

SUBJECT: IB diploma and other course credit by public higher education institutions

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Morrison, Goolsby, F. Brown, Dawson, Giddings, Harper-Brown, J. Jones, Rose

0 nays

1 absent — Gallego

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

WITNESSES: For — Thomas Newman, Hurst-Eules-Bedford Independent School District, Texas International Baccalaureate Schools Organization; Karen Phillips, Texas International Baccalaureate Schools; Tracy Weinberg, Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented

Against — None

BACKGROUND: The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma program, founded in 1968, is an internationally recognized comprehensive academic curriculum and assessment system for students in their last two years of high school. It is offered to 1,554 schools in 120 countries around the world, including the United States. Currently, 27 school districts in Texas offer the IB diploma program, with three more waiting for authorization to begin offering it. The decision to offer the IB program is made by the trustees of individual school districts.

In order to earn the IB diploma, students must pass six IB exams in college-level courses taken while they are still in high school and must successfully complete an internal assessment and an extended, comprehensive essay, and must perform community service hours.

DIGEST: SB 111 would require public higher education institutions in Texas to adopt and implement a policy to reward course credit for entering freshmen who successfully completed the IB diploma program, the advanced placement exams (AP), or the college-level examination

program (CLEP) or who successfully completed one or more dual credit courses. The institution would establish requirements for granting course credit, including stipulating what the minimum required scores on examinations would be.

Universities would be required to grant at least 24 semester credit hours or the equivalent course credit in the appropriate subject areas. Universities could grant fewer credit hours if a student scored less than four, which is the minimum score, on an IB exam. Universities could grant fewer credit hours only for a course that was the subject of the exam on which the student scored less the minimum.

Following a request by a freshmen applicant, universities would have to inform the students how many credits they were eligible to receive from a particular course or exam based on university policies.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) would have to determine which courses at each university were substantially similar to the courses and examinations in the IB diploma program as well as the AP and the CLEP. The information would be available to the public on THECB's Internet website.

Universities would have to adopt and make the course credit policy available by December 31, 2005, and begin implementation by the 2006-07 academic year. The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 111 would standardize the awarding of higher education course credits to IB diploma students. All Texas universities already offer course credit to varying degrees to IB diploma students and to students who achieve the required scores on AP and CLEP exams. Texas should join other states, including Colorado, Florida and California, that have enacted legislation to award at least 24 hours of course credit to IB diploma students. Every state higher education institution in California offers course credit to IB diploma students. The University of Florida attracts more IB students than any university in the world because it offers 30 hours of credit for the diploma. More than 100 universities in the United States have instituted similar programs to award 24 to 30 hours of credit to IB diploma students.

IB diploma students are taught to be active learners, well rounded individuals, and engaged citizens. They have spent many more hours than their peers writing, collaborating, problem solving, and completing

authentic research projects, in addition to performing community service hours. As IB students, they already have successfully completed college-level work while completing the requirements for the IB diploma and should not have to repeat work in college they already have covered. These are the students that top universities want and the students that Texas should recruit for Texas universities.

SB 111 would stop the "brain drain" of out-of-state applications to universities that have more generous IB diploma policies and would keep these outstanding students in Texas. Texas IB diploma students are choosing to apply to out-of-state universities, including Cornell, Duke, Stanford, and Brown, when they should be staying in Texas. IB students are among the best educated high school students in the country, with average SAT scores of 1300. By awarding Texas IB diploma recipients with 24 hours of core credit, the state would encourage these students to stay in Texas for their undergraduate college experience. This could lead to more productive citizens contributing to the economy.

A survey conducted by the University of Florida admissions office found that IB students earn higher grades in sophomore courses than do students who started as freshmen at the university. IB students also earn undergraduate degrees in three or four years and complete graduate studies at a higher rate than non-IB students. This would be a significant cost savings to the state.

Concerns that the bill would reduce a university's ability to assess students are unfounded. Institutions would retain authority to decide where the 24 hours of course credit would be awarded. There is enough flexibility for an institution to grant 24 hours of course credit and still require a student to take whatever courses the institution deemed appropriate.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 111 would reduce a university's ability to gauge student performance, yet it would require all universities to grant course credit to these students based on IB exam scores. The IB curriculum is recognized as a rigorous curriculum but it is not currently evaluated or reviewed by college admission officers as part of the admissions process. Whether or not an institution offered course credit to IB diploma students is a decision best left to the institution and should not be mandated by state law.