

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 708
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Higher Education
5/21/2009
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

H.B. 708 amends current law relating to higher education transfer practices, articulation agreements, policies for dropping courses, and special-purpose centers and to the formula funding for certain credit hours.

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 Sections 51.907(a) and (b), Education Code, as follows:

- (a) Defines "governing board," "institution of higher education," and "public junior college." Makes nonsubstantive changes.
- (b) Provides that this section applies only to an undergraduate student who drops a course at an institution of higher education other than a public junior college and only if the student meets certain requirements.

SECTION 2. (a) Amends Section 61.0595(d), Education Code, to provide that certain credits or credit hours not counted for purposes of determining whether the student has previously earned the number of semester credit hours specified by Subsection (a), including semester credit hours earned by the student before receiving an associate or, rather than a, baccalaureate degree that has previously been awarded to the student; and semester credit hours earned by the student before graduating from high school and used to satisfy high school graduation requirements. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

- (b) Provides that the change in law made by this section to Section 61.0595, Education Code, applies beginning with the funding recommendations made under Section 61.059, Education Code, for the 2011-2012 academic year.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 61.830, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.830. New heading: PUBLICATION OF TRANSFER GUIDELINES; TRANSFER PRACTICES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires each institution of higher education, in its course catalogs and on its website, to publish guidelines addressing the practices of the institution regarding the transfer of course credit, under which courses are identified using the common course numbering system approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and in a format designated by the commissioner of higher education (commissioner), all institutional and statewide articulation agreements concerning the transfer of courses. Deletes existing text requiring the institution, in the guidelines, to identify a course by using the common course numbering system approved by THECB. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

- (b) Requires each institution of higher education to post on the institution's website the dates for which each published articulation agreement is valid and remove an expired articulation agreement from the website not later than the 30th day after the date of its expiration.

(c) Requires THECB to adopt a standard format for the publication of articulation agreements under this section. Requires that the format provide students with access to the requirements of each articulation agreement to allow students enrolled in public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to plan and coordinate course schedules to meet those requirements.

(d) Requires THECB to provide links to each website described under Subsection (a) in a prominent, easily accessible, and identifiable location on THECB's college information website.

(e) Requires the commissioner, not later than September 30 of each even-numbered year, to make recommendations to each standing committee of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher education to improve the publication of transfer policies and articulation agreements for the benefit of transfer students and the level of participation of institutions of higher education in articulation agreements for the purpose of facilitating the transfer of students between institutions.

(f) Provides that a student who enrolls in a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute under an articulation agreement is entitled to transfer to the general academic teaching institution that is a party to the agreement not later than the fourth anniversary of the date the student first enrolled in the public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute.

SECTION 4. Amends Chapter 111, Education Code, by adding Subchapter I, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER I. UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HURRICANE CENTER FOR
INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Sec. 111.121. DEFINITIONS. Defines "board" and "center" in this subchapter.

Sec. 111.122. ESTABLISHMENT. (a) Provides that the University of Houston Hurricane Center for Innovative Technology (center) is established at the University of Houston (UH).

(b) Provides that the organization, control, and management of the center are vested in THECB.

(c) Requires that the center be hosted by UH's College of Engineering. Requires that participation in the center's activities be open to any faculty member of UH who is an active researcher in the field of materials, nanotechnology, structural engineering, designing of structures, or sensor technology, or in another relevant field as determined by UH.

Sec. 111.123. PURPOSE. Provides that the center is created to promote interdisciplinary research, education, and training for the development of state-of-the-art products, materials, systems, and technologies designed to mitigate the wind and asserted structural damages in the built environment and offshore structures caused by hurricanes in the Gulf Coast region and develop protocols for the fast and efficient recovery of the public and private sectors, including utilities, hospitals, petrochemical industries, offshore platforms, and municipalities and other local communities following a hurricane.

Sec. 111.124. POWERS AND DUTIES. Requires the center to:

(1) collaborate with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and private business or nonprofit entities as necessary to coordinate efforts after a hurricane in the Gulf Coast region;

- (2) develop smart materials and devices for use in hurricane protection and mitigation systems for structural monitoring;
- (3) develop anchor systems for window and door screens, dwellings and other buildings, pipelines, and other onshore and offshore structures to withstand hurricane wind damage;
- (4) develop test facilities for evaluating the performance of new products, materials, or techniques designed to protect against hurricane wind damage;
- (5) develop specifications and standards for products used for protecting against hurricane wind damage;
- (6) design buildings, houses, and other structures to withstand hurricane wind damage; and
- (7) provide hurricane-related educational programs, seminars, conferences, and workshops to the community designed to ensure safety, minimize loss of life, and mitigate the destruction of property associated with hurricane wind damage.

Sec. 111.125. **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES.** Requires UH to encourage public and private entities to participate in or support the operation of the center and authorizes UH to enter into an agreement with any public or private entity for that purpose. Authorizes an agreement to allow the center to provide information, services, or other assistance to an entity in exchange for the entity's participation or support.

Sec. 111.126. **GIFTS AND GRANTS.** Authorizes THECB to solicit, accept, and administer gifts and grants from any public or private source for the purposes of the center.

Sec. 111.127. **PERSONNEL.** Authorizes THECB to employ personnel for the center as necessary.

SECTION 5. (a) Requires each public institution of higher education to satisfy the requirements of Section 61.830, Education Code, as amended by this Act, not later than September 30, 2010.

(b) Requires THECB to adopt the standard publication format required by Section 61.830(a), Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than December 31, 2009.

SECTION 6. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.