

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 708
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Approximately 600,000 students are enrolled in two-year institutions of higher education in Texas, many with the intention of completing core curriculum courses to transfer to a four-year institution. All too often these students discover a course will not transfer for credit purposes, after having paid for and completed the course. This wastes the student's money and the state's money, and it can delay graduation if not deterring it altogether.

C.S.H.B. 708 requires an institution of higher education to publish in its course catalog and on its website information regarding articulation agreements and requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to provide links to those websites on its college planning website and to make recommendations to the legislature to improve the participation in and publication of articulation agreements. The bill entitles a student who enrolls in a two-year college under an articulation agreement to transfer to the four-year institution that is party to the agreement within four years of enrollment.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 708 amends the Education Code to require each institution of higher education to publish, in its course catalogs and on its website and in a format designated by the commissioner of education, all institutional and statewide articulation agreements concerning the transfer of courses, in addition to publishing 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. The bill requires each institution of higher education to post on the institution's website the dates for which each published articulation agreement is valid and to remove an expired articulation agreement from the website not later than the 30th day after the date of its expiration.

C.S.H.B. 708 requires the coordinating board to adopt a standard format for the publication of articulation agreements that provides 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. The bill requires the coordinating board to provide links to each website described above in a prominent, easily accessible, and identifiable location on the board's college information website, and 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.

C.S.H.B. 708 entitles a student who enrolls in a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute under an articulation agreement 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. The bill requires each public institution of higher education to satisfy the publication requirements not later than September 30, 2010, and requires the coordinating board to adopt the standard publication format not later than December 31, 2009.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 708 adds provisions not in the original requiring each institution of higher education to publish in its course catalogs and on its website all institutional and statewide articulation agreements concerning the transfer of courses, to post on the institution's website the dates for which each published articulation agreement is valid, and to remove an expired articulation agreement from the website not later than the 30th day after the date of its expiration. The substitute adds provisions not in the original requiring the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt a standard format for the publication of articulation agreements and to provide links to each website described above in a prominent, easily accessible, and identifiable location on the board's college information website and requiring the commissioner of higher education, 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.

C.S.H.B. 708 adds provisions not in the original entitling a student who enrolls in a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute under an articulation agreement 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, requiring each public institution of higher education to satisfy the bill's requirements not later than September 30, 2010, and requiring the coordinating board to adopt the standard publication format not later than December 31, 2009.

C.S.H.B. 708 removes provisions in the original requiring the coordinating board to collaborate with general academic teaching institutions and two-year institutions of higher education to compare the curricula between the two to determine if the curricula of the two-year institutions satisfy the goals of providing the prerequisite courses needed for students to enroll in courses at general academic teaching institutions, providing courses that will be generally accepted for course credit by general academic teaching institutions, and preparing students for academic success at general academic teaching institutions and to ensure that the curricula of the two-year institutions satisfy these goals and adopt any standards necessary for curricula and instruction at two-year institutions and any plans necessary to implement the standards.

C.S.H.B. 708 removes provisions in the original requiring each two-year institution to designate in the institution's student course catalog each course that is not generally accepted for course credit by general academic teaching institutions beginning with the 2011 fall semester, requiring the coordinating board to maintain an Internet website that includes an enrollment guide for planning and tracking a student's progress toward completion of the student's degree or certificate program, information concerning the recommended core curriculum relating to the transfer of credit, information concerning major and minor areas of study available at institutions

of higher education, and any other information the board determines would serve students enrolled at institutions of higher education, and requiring each institution of higher education to provide a link to the coordinating board's website on the primary admissions information page on the institution's website.