

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 1529

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to policies and measures to promote timely graduation of students from public institutions of higher education.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter H, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.4032 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.4032. REPORT OF EFFORTS CONCERNING TIMELY GRADUATION. (a) Not later than November 1 of each year, the president of each general academic teaching institution, as defined by Section 61.003, shall provide to the governing board of the institution a report for the preceding academic year that examines the institution's efforts concerning timely graduation of its undergraduate students.

(b) The report must:

(1) state, for each undergraduate degree program, the average number of semester credit hours attempted and the average number of fall and spring semesters attended by a student completing the program;

(2) state the specific efforts implemented by the institution to ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner and do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum number required to complete the students' degree programs, including the institution's efforts to provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation,

1 including the development of an online student degree progress
2 report which compares the courses taken and credit received by a
3 student to the courses completed and needed for degree and
4 graduation requirements for each academic term, and to implement
5 tuition policies that encourage timely graduation; and

6 (3) include any other information required by the
7 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

8 (c) An institution's report must be in the form prescribed
9 by coordinating board rule adopted in consultation with general
10 academic teaching institutions.

11 SECTION 2. Section 54.068, Education Code, is amended to
12 read as follows:

13 Sec. 54.068. TUITION FOR REPEATED OR EXCESSIVE
14 UNDERGRADUATE HOURS. (a) An institution of higher education may
15 charge a resident undergraduate student tuition at a higher rate
16 than the rate charged to other resident undergraduate students, not
17 to exceed the rate charged to nonresident undergraduate students,
18 if before the semester or other academic session begins the student
19 has previously attempted a number of semester credit hours for
20 courses taken at any institution of higher education while
21 classified as a resident student for tuition purposes that exceeds
22 by at least 30 [~~45~~] hours the number of semester credit hours
23 required for completion of the degree program in which the student
24 is enrolled. For purposes of this subsection, an undergraduate
25 student who is not enrolled in a degree program is considered to be
26 enrolled in a degree program requiring a minimum of 120 semester
27 credit hours. An institution of higher education that charges

1 students tuition at a higher rate under this subsection may adopt a
2 policy under which the institution exempts from the payment of that
3 higher rate a student that is subject to the payment of the higher
4 rate solely as a result of hardship as determined by the institution
5 under the policy.

6 (b) Semester credit hours or other credit listed in Section
7 61.0595(d) is not counted in determining the number of semester
8 credit hours previously attempted by a student for purposes of
9 Subsection (a).

10 (c) Subsection (a) applies only [~~does not apply~~] to the
11 tuition charged to a student who initially enrolled as an
12 undergraduate student in an institution of higher education during
13 or after [~~before~~] the 1999 fall semester, except that the
14 institution of higher education may not require a student who
15 initially enrolls as an undergraduate student in an institution of
16 higher education before the 2006 fall semester to pay higher
17 tuition as permitted by Subsection (a) until the number of semester
18 credit hours previously attempted by the student as described by
19 that subsection exceeds the number of semester credit hours
20 required for the student's degree program by at least 45 hours.

21 (d) In its appropriations to institutions of higher
22 education, the legislature shall compute the local funds available
23 to each institution as if the tuition collected under Subsections
24 [~~Subsection~~] (a) and (f) were not collected.

25 (e) Each institution of higher education shall inform each
26 new undergraduate student enrolling at the institution in writing
27 of the limitation provided by this section on the number of hours or

1 type of courses that a Texas resident is entitled to complete while
2 paying tuition at the rate provided for Texas residents.

3 (f) An institution of higher education may charge a resident
4 undergraduate student tuition at a higher rate than the rate
5 charged to other resident undergraduate students, not to exceed the
6 rate charged to nonresident undergraduate students, for any course
7 in which the student enrolls that is the same as or substantively
8 identical to a course for which the student previously completed.
9 The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt a rule
10 that exempts a resident undergraduate student from this subsection
11 if the student enrolls in a course that is the same as or
12 substantially similar to a course that the student previously
13 completed, solely as a result of a hardship or other good cause.

14 SECTION 3. Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, is
15 amended by adding Section 61.0515 to read as follows:

16 Sec. 61.0515. SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS REQUIRED FOR
17 BACCALAUREATE DEGREE. (a) To earn a baccalaureate degree, a
18 student may not be required by a general academic teaching
19 institution to complete more than the minimum number of semester
20 credit hours required for the degree by the Southern Association of
21 Colleges and Schools or its successor unless the institution
22 determines that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring
23 completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

24 (b) The board may review one or more of an institution's
25 baccalaureate degree programs to ensure compliance with this
26 section.

27 (c) Subsection (a) does not apply to a baccalaureate degree

1 awarded by an institution to a student enrolled in the institution
2 before the 2008 fall semester. This subsection does not prohibit
3 the institution from reducing the number of semester credit hours
4 the student must complete to receive the degree.

