

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 31

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to requiring students receiving certain financial aid at institutions of higher education to meet timely graduation and academic progress requirements.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 56.304(e), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(e) A person is not eligible to receive ~~[person's eligibility for]~~ a TEXAS grant for any term or semester in which the person is enrolled in a program leading to an undergraduate certificate or degree if the person is not awarded the certificate or degree from an eligible institution within the applicable period prescribed by Section 56.462 to qualify for forgiveness of a Texas B-On-time loan ~~[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 this subsection. The coordinating board shall adopt rules to provide a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a TEXAS grant additional time during which the person may receive a TEXAS grant in the event of a hardship or other good cause shown that prevents the person from continuing the person's enrollment during the period the person would otherwise have been eligible to receive a TEXAS grant, including a showing of a severe illness or other

debilitating condition or that the person is or was responsible for the care of a sick, injured, or needy person.

SECTION 2. Sections 56.305(e) and (g), Education Code, are amended to read as follows:

(e) For the purpose of this section, a person makes satisfactory academic progress toward an undergraduate degree or certificate only if:

(1) in the person's first academic year the person meets the satisfactory academic progress requirements of the institution at which the person is enrolled; and

(2) in a subsequent academic year, the person:

(A) completed ~~[completes]~~ at least 30 ~~[75 percent of the]~~ semester credit hours ~~[attempted]~~ in the student's most recent academic year; and

(B) has earned ~~[earns]~~ an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on coursework previously attempted at institutions of higher education.

(g) The coordinating board shall adopt rules to allow a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a TEXAS grant, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause shown, including a showing of a severe illness or other debilitating condition that may affect the person's academic performance or that the person is responsible for the care of a sick, injured, or needy person and that the person's provision of care may affect the person's academic performance, to receive a TEXAS grant:

(1) while enrolled in a number of semester credit

hours that is less than the number of semester credit hours required under Subsection (a)(3); or

(2) if the student's grade point average or the number of semester credit hours completed by the student ~~[completion rate]~~ falls below the satisfactory academic progress requirements of Subsection (e).

SECTION 3. Section 56.462, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 56.462. LOAN FORGIVENESS. A student who receives a Texas B-On-time loan shall be forgiven the amount of the student's loan if the student is awarded an undergraduate certificate or degree at an eligible institution with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent:

(1) within:

(A) four calendar years after the date the student initially enrolled in the institution or another eligible institution if:

(i) the institution is a four-year institution; and

(ii) the student is awarded a degree other than a degree in engineering, architecture, or any other program determined by the coordinating board to require more than four years to complete;

(B) five calendar years after the date the student initially enrolled in the institution or another eligible institution if:

(i) the institution is a four-year

1 institution; and

2 (ii) the student is awarded a degree in
3 engineering, architecture, or any other program determined by the
4 coordinating board to require more than four years to complete; or

5 (C) two years after the date the student
6 initially enrolled in the institution or another eligible
7 institution if the institution is a public junior college or public
8 technical institute; or

9 (2) with a total number of semester credit hours,
10 including transfer credit hours and excluding hours earned
11 exclusively by examination and hours earned for a course for which
12 the student received credit toward the student's high school
13 academic requirements, that is not more than six hours more than the
14 minimum number of semester credit hours required to complete the
15 certificate or degree.

16 SECTION 4. Section 61.225, Education Code, is amended to
17 read as follows:

18 Sec. 61.225. ELIGIBILITY ~~[QUALIFICATIONS]~~ FOR GRANT. (a)
19 To be eligible for a tuition equalization grant in the first
20 academic year in which the person receives the grant, a person must:

21 (1) be a Texas resident as defined by the coordinating
22 board and meet, at a minimum, the resident requirements defined by
23 law for Texas resident tuition in fully state-supported
24 institutions of higher education;

25 (2) be enrolled for at least one-half of a full course
26 load conforming to an individual degree plan in an approved college
27 or university;

1 (3) be required to pay more tuition than is required at
2 a public college or university and be charged no less than the
3 regular tuition required of all students enrolled at the
4 institution;

5 (4) establish financial need in accordance with
6 procedures and regulations of the coordinating board;

7 (5) not be a recipient of any form of athletic
8 scholarship; and

9 (6) have complied with other requirements adopted by
10 the coordinating board under this subchapter.

11 (b) After qualifying for a tuition equalization grant under
12 Subsection (a), a person may receive a tuition equalization grant
13 in a subsequent academic year in which the person is enrolled at an
14 approved institution only if the person:

15 (1) meets the requirements of Subsection (a); and

16 (2) completed at least 30 semester credit hours in the
17 person's most recent academic year or, if the person was not
18 enrolled for both regular semesters of that academic year,
19 completed at least 15 semester credit hours in that academic year.

20 (c) Notwithstanding Subsections (a) and (b), a person is not
21 eligible to receive a tuition equalization grant in any term or
22 semester in which the person is enrolled in a program leading to an
23 undergraduate certificate or degree if the person is not awarded
24 the certificate or degree from an approved institution within the
25 applicable period prescribed by Section 56.452 to qualify for
26 forgiveness of a Texas B-On-time loan.

27 (d) The coordinating board shall adopt rules to allow a

1 person who is otherwise eligible to receive a tuition equalization
2 grant, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause shown, to
3 receive a tuition equalization grant if the person does not:

4 (1) complete the semester credit hours required by
5 Subsection (b)(2); or

6 (2) complete the person's certificate or degree
7 program within the period prescribed by Subsection (c).

8 SECTION 5. (a) The changes in law made by this Act to
9 Sections 56.304 and 56.305, Education Code, apply beginning with
10 the 2005-2006 academic year, but only for TEXAS grants awarded on or
11 after the effective date of this Act. A TEXAS grant awarded before
12 the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect
13 immediately before the effective date, and the former law is
14 continued in effect for that purpose.

15 (b) The changes in law made by this Act to Section 56.462,
16 Education Code, apply to a student who is awarded an undergraduate
17 certificate or degree on or after the effective date of this Act,
18 without regard to when the student is awarded a Texas B-On-time
19 loan.

20 (c) The changes in law made by this Act to Section 61.225,
21 Education Code, apply beginning with tuition equalization grants
22 for the 2005-2006 academic year, but only for tuition equalization
23 grants awarded on or after the effective date of this Act. A
24 tuition equalization grant awarded before the effective date of
25 this Act is governed by the law in effect immediately before the
26 effective date, and the former law is continued in effect for that
27 purpose.

1 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2005.