

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 1583
By: Clardy (Zaffirini)
Higher Education
5/22/2015
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Approximately one-half of all college students in Texas attend school part-time while they work to help pay for school, and this is especially true at two-year institutions that offer associate degrees and specialty certificate programs. Because part-time students lack predictability in their school schedule, it is difficult for them to accommodate work schedules, child care, and other obligations. The decision between taking a class and working often leads to slower completion rates, and many times the student does not finish the degree at all.

Many states, such as Tennessee and New York, have implemented block scheduling and have seen graduation rates rise significantly. In addition to this, after the 2011 legislative session, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) produced a report pertaining to improved student outcomes. One of THECB's recommendations was "block schedules with consistent meeting times to provide predictability and stability."

C.S.H.B. 1583 would promote the use of block scheduling for community college programs.

C.S.H.B. 1583 amends current law relating to block scheduling for certain associate degree and certificate programs at public junior colleges.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 130.0095, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 130, Education Code, by adding Section 130.0095, as follows:

Sec. 130.0095. BLOCK SCHEDULING FOR CERTAIN ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM. (a) Requires the college, to facilitate timely degree completion by students at public junior colleges, to establish for at least five of those programs not previously offered as a block schedule curriculum, a block schedule curriculum under which:

(1) courses required for a student's enrollment in the program as a full-time student are offered each semester in scheduled blocks, such as a morning, full-day, afternoon, evening, or weekend block schedule, designed to provide scheduling predictability from semester to semester to students enrolled in the program; and

(2) students may enroll in an entire block schedule curriculum offered under the program in a semester, rather than enrolling in individual courses leading toward the degree or certificate.

(b) Requires each public junior college to publish in advance of each semester the available block schedule curricula for each associate degree or certificate program described by Subsection (a) offered by the college for that semester.

(c) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), consultation with public junior colleges, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section, including rules prescribing a process by which a public junior college may petition the coordinating board for an exception to the number of programs for which a block schedule curriculum is required by Subsection (a) on demonstration of hardship.

(d) Requires THECB to submit to the governor of the State of Texas and legislature a detailed report on the effectiveness of block scheduling under this section and any related recommendations for legislative or other action, not later than November 1, 2018.

(e) Provides that this section expires August 1, 2019.

SECTION 2. Provides that Section 130.0095, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2016 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.