

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 25
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Higher Education
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

One of the key strategies outlined in the 60X30TX plan is streamlined and coordinated transfer pathways between two-year colleges and four-year universities. In practice, semester credit hours are often stranded at the point of transfer, resulting in frustration for students, and waste of taxpayer dollars estimated to be \$58 million annually.

C.S.S.B. 25 requires related definitions, the report of nontransferable credit, creation of an option for students to be considered for admissions into degree programs at other HEIs if they are not admitted to a degree program at their preferred institution, that students file a degree plan at 30 hours and those enrolled in dual credit to file at 15 hours, negotiated rulemaking related to administration and compliance, that HEIs develop course sequences for degree programs and certificates and report them to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for posting, opportunity for articulation agreements and what's included in them, clarification of "core curriculum" with general core and discipline core designations, the inclusion of "fields of study" and meta-majors, options for release of student academic information, and a study on transfer admission guarantee.

C.S.S.B. 25 amends current law relating to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is modified in SECTION 4 (Section 51.9685, Education Code) and SECTION 12 (Section 61.827, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter H, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Sections. 51.400 and 51.4033, as follows:

Sec. 51.400. DEFINITIONS. Defines "coordinating board" as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and defines "general academic teaching institution," "institution of higher education," and "medical and dental unit" for purposes of this subchapter.

Sec. 51.4033. REPORT OF NONTRANSFERABLE CREDIT. (a) Requires each general academic teaching institution and medical and dental unit, not later than December 1 of each year and in the form prescribed by THECB, to provide to THECB a report describing any courses for which a student who transfers to the institution from another institution of higher education is not granted academic credit at the receiving institution.

(b) Requires a report required by this section to indicate 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.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 51.762, Education Code, by adding Subsection (j) to require THECB, in adopting a form under this section (Common Admission Application Forms), to ensure that an applicant may indicate on the form the applicant's consent to an institution of higher education to which the applicant submits an application for admission to a particular degree program using the form to, if the institution denies the applicant admission to that degree program, provide the applicant's application to other institutions of higher education that offer the degree program.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 51.9685(a)(2), Education Code, to provide that "institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003 (Definitions), rather than to provide that "institution of higher education and "public junior college" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 51.9685, Education Code, by amending Subsections (b), (c), and (g) and adding Subsection (c-2), as follows:

(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 before the end of the semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 30 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 course credit awarded by examination, rather than requiring 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 end of the second regular 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 course credit awarded by examination.

(c) Requires a student to whom Subsection (b) applies who begins the student's first semester or term at an institution of higher education with 30 or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses described by Subsection (b) to file a degree plan with the institution before the end of that semester or term, rather than requiring 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 not later than the end of the student's second regular semester or term at the institution.

(c-2) Requires a student enrolled in a dual credit course at an institution of higher education and to whom Subsection (b) does not apply to file a degree plan with the institution not later than:

(1) the end of the second regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 15 or more semester credit hours of course credit for dual credit courses successfully completed by the student; or

(2) if the student begins the student's first semester or term at the institution with 15 or more semester credit hours of course credit for dual credit courses successfully completed by the student, the end of the student's second regular semester or term at the institution.

(g) Requires, rather than authorizes, THECB, in consultation with institutions of higher education, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section, including rules to ensure compliance with this section.

SECTION 5. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853, as follows:

Sec. 51.96852. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) Defines "coordinating board" and "institution of higher education" for purposes of this section.

(b) Requires each institution of higher education to develop at least one recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. Requires each recommended course sequence to:

(1) identify the required courses for the applicable certificate or degree program in the general core curriculum or the disciplinary core curriculum as described by Section 61.822 (Transfer of Credits; Core Curriculum);

(2) include for each course, if applicable, the course number or course equivalent under the common course numbering system approved by THECB under Section 61.832 (Common Course Numbering System);

(3) be designed to enable a full-time student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within:

(A) for a 60-hour degree or certificate program, two years; or

(B) for a 120-hour degree program, four years; and

(4) include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the time frame described by Subdivision (3).

