

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 34  
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Education  
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Enrolled

### **AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

As is the case in other states, 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.

In Texas, approximately 23 percent of full-time students earn a baccalaureate degree within four years of entering Texas higher education, another 23 percent within five years, and an additional 6.6 percent within six years, according to the most recent data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

An analysis of the number of semester credit hours for full-time students who entered Texas higher education in 1998 indicates that students who earned a baccalaureate degree within four years attempted a median of 130 semester credit hours. In contrast, students who earned a baccalaureate degree within five years attempted a median of 147 semester credit hours, and students who earned a baccalaureate degree within six years attempted a median of 166 semester credit hours.

Based on these trends, the cost of excess credit hours by full-time students taking five or six years to complete a degree is estimated at \$29.4 million per year to the state and a total cost of \$45.9 million to parents/students.

S.B. 34 adds the requirement that a student be graduated timely as defined by the B-On-Time loan forgiveness provisions in order to receive the tuition rebate. S.B. 34 also adds a provision that creates a board of student regents that assists in matters of the universities board of regents meetings, but is prohibited to vote on the matters and is not counted in determining a quorum.

A student regent is in response to the enactment of tuition deregulation during the 78th Legislature, Regular Session, 2003, which granted tuition-setting powers to the board of regents of public universities. A student regent is needed to ensure that the boards act fairly and in the best interest of the students, offering a student's perspective on the boards of regents.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 54.0065, Education Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 51.351(1), Education Code, to define "medical and dental unit."

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter G, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Sections 51.355 and 51.356, as follows:

Sec. 51.355. NONVOTING STUDENT REGENT; UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS. (a) Defines "student government."

(b) Requires the chancellor of each university system to develop a uniform application form to be used by each general academic teaching institution and medical and dental unit in the university system to solicit applicants for the position of student regent.

- (c) Sets forth procedures for selecting a student regent.
- (d) Sets forth eligibility requirements for a student regent.
- (e) Provides that a student regent is not a member of the board of regents of the system for which the student regent is appointed. Provides that a student regent has the same powers and duties as the members of the board of regents of the system, including the right to attend and participate in meetings of the board of regents, except for certain specific powers.
- (f) Prohibits the student government of the general academic teaching institution or medical and dental unit at which a current student regent was enrolled at the time of the student regent's appointment from soliciting applicants for the position of student regent for the next regular term of the position.
- (g) Requires a vacancy in the position of student regent for a university system to be filled for the unexpired term by appointment by the governor in consultation with the chancellor of the system.

Sec. 51.356. NONVOTING STUDENT REGENT; INSTITUTION BOARD OF REGENTS. (a) Provides that this section applies only to a general academic teaching institution that is not a part of a university system.

- (b) Defines "student government."
- (c) Requires the president of a general academic teaching institution to develop a uniform application form to be used to solicit applicants for the position of student regent.
- (d) Sets forth procedures for selecting a student regent.
- (e) Sets forth eligibility requirements for a student regent.
- (f) Provides that a student regent is not a member of the board of regents of the system for which the student regent is appointed. Provides that a student regent has the same powers and duties as the members of the board of regents of the system, including the right to attend and participate in meetings of the board of regents, except for certain specific powers.
- (g) Requires a vacancy in the position of student regent for an institution to be filled for the unexpired term by appointment by the governor in consultation with the president of the institution.

SECTION 3. Amends Sections 54.0065(a), (c), and (i), Education Code, as follows:

- (a) Limits eligibility for rebate of a portion of the undergraduate tuition to certain students graduating within a certain time period, as applicable, to qualify for forgiveness of a Texas B-On-time loan.
- (c) Provides that transcripts provided by certain transfer students will be used to verify the period during which the student has been enrolled in a general academic teaching institution.
- (i) Includes among the rules that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (coordinating board) is required to adopt for administration of this section, a rule to allow an otherwise eligible student to receive a rebate under this section if the student is not awarded a baccalaureate degree within the period required by Subsection (a)(1) solely as a result of a hardship or other good cause. Requires the performance of active duty military service by a student to be recognized as "good cause" for purposes of this section.

SECTION 4. Provides that the initial term of a student regent appointed for a state university system under Section 51.355, Education Code, as added by this Act, or for a state university under Section 51.356, Education Code, as added by this Act, expires February 1, 2007. Requires the appropriate student governments, the chancellor of each state university system, the president of each state university that is not a part of a university system, and the governor to take the actions required by Sections 51.355 and 51.356, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after this Act takes effect to select a student regent for each state university or state university system for that initial term.

SECTION 5. (a) Makes application of Sections 54.0065(a), (c), and (i), Education Code, prospective.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt the rule required by Subsection (i), Section 54.0065, Education Code, as amended by this Act, relating to students who do not graduate within the required time as a result of hardship or other good cause, as soon as practicable after this Act takes effect. Authorizes the coordinating board to adopt the initial rule in the manner provided by law for emergency rules for that purpose.

SECTION 6. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2005.