5 SECTION 4. Section 61.0595, Education Code, is amended by
6 amending Subsections (a) and (e) and adding Subsection (f) to read
7 as follows:

8 (a) In the formulas established under Section 61.059, the
9 board may not include funding for semester credit hours earned by a
10 resident undergraduate student who before the semester or other
11 academic session begins has previously attempted a number of
12 semester credit hours for courses taken at any institution of
13 higher education while classified as a resident student for tuition
14 purposes that exceeds by a least 30 [~~45~~] hours the number of
15 semester credit hours required for completion of the degree program
16 in which the student is enrolled.

17 (e) Subsection (a) applies only [~~does not apply~~] to funding
18 for semester credit hours earned by a student who initially
19 enrolled as an undergraduate student in any institution of higher
20 education during or after [~~before~~] the 1999 fall semester, except
21 that with respect to semester credit hours earned by a student who
22 initially enrolls as an undergraduate student in any institution of
23 higher education before the 2006 fall semester, the board may not
24 reduce funding under this section until the number of semester
25 credit hours previously attempted by the student as described by
26 this section exceeds the number of semester credit hours required
27 for the student's degree program by at least 45 hours.

1 (f) In the formulas established under Section 61.059, the
2 board shall include without consideration of Subsection (a) funding
3 for semester credit hours earned by a student who initially
4 enrolled as an undergraduate student in any institution of higher
5 education before the 1999 fall semester [~~for those semester credit~~
6 ~~hours without consideration of Subsection (a)~~].

7 SECTION 5. Subsections (a), (b), and (c), Section 61.822,
8 Education Code, are amended to read as follows:

9 (a) The board, with the assistance of advisory committees
10 composed of representatives of institutions of higher education,
11 shall develop recommendations for a [~~recommended~~] core curriculum
12 that could be satisfied through completion of a number of [~~at least~~
13 ~~42~~] semester credit hours permitted by Subsection (b). The
14 recommendations must include [~~, including~~] a statement of the
15 content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum.
16 At least a majority of the members of any advisory committee named
17 under this section must [~~shall~~] be faculty members of an
18 institution of higher education. An institution shall consult with
19 the faculty of the institution before nominating or recommending a
20 person to the board as the institution's representative on an
21 advisory committee.

22 (b) Each institution of higher education shall adopt a core
23 curriculum of not fewer than 36 and not more [~~no less~~] than 42
24 semester credit hours, including specific courses comprising the
25 curriculum. The core curriculum must [~~shall~~] be consistent with
26 the common course numbering system approved by the board and with
27 the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by the board. [~~An~~

1 ~~institution may have a core curriculum of other than 42 semester~~
2 ~~credit hours only if approved by the board.]~~

3 (c) If a student successfully completes the [42-hour] core
4 curriculum at an institution of higher education, that block of
5 courses may be transferred to any other institution of higher
6 education and must be substituted for the receiving institution's
7 core curriculum. A student shall receive academic credit for each
8 of the courses transferred and may not be required to take
9 additional core curriculum courses at the receiving institution
10 unless the receiving institution [board] has adopted [approved] a
11 [larger] core curriculum that requires completion of more semester
12 credit hours than the sending [at the] institution.

13 SECTION 6. (a) The changes in law made by this Act to
14 Sections 54.068 and 61.0595, Education Code, apply beginning with
15 the 2005 fall semester.

16 (b) Not later than May 31, 2006, the Texas Higher Education
17 Coordinating Board shall adopt the rules required by Section
18 61.0515, Education Code, as added by this Act, relating to the
19 number of semester credit hours required for completion of a
20 baccalaureate degree program at a general academic teaching
21 institution.

22 (c) Not later than May 31, 2006, the Texas Higher Education
23 Coordinating Board shall develop recommendations for the core
24 curriculum to conform to the requirements of Section 61.822,
25 Education Code, as amended by this Act. Each public institution of
26 higher education in this state shall revise its core curriculum as
27 necessary to conform to the requirements of Section 61.822,

1 Education Code, as amended by this Act, and shall require students
2 to comply with the institution's revised core curriculum beginning
3 with the 2008 fall semester, except that an institution shall
4 permit a student who was enrolled in the institution before the 2008
5 fall semester to comply with the core curriculum requirements
6 applicable to that student before that semester. Each institution
7 of higher education shall issue course catalogs that reflect the
8 applicable core curriculum under Section 61.822, Education Code,
9 consistent with this subsection. This subsection expires at the
10 beginning of the 2010 fall semester.

11 (d) The change in law made by this Act to Subsection (c),
12 Section 61.822, Education Code, applies to students who transfer
13 between institutions of higher education beginning with the 2008
14 fall semester. Students who transfer between institutions of
15 higher education before the 2008 fall semester are covered by
16 Subsection (c), Section 61.822, Education Code, as that subsection
17 existed before its amendment by this Act, and that law is continued
18 in effect for that purpose.

19 SECTION 7. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
20 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
21 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
22 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
23 Act takes effect September 1, 2005.