(c) Requires each institution of higher education to include the recommended course sequences developed under this section in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's Internet website and submit the recommended course sequences developed under this section to THECB as provided by THECB rule.

Sec. 51.96853. TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM LOWER-DIVISION INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION; ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS. (a) Defines "articulation agreement," "general academic teaching institution" and "lower-division institution of higher education" for purposes of this section.

(b) Authorizes each general academic teaching institution to enter into an articulation agreement with a lower-division institution of higher education for a certificate or degree program for which students transferring from the lower-division institution to the general academic teaching institution receive transfer credit.

(c) Requires the agreement, to the greatest extent practicable, to use fields of study curricula developed by THECB under Section 61.823 (Field of Study Curriculum).

(d) Authorizes a general academic teaching institution to extend an existing articulation agreement entered into under Subsection (b) to another lower-division institution of higher education with respect to the transfer of courses from that lower-division institution of higher education to the general academic teaching institution, on request by that lower-division institution of higher education.

(e) Authorizes an articulation agreement established under this section to enable a transfer student to receive up to 60 semester credit hours for courses completed at the lower-division institution of higher education.

(f) Provides that a general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement under this section does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 51.9715(b), Education Code, to authorize an institution of higher education to release student information in accordance with Subsection (a) only through the National Student Clearinghouse, rather than through the National Student Clearinghouse or a similar national electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

SECTION 7. Amends Section 61.059(p), Education Code, as follows:

(p) Prohibits THECB, in its instruction and operations formula applicable to an institution of higher education, from including any semester credit hours earned for dual course credit by a high school student for high school and college credit at the institution unless those credit hours are earned through any of the following:

(1) makes no changes to this subdivision;

(2) a course offered by the institution providing course credit in a field of study curriculum developed by THECB under Section 61.823 or a program of study curriculum established by THECB under Section 61.8235;

(3) creates this subdivision from existing text and redesignates existing Subdivision (3) as Subdivision (4); or

(4) makes no further changes to this subdivision.

SECTION 8. Amends Section 61.821(1), Education Code, to redefine "core curriculum" to mean the lower division curriculum in liberal arts, humanities, and sciences and political, social, and cultural history that provides the knowledge and academic competencies foundational for all future learning and that all undergraduate students of an institution of higher education are required to complete before receiving an academic undergraduate degree.

SECTION 9. Amends Section 61.822, Education Code, by adding Subsections (a-2), (a-3), (f), and (g) and amending Subsections (b), (c), and (d), as follows:

(a-2) Requires the recommended core curriculum developed under Subsection (a-1) (relating to requiring THECB to develop a recommended core curriculum) to have the following components:

(1) a general core curriculum of at least 24 semester credit hours that includes certain specified credits; and

(2) for each broad academic discipline, an academic discipline core curriculum not more than 18 semester credit hours specific to that discipline and that includes relevant courses in mathematics and physical sciences.

(a-3) Requires THECB, in developing an academic discipline core curriculum as described by Subsection (a-2), to consult with relevant faculty at institutions of higher education.

(b) Requires each institution of higher education to adopt a core curriculum of 42 semester credit hours, rather than a core curriculum of no less than 42 semester credit hours, including specific courses comprising the curriculum. Requires the core curriculum to:

(1) include a general core curriculum and, for each broad academic discipline offered by the institution, an academic discipline core curriculum as described by Subsection (a-2); and

(2) be consistent with the common course numbering system approved by THECB and with the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by THECB. Deletes existing text authorizing an institution to have a core curriculum of other than 42 semester credit hours only if approved by THECB. Creates this subdivision from existing text.

(c) Deletes existing text prohibiting a student transferring credit from being required to take additional core curriculum courses at the receiving institution unless THECB has approved a larger core curriculum at the institution.

