

- SUBJECT:** Offering developmental education courses at higher education universities
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Branch, Castro, Alonzo, Berman, Cohen, D. Howard, Patrick, Rose
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — McCall
- WITNESSES:** For — Jo-Carol Fabianke, Alamo Colleges; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Leo Zuniga, Alamo Colleges)
- Against — None
- On — Roberto Aguero, Tarrant County College District; Tamara Clunis, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Rey Garcia, Texas Association of Community Colleges
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 51.3062 regulates the Success Initiative program as a requirement at all Texas institutions of higher education and was designed to improve student success in college. The program was established by the Legislature in 2003, and it requires students, unless exempt, to be assessed in reading, writing and math skills before enrolling in college and to be advised based on the results of that assessment. Students who score below the minimum passing level of one or more sections of the initial assessment test are required to enroll in appropriate developmental education courses. Certain students are exempt, including students who:
- have a certain score on the SAT or ACT standardized tests;
  - have a certain minimum TAKS score;
  - already have a associate or baccalaureate degree;
  - have transferred successfully after completing college-level work;
  - are enrolled in a certificate program; or
  - are serving as a member of a reserve component of the armed forces, are a veteran, or on active duty.

DIGEST:

CSHB 3296 would stipulate that an institution of higher education that required a student to enroll in developmental coursework would have to allow a student the option of enrolling in an intensive or compressed course-based format that allowed the student, to the extent possible, to enroll without substantially conflicting with other coursework or the student's overall academic progress. The student would have to be eligible under the rules of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to enroll in developmental courses in the intensive or compressed course-based format.

THECB would be required to adopt rules prescribing student eligibility criteria for enrolling in the intensive or compressed course-based format and requirements for approving the use of that format.

The change proposed by the bill would take effect beginning with the 2010-11 academic year.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

Currently, when a student takes a college assessment test and fails, either by a small or a large margin, the student is required to take a non-credit bearing developmental course to bring the student up to a college-ready standard. CSHB 3296 would require all institutions to offer the option of compressed or intensive course-based developmental courses to their students, and institutions would receive funding for these courses.

About 60 percent of community college students require some type of developmental or remedial education. Some students spend up to two years paying for non-credit bearing developmental courses. Many of these students get frustrated and drop out. If the time it takes to complete these prerequisite courses without reducing quality could be reduced, a barrier to degree attainment could effectively be eliminated.

Although some institutions offer compressed remedial courses, by requiring all institutions to offer compressed, developmental courses, the bill would encourage students to quickly complete their developmental education and move on to obtaining their degrees.

A similar pilot program is already in place at Tarrant County College and it is proving to be successful. About 450 students are in the program and report they like the format and are doing well. The student retention rate has improved significantly.

Even though the bill requires institutions to offer the compressed developmental course-based coursework, it offers flexibility by allowing institutions to offer the format, to the extent possible, in a way that would not conflict with other coursework. This would address limitations institutions may have in terms of classroom availability, instructor availability, and curriculum design for intensive or compressed formats. Also, THECB would adopt rules to determine if a student was eligible to enroll in developmental courses in this format to ensure that only students who were close to being college-ready were in the program.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Community colleges already are experimenting with programs like the one proposed in the bill and are getting good results. However, funding for a mandated statewide programs is a concern because mandating these programs on a statewide level would be expensive. It is not clear whether compressed coursework would be eligible for state funding. Some of what is proposed in the bill would be eligible for state funding, but a program that is outside traditional coursework might not be. There needs to be identified funding for the requirements in the bill. One approach would be for THECB to include non-course based developmental education in their formula recommendations for the Legislature.