

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 331
By: West
Higher Education
6/9/2017
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Current law requires a private or independent college or university to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to participate in the tuition equalization grant program. Interested parties note that, in some instances, a private or independent college or university may lose its accreditation and contend that if the college or university is on track to restore its accreditation it should be granted temporary approval to continue participating in the grant program. S.B. 331 seeks to clarify accreditation language and extend the number of possible renewals granted from once to twice.

S.B. 331 amends the Education Code to clarify the authorization of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to temporarily approve for participation in the tuition equalization grant program a private or independent institution of higher education (IHE) that previously qualified as an approved IHE but no longer holds the same accreditation as public IHEs. The bill requires such an IHE, in order to qualify, to be accredited by an accreditor recognized by THECB; to be actively working toward the same accreditation as public IHEs; to be participating in the federal financial aid program; and to be a "part B institution" as defined by federal law. The bill extends the authorization of THECB to grant temporary approval for a period of two years with one renewal to authorizing two renewals.

Committee Substitute:

Under existing law, students at a private or independent IHE that previously lost its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) regional accreditation are eligible to continue receiving the tuition equalization grant only under the following conditions:

1. That the IHE was previously accredited by an accreditor recognized by THECB;
2. That the IHE is working toward reacquiring regional accreditation from SACS-COC;
3. That the IHE is participating in federal financial aid; and
4. That the IHE is a federally-recognized Historically Black College or University.

None of these four statutory conditions changed in the committee substitute, which makes one change to existing law: it gave THECB the authority to grant temporary two-year approval not once, but twice, to a private or independent IHE that met the four statutory conditions. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 331 amends current law relating to the temporary approval of a private or independent college or university to continue to participate in the tuition equalization grant 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 Section 61.222(c), Education Code, to authorize the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to grant temporary approval for a period of two years and to renew the approval twice, rather than once.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.