(d) Requires a student who transfers from one institution of higher education to another without completing the core curriculum of the sending institution to receive academic credit from the receiving institution toward that institution's general core curriculum or academic discipline core curriculum, as applicable, for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed in the core curriculum of the sending institution. Authorizes the student, following receipt of credit for these courses, to be required to satisfy any remaining, rather than to satisfy further, course requirements in the core curriculum of the receiving institution.

(f) Requires each institution of higher education to:

(1) identify in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's Internet website each course offered by the institution that fulfills a course requirement in the institution's general core curriculum or academic discipline core curriculum and the specific course requirement that the course fulfills;

(2) provide to THECB in accordance with THECB rule the institution's general core curriculum and academic discipline core curriculum and the information described by Subdivision (1); and

(3) advise each student enrolled at the institution regarding the importance of taking coherent sequences of courses in the core curriculum that are aligned with the student's academic and career goals.

(g) Requires THECB, to assist in advising a student regarding the selection of coherent sequences of courses in the core curriculum that are aligned with the student's academic and career goals, to make available to each institution of higher education and to school counselors and other postsecondary advisors employed by a school district or charter school information regarding:

(1) the general core curriculum and academic discipline core curriculum required under Subsection (b); and

(2) the transferability of course credit between institutions of higher education for courses in the core curriculum as provided by this section.

SECTION 10. Amends Section 61.823, Education Code, by adding Subsection (f) to require a public junior college or public technical institute to adopt in whole or in part each field of study curriculum developed by THECB under this section for an academic area in which the college or institute offers courses.

SECTION 11. Amends Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.8231, as follows:

Sec. 61.8231. STUDY ON TRANSFER ADMISSION GUARANTEE. (a) Requires THECB to conduct a study on the feasibility of guaranteeing transfer admission to an

institution of higher education for students who complete certain courses in the core curriculum or a field of study curriculum at another institution of higher education.

(b) Requires THECB, not later than September 1, 2020, to submit to the members of the legislature a report on the results of the study and recommendations for legislative or other action. Requires the report to include recommendations regarding eligibility criteria for a student to receive or an institution of higher education to participate in the transfer admission guarantee.

(c) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2021.

SECTION 12. Amends Section 61.827, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.827. RULES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text and makes no further changes.

(b) Requires THECB, in adopting rules regarding the recommended core curriculum developed under Section 61.822, to use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008 (Negotiated Rulemaking), Government Code.

SECTION 13. Amends Section 61.833(a)(2), Education Code, to redefine "reverse transfer data sharing platform" to mean the National Student Clearinghouse, rather than the National Student Clearinghouse or a similar national electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

SECTION 14. Amends Section 130.0104(c), Education Code, as follows:

(c) Requires a student enrolled in a multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established under this section (Multidisciplinary Studies Associate Degree Program), in complying with the requirements regarding the filing of a degree plan under Section 51.9685 (Required Filing of Degree Plan), to meet with an academic advisor to complete a certain degree plan that fits certain requirements, rather than requiring a student, notwithstanding Section 51.9685, before the beginning of the regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student successfully completes a cumulative total of 30 or more semester credit hours for coursework in a multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established under this section, to meet with an academic advisor to complete a certain degree plan, as defined by Section 51.9685(a)(1) (relating to the definition of degree plan).

SECTION 15. Repealer: Section 51.9685(c-1) (relating to requiring a student enrolled in a certain program at a public junior college to file a degree plan with the college), Education Code.

SECTION 16. Requires each public institution of higher education and medical and dental unit required to submit a report under Section 51.4033, Education Code, as added by this Act, to submit the first report not later than December 1, 2020.

SECTION 17. Provides that Sections 51.762, 51.9715, 61.822, and 61.833, Education Code, as amended by this Act, and Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853, Education Code, as added by this Act, apply beginning with the 2020–2021 academic year.

SECTION 18. Requires THECB, not later than December 31, 2020, to develop a recommended core curriculum that conforms to the requirements of Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 19. Effective date: September 1, 2019.