, Nixon  
0 nays  
3 absent — Giddings, J. Jones, Smithee

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, March 26 — voice vote

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** Texas high schools offer three levels of curriculum: minimum, recommended, and advanced. Current students must complete at least the minimum requirements in order to receive a high school diploma.

For the minimum program, students must earn at least 22 credits, including basic courses in English, mathematics, science and social studies as well as economics, physical education, health, and speech. For the recommended program, students must complete the minimum program, plus more science and mathematics courses at higher levels, including chemistry, biology, and physics as well as algebra II. For the advanced program, students must complete three years of a foreign language in addition to other recommended core course requirements, and must achieve at least four advanced measures, which include presentation of an original research project, a score of three or more on a College Board Advanced Placement test, a score of four or more on an International Baccalaureate examination, or a score on the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test that qualifies a student for recognition.

Under Education Code, sec. 28.025, students entering the ninth grade in the 2004-05 school year will be required to complete the recommended or advanced high school curriculum unless the student, the student's parent, or other person standing in parental relation to the student, and a school counselor or school administrator agree that the student should be permitted to take courses under the minimum program. Each school district is required

to report the academic achievement record of students who have completed a minimum, recommended, or advanced high school program on the student's transcript, and the transcript must be designed to differentiate clearly between each of the programs.

Under Education Code, sec. 51.803, Texas general academic teaching institutions must admit an applicant for undergraduate admission if the applicant graduated with a grade point average in the top 10 percent of the student's high school graduating class in one of the two school years preceding the academic year for which the student applied for admission.

**DIGEST:**

SB 86 would amend Education Code, sec. 51.803, to require that students graduating with a grade point average in the top 10 percent of their class complete the recommended or advanced high school curriculum to qualify for automatic admission to a higher education institution as an undergraduate. This requirement would apply beginning with admissions for the 2007-08 academic year, and would not apply to an applicant who graduated from a public high school that did not offer the recommended or advanced high school program.

A student would be considered to have satisfied the recommended or advanced program if the student's high school transcript indicated that the student was unable to complete the appropriate curriculum solely because necessary courses were unavailable to the student at the appropriate times in the student's high school career as a result of course scheduling, lack of enrollment capacity, or other causes beyond the student's control. The bill would require school districts to begin noting such facts on the transcripts of students entering ninth grade in the 2003-04 school year or thereafter.

This bill would authorize the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), after consulting with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), by rule to establish standards for determining whether a student from an accredited private school had completed a program equivalent to the recommended or advanced program.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 86 would help ensure that students admitted to college under the top 10 percent law were prepared academically to succeed in college, and would discourage students from taking less rigorous courses in order to get higher grades that might qualify them for admission under this law. In the 2001 school year, 12.4 percent of students who qualified for admission under the top 10 percent law took the minimum level of curriculum. This is unfair to other students who follow more demanding curricula and do not qualify for top 10 percent admission as a result.

The bill would ensure that students who could not take advanced courses for reasons beyond their control would not be penalized. Students who attended schools that did not offer these courses or who otherwise were not able to complete the recommended curriculum would be treated the same way as students who had.

The recommended program will be a graduation requirement for all students by 2008. Students who are given the privilege of automatic admission to a public college or university, and who have the opportunity to take these courses, should have to complete the more rigorous program before 2008.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

SB 86 unfairly would penalize students who finished high school before the recommended curriculum was required. The reasons students do not complete the recommended curriculum vary, and may include lack of timely information about curriculum requirements or insufficient interest in advanced courses. Until the recommended curriculum is required for all students, those who qualify for undergraduate admission under the top 10 percent law should not be penalized for not completing it.

Studies of students who were admitted to college under the top 10 percent law indicate that these students are doing as well as or better than their peers regardless of whether they completed the recommended program. While completion of the recommended program is a worthy goal for high school students, following another program should not be a barrier to college admission.

**NOTES:**

In 2001, the Senate passed a similar measure, SB 974 by Wentworth, which died in the House Higher Education Committee.

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