

**SUBJECT:** Revising the Texas Success Initiative for student readiness

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

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Branch, Castro, Alonzo, D. Howard, Johnson, Lewis, Patrick  
0 nays  
2 absent — Bonnen, Brown

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Don Baylor, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Nelson Salinas, Texas Association of Business; Justin Yancy, Governor’s Business Council)  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Tamara Clunis, David Gardner, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Cynthia Ferrell, Texas Association of Community Colleges

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 51.3062 establishes the Texas Success Initiative (TSI), in which higher education institutions must assess each entering undergraduate student’s skills to determine readiness to enroll in freshman-level coursework. The institutions may not use the assessments as a condition of student admission. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) must prescribe standards for assessment instruments, but a higher education institution is allowed to adopt more stringent assessment standards if desired.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 1244 would revise the TSI by requiring the THECB to prescribe a single standard or set of standards to effectively measure student readiness for each assessment instrument. The bill would remove the higher education institution’s authority to adopt more stringent standards to assess a student’s readiness to perform freshman-level academic coursework.  
  
Higher education institutions that required a student to enroll in developmental education coursework would have to offer a range of developmental coursework or instructional support that included the

integration of technology to efficiently address the student's particular developmental needs.

A higher education institution would be required to base developmental coursework on research-based best practices that included the following components:

- assessment;
- differentiated placement and instruction;
- faculty development;
- support services;
- program evaluation;
- integration of technology with an emphasis on instructional support programs;
- noncourse-based developmental education interventions; and
- course pairing of developmental education courses with credit-bearing courses.

The coordinating board would be required to adopt rules for this provision.

A higher education institution would be required to provide professional development programs, including instruction in differentiated instruction methods designed to address students' diverse learning needs, to faculty and staff who provided developmental coursework to students.

CSHB 1244 would define "program evaluation" to mean a systematic method of collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about developmental education courses, interventions, and policies, particularly about their effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

The change in the law made by the bill would apply beginning with the 2012-2013 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, 2011.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

Developmental education in Texas is in need of reform. CSHB 1244 would reform the way developmental education is delivered at higher education institutions by using fact-based research and best practices to design curricula and effective developmental education programs.

By allowing the coordinating board to design a single assessment test, rather than the multiple assessments that are used now, higher education officials would be able to determine the best policy to pursue. The coordinating board currently recognizes four tests for student readiness assessment. Since assessment and placement are essential to ensuring students have a successful higher education outcome, it is critical to move toward a single assessment for measuring student readiness.

Almost two-thirds of all incoming community college students need at least one developmental education course. Students who require developmental education graduate at about half the rate of other students. Of the 42,000 students in community college who needed a math developmental education course in 2006, only about 14 percent went on to complete a college-level math course. Furthermore, about 11 percent of semester credit hours at community and technical colleges in 2010 were developmental education semester credit hours.

Between 2004 and 2010, 12 percent of contact hours in community colleges were in developmental education courses. Since 2010, that figure has dropped to 8 percent, so there has been progress. With such a diverse student population, Texas needs to implement innovative projects that are effective in addressing students' diverse needs, accelerating their progress toward college and career readiness, and improving overall outcomes. While the bill would give direction, it also would allow flexibility and recognize the autonomy of community colleges. Community colleges have to tailor their courses to meet the broad needs of their communities and the diverse populations they serve.

Developmental education instructors do not have access to ongoing professional development to integrate current research into instructional practice. CSHB 1244 would address these issues.

Institutions would have to base developmental education coursework on research-based practices that included support services, program evaluation, integration of technology, and other key components.

Developmental education in Texas needs to fundamentally change in order to achieve better results. The bill would set the stage so that higher education decision-makers could effectively utilize the best practices that are already being identified.

The bill would not stymie an institution's ability to accurately assess college readiness because it would allow the coordinating board the flexibility to set multiple standards. The coordinating board would be able to work with institutions to develop multiple standards for the different types of institutions.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 1244 would limit an institution's ability to set college readiness standards that could be more rigorous than those of the coordinating board. For institutions with a more rigorous curriculum, being able to more accurately assess student college readiness may require using assessment tools that are more rigorous than what the coordinating board has adopted. For example, academic coursework for a freshman at a research university could demand a higher readiness level for math than that required for a freshman at a master's university.

The inability of an institution to use a more stringent standard could compromise an institution's ability to accurately assess a student's college readiness. Having an assessment tool that is more in line with the rigors of course curricula would permit an institution to better place students and to provide resources to students needing academic support services.