

- SUBJECT:** Allowing private or independent colleges to continue a grant program
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Lozano, Raney, Alonzo, Alvarado, Button, Howard, Morrison, Turner
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Clardy
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, March 20 — 25-5 (Burton, Creighton, Hall, Huffines, V. Taylor)
- WITNESSES:** For — Bruce Brinson, Paul Quinn College; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ray Martinez, Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ken Martin and Charles Puls, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 61.221 allows the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to provide tuition equalization grants to Texas residents enrolled in any approved private Texas college or university. Sec. 61.222 establishes eligibility requirements for the approval of private or independent institutions of higher education for this purpose, including that they must hold the same accreditation as public institutions of higher education.
- The coordinating board may temporarily approve a private or independent institution that previously held, but no longer holds, the same accreditation as public institutions to participate in the tuition equalization grants program if the institution:
- accredited by an accreditor recognized by the board;

- actively working toward the same accreditation as public institutions of higher education;
- participating in the federal Pell Grant Program; and
- a historically black college or university.

The coordinating board may grant temporary approval for a two-year period and may renew the approval once. Some have suggested that there is a need to ensure college students do not lose funding from the tuition equalization grants program while their independent or private college seeks to restore accreditation to participate in the program.

DIGEST:

SB 331 would allow the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to renew twice, rather than once, the two-year temporary approval for an independent or private institution of higher education to participate in the tuition equalization grants program.

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, 2017.