

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 947
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Texas College Work-Study program provides eligible, financially needy students with jobs to help enable those students to attend public or private institutions of higher education. Employers provide part-time employment (insofar as is practicable, related to the student's academic interests) to a student and pay at least 25 percent (nonprofits) or 50 percent (for-profits) of the student's wages.

Currently, work-study placements funded through the Texas College Work-Study program primarily are on-campus positions, even though encouraging institutions to collaborate with business could help provide career relevant work-study placements. Texas could be leveraging its investment in College Work-Study funds to create off-campus work study positions as a way to provide meaningful work experience, especially for low-income, non-traditional students enrolled in public two-year institutions. These students would be better served by work placements in relevant fields that could provide the basis for employment after earning an associate degree or other certificate.

Because it is not clear why the current Texas College Work-Study program is not funding off-campus career focused placements despite such being allowed by statute, S.B. 947 would require a study of this issue, which could reveal potential challenges and offer solutions to help improve the program's outcomes. What's more, the study could help identify appropriate community colleges that show strong potential for piloting a private-sector work-study partnership. The study should be able to determine if such partnerships lead to improved outcomes as compared to the current on-campus program, as measured by higher graduation rates, increased employment within the field of study for student participants, or an expansion in the number of students taking advantage of the program due to private employer participation.

As proposed, S.B. 947 amends current law relating to a study and report by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board on the feasibility of providing off-campus employment positions through the Texas college work-study program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter E, Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Section 56.081, as follows:

Sec. 56.081. STUDY ON FEASIBILITY OF PROVIDING OFF-CAMPUS WORK-STUDY EMPLOYMENT. (a) Defines "public junior college."

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to conduct a study to examine the feasibility of providing employment positions located off-campus through the Texas college work-study program.

(c) Requires that the study identify:

(1) best practices for developing partnerships with employers to provide off-campus employment positions through the work-study program, including best practices learned from other apprenticeship, internship, or mentorship programs in this state or from similar programs in other states;

(2) any careers or industries that are well-suited for providing off-campus employment positions through the work-study program;

(3) current barriers that public junior colleges face in developing partnerships with employers to provide off-campus employment positions through the work-study program, including any staffing needs or limitations on the outreach capabilities of those colleges; and

(4) any public junior colleges that demonstrate strong potential for successful participation in a pilot program to develop partnerships with employers to provide off-campus employment positions through the work-study program.

(d) Requires THECB to submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the standing legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over higher education a report on the results of the study and any recommendations for legislative or other action not later than December 1, 2016.

(e) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2017.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.