

- SUBJECT:** Facilitating college course credit transferability
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — C. Turner, Stucky, Button, Frullo, Howard, Pacheco, Schaefer, Wilson
- 0 nays
- 3 absent — E. Johnson, Smithee, Walle
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 24 — 31-0
- WITNESSES:** *On House companion bill, HB 4018:*
For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; Dana Chiodo, CompTIA; Dana Harris, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Nataly Saucedo, United Ways of Texas; Daniel Womack, Dow)
- Against — None
- On — James Hallmark, Texas A&M University System; Dustin Meador, Texas Association of Community Colleges; Raymund Paredes, Higher Education Coordinating Board; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Rex Peebles, Higher Education Coordinating Board)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code sec. 61.822 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to encourage the transferability of lower division course credit among institutions of higher education. The coordinating board oversees several requirements in Education Code ch. 61, subch. S designed to facilitate transfers from public junior or community colleges to general academic teaching institutions. These include a common course numbering system, core curricula, and fields of study.
- DIGEST:** CSSB 25 would require general academic teaching institutions and junior

colleges to report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Legislature details about courses the institution would not accept for transfer credit. Higher education institutions would have to develop at least one recommended course sequence for each major offered. The bill also would require all college students, not just those attending community college, to file degree plans after earning 30 semester credit hours.

Reporting of nontransferable credit. CSSB 25 would require each general academic teaching institution to prepare a report describing any courses in the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual for which a student who transferred to the institution from another institution was not granted academic credit at the receiving institution or for which such a student who had declared a major and had not changed majors was not granted academic credit toward the student's major at the receiving institution.

The report would have to be provided to THECB and the Legislature by March 1 of each year and include:

- the course name and type;
- which institution of higher education provided academic credit for the course; and
- the reason why the receiving institution did not grant academic credit for the course.

Each public junior college would have to prepare a report on courses taken by students who, during the preceding academic year, had transferred to a general academic teaching institution or had earned an associate degree at the college. The report would have to be provided to THECB and the Legislature by March 1 of each year and would be required to include the total number of:

- courses attempted and completed at the college, including the total number of semester credit hours for those courses, disaggregated by whether the course was in the Workforce Education Course

- Manual or the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual;
- courses attempted and completed at the college that were not in the recommended core curriculum developed by the coordinating board; and
 - dual credit courses, including courses for joint high school and junior college credit, attempted and completed at the college.

Common admission form. THECB would have to ensure when adopting a Texas common application form that an applicant could indicate consent for the form to be submitted to other public higher education institutions that offered the applicant's degree program if the institution to which the application was originally submitted denied the applicant admission.

Degree plan. CSSB 25 would decrease from 45 to 30 the minimum number of semester credit hours that would trigger requirements for a student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at a public higher education institution to file a degree plan. The bill would change the deadline for the filing of a degree plan to after the 12th class day but before the end of the semester in which the student earned the minimum number of semester credit hours, rather than the end of the second regular semester or term after the student earned the minimum number.

The bill also would change the degree plan filing deadline for a student who began the student's first semester at an institution with 30 or more credit hours from the end of the student's second regular semester at the institution to after the 12th class day but before the end of the student's first semester or term.

Dual credit. Certain students enrolled in a dual credit course at an institution would have to file a degree plan not later than the end of the second regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a total of 15 or more semester credit hours of dual credit. If a student began the student's first semester at the institution with 15 or more semester credit hours of dual course credit, the degree plan would have to be filed at the end of the student's second regular semester.

Recommended course sequences. Each higher education institution would have to develop at least one recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. Each sequence would have to:

- identify all required lower-division courses for the applicable certificate or degree program;
- include the applicable course number or equivalent under the common course numbering system and the course equivalent in the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual;
- be designed to enable a full-time student to obtain a certificate or degree within two years for a 60-hour degree or certificate or four years for a 120-hour degree; and
- include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within those time frames.

Each higher education institution would have to include the recommended course sequences in its course catalog and on its website and submit the recommended course sequences to THECB.

