

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 3025
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Higher Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Each year thousands of students enter community colleges with the intent to transfer to a four-year university, but some reports indicate that only a minority succeed in doing so. Interested parties argue that students are more likely to succeed if given early and consistent advising and a clear degree plan to follow. Those parties therefore argue that Texas should invest in creating a seamless transfer pathway that decreases the time a student takes to complete a degree and simplifies the process for a student who wants to continue his or her education beyond a certificate or associate's degree. H.B. 3025 seeks to implement certain measures to facilitate the transfer of students within the public higher education system and the timely graduation of students from public institutions of higher education.

H.B. 3025 amends current law relating to measures to facilitate the transfer of students within the public higher education system and the timely graduation of students from public institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 7 (Section 51.9685, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.05135, as follows:

Sec. 61.05135. STATEWIDE TRANSFER COMPACTS. (a) Defines, in this section, "career school or college" and "qualified degree-granting career school or college."

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in collaboration with institutions of higher education, to develop transfer compacts that identify learning objectives for coursework in major degree fields that are acceptable across institutions offering coursework or degrees in those fields in an effort to facilitate the universal articulation of specific courses completed at public junior colleges, public state colleges, public technical institutes, general academic teaching institutions, and qualified degree-granting career schools or colleges and transferred to general academic teaching institutions.

(c) Authorizes a career school or college to apply to THECB to participate in a statewide transfer compact developed under this section. Requires THECB, on application by a career school or college, to review the school's or college's curriculum for the purpose of determining whether the school or college is qualified to participate in the compact. Authorizes THECB to determine that the career school or college is qualified to participate in the compact only if THECB finds that the school or college:

(1) is authorized to grant degrees in this state;

(2) has adopted and implemented a core curriculum described by Section 61.822 (Core Curriculum), applying the same assumptions and defining characteristics applicable to institutions of higher education; and

(3) has appropriately identified for each of its core curriculum courses the equivalent course number under the common course numbering system approved by THECB under Section 61.832 (Common Course Numbering System).

(d) Requires an institution of higher education or qualified degree-granting career school or college to comply with any applicable compact under Subsection (b) entered into by the institution, school, or college and THECB.

(e) Requires a general academic teaching institution designated as a research institution under THECB's higher education accountability system that elects not to participate in an applicable transfer compact developed under this section to:

(1) publish on the institution's website for use by prospective undergraduate students a detailed description, developed by the institution's faculty, of the learning objectives, content, and prior knowledge requirements for at least 12 courses for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education; and

(2) establish honors articulation agreements with at least two public junior colleges designed to strengthen the lower-division course offerings of those public junior colleges and to improve the persistence and success rates of students who transfer to the institution from public junior colleges.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.0515(a), Education Code, to prohibit a student, to earn a baccalaureate degree, from being required by a general academic teaching institution to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency unless academic accreditation or professional licensure requirements require the completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree, rather than by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor unless the institution determines that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.05151, as follows:

Sec. 61.05151. SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS REQUIRED FOR ASSOCIATE DEGREE. (a) Prohibits a student, to earn an associate degree, from being required by an institution of higher education to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency unless academic accreditation or professional licensure requirements require the completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

(b) Authorizes THECB to review one or more of an institution's associate degree programs to ensure compliance with this section.

(c) Provides that Subsection (a) does not apply to an associate degree awarded by an institution to a student enrolled in the institution before the 2013 fall semester.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 61.052, Education Code, by amending Subsections (a) and (b) and adding Subsection (b-1), as follows:

(a) Requires that the comprehensive list of courses offered by each institution also specifically identify any course included in the common course numbering system under Section 61.832 that has been added to or removed from the institution's list for the current

academic year, and requires THECB to distribute that information as necessary to accomplish the purposes of Section 61.832.

(b) Requires the governing board, after the comprehensive list of courses is submitted by a governing board under Subsection (a), to submit on dates designated by the board any changes in the comprehensive list of courses to be offered, including any changes relating to offering a course included in the common course numbering system. Makes a nonsubstantive change.

(b-1) Requires each governing board to certify at the time of submission under Subsection (a) that the institution does not:

(1) prohibit the acceptance of transfer credit based solely on the accreditation of the sending institution; or

(2) include language in any materials published by the institution, whether in printed or electronic form, suggesting that such a prohibition exists.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 61.822, Education Code, by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (f), as follows:

(a) Requires THECB, with the assistance of advisory committees composed of representatives of institutions of higher education, to develop a recommended core curriculum of at least 42 semester credit hours, including a statement of the content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum. Requires at least a majority of the members of any advisory committee named under this section to be administrators or faculty members of an institution of higher education.

(f) Requires THECB, in an effort to facilitate the transfer of major-related coursework beyond the general education core curriculum, with the assistance of the advisory committees described by Subsection (a), to:

(1) develop a course-specific core curriculum for each broad academic discipline within the general core curriculum; and

(2) identify those degree programs offered at institutions of higher education to which the course-specific core curriculum, if successfully completed by a student at another institution of higher education or at a qualified degree-granting career school or college, as defined by Section 61.05135, is fully transferrable.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 61.832, Education Code, by adding Subsection (e) to require a student who transfers from one institution of higher education to another to receive academic credit from the receiving institution for each course that the student has successfully completed that serves as an equivalent course under the common course numbering system at the institution from which the student transfers.

SECTION 7. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Section 51.9685, as follows:

Sec. 51.9685. **REQUIRED FILING OF DEGREE PLAN.** (a) Defines, in this section, "degree plan" and "institution of higher education."

(b) Requires each student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at an institution of higher education, except as otherwise provided by Subsection (c), to file a degree plan with the institution not later than the semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 45 or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including transfer courses, international baccalaureate courses, dual credit courses, and any other course for which the institution the

student attends has awarded the student college course credit, including by examination.

(c) Requires a student to whom this section applies who begins the student's first semester or term at an institution of higher education with 45 or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses described by Subsection (b) to file a degree plan with the institution during the student's first semester at the institution.

(d) Prohibits a student to whom this section applies from registering for any course offered by the institution of higher education for a semester or term succeeding the semester or term in which the student is required to file a degree plan under this section unless the student has filed a degree plan with the institution.

(e) Prohibits a student to whom this section applies, after filing a degree plan with an institution of higher education as required by this section, from changing the student's degree plan or enrolling in a course that is not included in the student's degree plan unless the student has consulted with the student's academic advisor and satisfied any applicable prerequisite or other requirement imposed by the institution regarding that degree plan change or course enrollment, as applicable.

(f) Authorizes THECB, in consultation with institutions of higher education, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 8. Provides that the change in law made by this Act to Section 61.0515(a), Education Code, applies beginning with undergraduate students who initially enroll in a general academic teaching institution for the 2013 fall semester.

SECTION 9. Provides that the changes in law made by this Act to Section 61.052, Education Code, apply to the comprehensive lists of courses offered by public institutions of higher education beginning with lists required to be submitted for the 2012-2013 academic year.

SECTION 10. Requires THECB, not later than May 31, 2012, to develop core curricula for broad academic disciplines included within the general core curriculum that conform to the requirements of Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 11. Provides that Section 61.832(e), Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2011 fall semester.

SECTION 12. Provides that Section 51.9685, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with undergraduate students who initially enroll in a general academic teaching institution for the 2011 fall semester.

SECTION 13. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.