

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 200
By: Eckhardt
Education
5/30/2023
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

If you're a Texas resident and wish to re-enroll in higher education as an undergraduate, you may be able to waive your previous academic record and begin a new course of study with a clear academic record under the current "Academic Fresh Start" law.

If you have credits for college courses taken ten or more years prior to the planned enrollment date, those credits and grades can be waived from consideration for admissions decisions.

This is an all or nothing option. If you choose the "Academic Fresh Start" option, you will not receive any credit for any courses you took over ten years ago. This means that forfeited courses cannot be used to meet prerequisite requirements and will not be applied towards the new degree.

Bill Idea

- S.B. 200 changes the law to allow for college courses taken five (5) years prior to college application under "Academic Fresh Start" to be eliminated from consideration for admissions purposes.
- Also allows students who wish to invoke Fresh Start to keep up to six (6) semester hours toward their degree plan.
- This is a local option which each university MAY choose to utilize, it IS NOT mandatory.

A committee substitute is expected and will make the following changes:

- Instead of requiring prospective students to wait 10 years before utilizing the program, institutions may choose a number of years from within a range of five to 10 years to make academic fresh start available.
- The substitute also eliminates the language in our bill concerning academic credits.
- Finally, each institution will be required to post its academic fresh start policy on its website and submit their academic fresh start policies to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

S.B. 200 amends current law relating to the period for which an applicant for admission as an undergraduate student to a public institution of higher education is entitled to an academic fresh start.

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 51.931, Education Code, by adding Subsections (c-1) and (c-2), as follows:

(c-1) Authorizes a public institution of higher education, in considering an applicant for admission under Section 51.931 (Right to an Academic Fresh Start), to choose to

disregard academic course credits or grades earned by the applicant more recently than 10 years before the starting date of the semester in which the applicant seeks to enroll, except the institution is prohibited from disregarding any credits or grades earned during the five-year period preceding that date. Provides that an institution that chooses to disregard course credits or grades earned during the additional period permitted by this subsection is required to disregard all course credits or grades earned during that period and is prohibited from awarding any credit for those courses.

(c-2) Requires each public institution of higher education to adopt, post on the institution's Internet website, and submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board a policy regarding the admissions made by the institution under this section, including the period for which an applicant's course credits or grades will be considered by the institution under the policy.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.0595(c), Education Code, as follows:

(c) Provides that semester credit hours that were earned by the student before the date the student began the new degree program under Section 51.931 and that were disregarded under institution policy by that section, rather than semester credit hours earned by the student 10 or more years before the date the student begins the new degree program under Section 51.931, are not counted for purposes of determining whether the student has previously earned a certain number of semester credit hours.

SECTION 3. Provides that Section 51.931, Education Code, as amended by this Act, applies beginning with admissions to a public institution of higher education for the 2023 fall semester.

SECTION 4. Provides that Section 61.0595(c), Education Code, as amended by this Act, applies beginning with funding recommendations made under Section 61.059 (Appropriations), Education Code, for the state fiscal biennium beginning September 1, 2025, for semester credit hours earned by students enrolling in a baccalaureate degree program at a public institution of higher education under Section 51.931, Education Code, as amended by this Act, for the 2023 fall semester or a subsequent semester or term. Provides that funding recommendations for semester credit hours earned by a student who enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a public institution of higher education under Section 51.931, Education Code, as added by this Act, before the 2023 fall semester are governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.