Articulation agreements. The bill would define "articulation agreement" as a formal written agreement between a lower-division institution and a general academic teaching institution identifying courses offered by the lower-division institution that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general academic teaching institution. The bill would define "lower-division institution of higher education" to mean a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute. The bill would use the definition of "general academic teaching institution" assigned by Education Code sec. 61.003.

Each general academic teaching institution could enter into an articulation agreement with a lower-division institution for a certificate or degree program for which transferring students could receive transfer credit. Such an agreement could enable a transfer student to receive up to 60 semester

credit hours for courses completed at the lower-division institution.

A general academic teaching institution could extend an existing articulation agreement to another lower-division institution on request by that lower-division institution.

An articulation agreement entered into on or after September 1, 2019, could use field of study curricula developed by the coordinating board.

Student information. A higher education institution or a school district that offered international baccalaureate courses, dual credit courses, or any other course for which an institution could award college credit could release student information to an institution for purposes of transferring course credit to that institution or enabling the awarding of course credit by that institution, in accordance with federal and state student privacy laws.

Study on core curriculum. THECB would be required to study and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding the feasibility of implementing statewide meta majors for institutions of higher education. The board would have to establish an advisory committee to assist in completing the study and to provide subject matter expertise and analysis.

The advisory committee would have to consist of representatives of public junior colleges and general academic teaching institutions designated by the colleges and institutions. A majority of the committee members would have to represent institutions at which at least 25 percent of students enrolled for the 2018 fall semester were classified as transfer students.

In appointing members to the committee, THECB would have to ensure membership was balanced with respect to:

- institutional representation, including the regions of the state, the type of mission of the institution or college, university system affiliation, and student enrollment;
- representation of faculty and administrators at institutions and

- colleges;
- representation of academic disciplines; and
- any other factors the board deemed relevant.

The advisory committee would have to study and make recommendations to the coordinating board on the effectiveness of statutory requirements regarding the transfer of course credit for courses in the core curriculum to support more efficient undergraduate transfer between higher education institutions. The study and recommendations would have to include an analysis of:

- the efficacy of dividing the recommended core curriculum for each meta major into a general academic core curriculum and an academic discipline core curriculum and, if it was determined to be efficacious, the recommended number of semester credit hours for each component;
- methods to ensure that courses completed in the general academic core curriculum and academic discipline core curriculum would transfer between institutions and apply toward a student's major at the receiving institution; and
- the potential inclusion of courses in the field of study curricula in the recommended core curriculum.

For each quarter ending before November 1, 2020, THECB would have to submit to certain legislative committee chairs a report on the board's progress on the study. The report would be due by November 1, 2020, and would have to be submitted to the lieutenant governor, the House speaker, and the relevant standing legislative committees.

CSSB 25 would apply beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year, except that the bill's provisions relating to recommended course sequences and articulation agreements would apply beginning with the 2021-2022 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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSSB 25 would encourage the timely completion of college degrees by helping community college students planning to transfer to a four-year university select courses likely to apply to their major. The accumulation of excess credit hours that either do not transfer or do not apply to a student's major is costing students and taxpayers millions of dollars each year. Ensuring efficient transfer pathways among Texas institutions of higher education is critical to meeting the state's goal of having 60 percent of Texans ages 25 to 34 with a certificate or degree by 2030.

The bill would establish a reporting requirement for general academic institutions and community colleges to provide the state with data that could be used to develop policies to improve transferability. By requiring universities to report the courses they did not accept for transfer credit, the bill would help the Legislature gain a better understanding of the specific challenges of improving student transfer pathways.

Student advising would be improved by the bill's requirement that all students file a degree plan after completing 30 semester credit hours rather than the current 45 hours. This would be in line with current requirements for community college students to file a degree plan at 30 hours. The bill also would ensure the growing number of students taking dual credit courses did not accumulate excess credit by requiring them to file degree plans after earning 15 credit hours.

CSSB 25 also would help students select the best courses for their major by requiring higher education institutions to develop at least one recommended course sequence for each undergraduate degree they offer.

The bill would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to convene an advisory committee to study whether the core curriculum that all Texas college students must complete should be split into a general academic core and a core specific to meta majors, which are collections of academic majors that have related courses. This could lead to legislative recommendations that would provide students with more assurance that

their credits would transfer and apply to their major.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No concerns identified.