

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 31
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Higher Education
4/18/2009
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, there are no incentive programs to encourage students to transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. The 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005, directed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to study the feasibility of allowing automatic admission to four-year institutions of community college students who complete the core curriculum with a B average.

This legislation provides a financial incentive for students to complete the core curriculum and/or associate's degree at community colleges and transfer to four-year institutions. The bill encourages students to maintain good grades and complete their bachelor's degrees in a timely manner. Ensuring success in community college is vital to remedying inequities associated with race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

C.S.S.B. 31 amends current law relating to financial assistance for students who complete certain coursework at two-year public institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 56.901, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Subchapter Z, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER Z. OTHER STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Sec. 56.901. GRANTS FOR STUDENTS COMPLETING CERTAIN COURSEWORK AT TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. (a) Defines "coordinating board," "general academic teaching institution," "public junior college," "public state college," and "public technical institute" in this section.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a program under which an eligible student is entitled to receive financial assistance in the form of a grant to be applied toward the payment of tuition and fees at a general academic teaching institution.

(c) Sets forth eligibility requirements to receive a grant under this section.

(d) Provides that, except as provided by Subsections (e) and (f), the amount of a grant under this section is \$700 for each semester or other academic term in which the student is enrolled at a general academic teaching institution.

(e) Provides that, subject to the limitation provided by Subsection (f), if after the application of any other state or federal grant aid a student owes to a general academic teaching institution for a semester or other academic term an amount of tuition and fees that is less than the amount of a grant otherwise provided by this section for that semester or other term, the amount of the grant is equal to the amount of tuition and fees owed by the student that is not covered by that other grant aid.

(f) Prohibits the total amount of grants under this section for an academic year from exceeding \$1,400.

(g) Provides that a student, except as provided by Subsection (k), is not eligible for a grant under this section for a semester or other academic term that begins after the second anniversary of the date the student first enrolled at a general academic teaching institution.

(h) Prohibits the student, if a student fails to meet any of the requirements of Subsection (c) after the completion of any semester or other academic term, from receiving a grant under this section for the next semester or term in which the student enrolls. Authorizes a student to become eligible to receive a grant under this section in a subsequent semester or term if the student meets certain requirements.

(i) Requires each public high school in this state, at the beginning of each school year, to provide information regarding the requirements of the program under this section to each senior student enrolled at the high school and to a parent, conservator, or guardian of the student. Requires certain colleges and institutes to notify each entering undergraduate students of the program requirements no later than the sixth week of the student's first semester or term.

(j) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and THECB to jointly prepare a publication that includes the information required under Subsection (i) and to post that publication on the website of each agency in a form that enables certain institutions to reproduce the information for distribution to certain persons.

(k) Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer this section, including rules requiring an eligible student to apply for a grant under this section and to submit the information required to verify the student's eligibility. Requires that the rules provide procedures by which an otherwise eligible student may be granted additional time to receive grants under this section under certain circumstances. Sets forth circumstances and conditions to be included as hardship or other good cause for the purpose of this subsection.

(l) Prohibits a student from receiving a grant under this section for a semester or term before the 2011 fall semester. Prohibits a student from establishing eligibility for a grant based in any part on higher education coursework completed before the 2009 fall semester. Provides that this subsection expires January 1, 2013.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to adopt rules for the administration of Section 56.901, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act. Authorizes THECB to adopt the initial rules in the manner provided by law for emergency rules.

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act does not make an appropriation. Provides that this Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations act of the 81st Legislature.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.