

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 31
By: Zaffirini
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, students in Texas public institutions of higher education are taking longer to complete their baccalaureate degree programs. This increases the cost of education, both to students and to the state, and negatively impacts graduation rates. There is considerable variation among the eligibility criteria for state financial aid programs, which causes confusion among parents and students regarding their access to state funding. Further, this problem does not encourage students to graduate in a timely manner.

S.B. 31 promotes more timely graduation by streamlining the financial aid criteria to encourage students to take heavier course loads.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 3 of this bill.

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 4 of this bill.

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 8 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 56.076, Education Code, to require an employer to meet certain requirements in order to be eligible to participate in the work-study program, including providing from sources other than federal college work-study program funds a percentage, rather than not less than 30 percent, of an employed student's wages that is equal to the percentage of a student's wages that the employer would be required to provide to the student in that academic year under the federal college work-study program and providing from sources other than federal college work-study funds 100 percent of other employee benefits for the employed student. Deletes existing requirements distinguishing between for-profit and not-for-profit entities.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter E, Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Section 56.079, as follows:

Sec. 56.079. WORK-STUDY STUDENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM. (a) Defines "general academic teaching institution."

(b) Authorizes each general academic teaching institution to establish a work-study student mentorship program under which students who are enrolled in their junior or senior year at the institution and who meet the eligibility requirements for employment in the Texas college work-study program are authorized to be employed by the institution under the Texas college work-study program to mentor students who are on academic probation at the institution.

(c) Authorizes a general academic institution that has established a work-study student mentorship program under this section to require students who are on academic probation at the institution to be matched with a student mentor employed under the program.

(d) Requires each general academic teaching institution that has established a work-study program under this section, not later than November 1 of each year, to submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (coordinating board) a report regarding the progress of the institution's program. Sets forth requirements for the contents of the report.

(e) Requires each general academic teaching institution that has established a work-study program under this section to set aside a portion of the institution's Texas college work-study funds to pay for the state's contribution toward the costs of the work-study student mentorship program.

(f) Requires a general academic teaching institution that employs a student mentor under the work-study program student mentorship program, notwithstanding Section 56.076 (Eligible Employer), to provide from sources other than federal college work-study funds not less than 10 percent of the employed student's wages and 100 percent of other employee benefits for the employed student.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 56.304, Education Code, by amending Subsection (e) and adding Subsections (e-1) and (e-2), as follows:

(e) Provides that, if a person is initially awarded a TEXAS grant before the 2005 fall semester, the person's eligibility for a TEXAS grant ends on the sixth anniversary of the initial award of a TEXAS grant to the person and the person's enrollment in an eligible institution, unless the person is provided additional time during which the person may receive a TEXAS grant under Subsection (e-2), rather than this subsection.

(e-1) Sets forth guidelines for determining the end of a person's eligibility for a TEXAS grant, if a person is initially awarded a TEXAS grant during or after the 2005 fall semester, unless the person is provided additional time during which the person may receive a TEXAS grant under Subsection (e-2).

(e-2) Creates subsection from existing text.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 56.305, Education Code, by amending Subsections (e) and (g), and adding Subsection (e-1), as follows:

(e) Provides that, for the purposes of this section, a person who is initially awarded a TEXAS grant before the 2005 fall semester makes satisfactory academic progress toward an undergraduate degree or certificate only if the person meets certain requirements.

(e-1) Provides that, for the purposes of this section, a person who is initially awarded a TEXAS grant during or after the 2005 fall semester makes satisfactory academic progress toward an undergraduate degree or certificate only if the person meets certain requirements

(g) Requires the coordinating board to adopt rules to allow a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a TEXAS grant, but shows good cause that certain conditions might affect the person's academic performance, to receive a TEXAS grant if the student's grade point average or the student's completion rate, or number of semester credit hours complete, as applicable, falls below the satisfactory academic progress requirements of Subsection (e) or (e-1).

SECTION 5. Subchapter M, Chapter 56, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 56.3071 to read as follows:

Sec. 56.3071. EFFECT OF ELIGIBILITY FOR TUITION EQUALIZATION GRANT.

(a) Notwithstanding Section 56.307, the total amount of financial aid that a student enrolled in a private or independent institution of higher education is eligible to receive in a state fiscal year from TEXAS grants awarded under this subchapter may not exceed the maximum

amount the student may receive in tuition equalization grants in that fiscal year as determined under Subchapter F, Chapter 61.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, a student enrolled in a private or independent institution of higher education may not receive a TEXAS grant under this subchapter and a tuition equalization grant under Subchapter F, Chapter 61, for the same semester or other term, regardless of whether the student is otherwise eligible for both grants during that semester or term. A student who but for this subsection would be awarded both a TEXAS grant and a tuition equalization grant for the same semester or other term is entitled to receive only the grant of the greater amount.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 56.462, Education Code, to provide that a student who receives a Texas B-On-Time loan will be forgiven the amount of the student's loan if the student is awarded an undergraduate certificate or degree with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent with a total number of semester credit hours, including transfer credit hours and excluding hours earned exclusively by examination, hours earned for a course for which the student received credit toward the student's high school academic requirements, and hours earned for developmental coursework that an institution of higher education has required the student to take under Section 51.3062 (Successive Initiative) or under the former provisions of Section 51.306 (Texas Academic Skills Program), that is not more than six hours more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required to complete the certificate or degree.

SECTION 7. Amends Section 61.225, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.225. New Heading: ELIGIBILITY FOR GRANT; PERSONS AWARDED GRANTS BEFORE 2005-2006 ACADEMIC YEAR. (a) Provides that this section applies only to a person who initially received a tuition equalization grant before the 2005-2006 academic year.

(b) Creates subsection from existing text.

(c) Requires a grant to a part-time student under this section to be made on a pro rata basis of a full-time equivalent.

SECTION 8. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.2251, as follows:

Sec. 61.2251. ELIGIBILITY FOR GRANT; PERSONS INITIALLY AWARDED GRANTS DURING OR AFTER 2005-2006 ACADEMIC YEAR. (a) Provides that this section does not apply to a person who initially received a tuition equalization grant before the 2005-2006 academic year.

(b) Sets forth requirements for a person to be eligible for a tuition equalization grant in the first academic year in which the person receives the grant.

(c) Authorizes a person, after qualifying for a tuition equalization grant under Subsection (b), to receive a tuition equalization grant in a subsequent academic year in which the person is enrolled at an approved institution, only if the person meets certain requirements.

(d) Sets forth guidelines for determining the end of a person's eligibility for a tuition equalization grant, notwithstanding Subsections (b) and (c).

(e) Requires the coordinating board to adopt rules to allow a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a tuition equalization grant, in the event of hardship or for other good cause shown, to receive a tuition equalization grant if the person meets certain requirements.

SECTION 9. Amends Section 61.227(c), Education Code, by deleting existing text requiring a grant to a part-time student to be made on a pro rata basis of a full-time equivalent.

(d) Provides that a student enrolled in a private or independent institution of higher education, notwithstanding any other law, may not receive a tuition equalization grant under this subchapter and a TEXAS grant under Subchapter M, Chapter 56, for the same semester or other term, regardless of whether the student is otherwise eligible for both grants during that semester or term. Provides that a student who but for this subsection would be awarded both a tuition equalization grant and a TEXAS grant for the same semester or other term is entitled to receive only the grant of the greater amount.

SECTION 10. Subsection (h), Section 56.307, Education Code, is repealed.

SECTION 11. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 12. Effective date:

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act takes effect September 1, 2005.