BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1249
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Students who successfully complete their associate's degrees often find that the courses they completed towards these degrees do not apply to their bachelor's degree programs. Despite their degree attainment, students may be forced to repeat classes at four-year institutions. The lack of alignment between degree programs and the lack of clear course articulation act as barriers to the attainment of bachelor's degrees.

As proposed, S.B. 1249 establishes a pilot program to develop and assess methods for increasing the number of students with bachelor's degrees in engineering and ensure that all the credits earned for an associate's degree in engineering will apply seamlessly and automatically to a bachelor's degree in engineering.

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 Section 61.821, Education Code, by amending Subdivision (1) and adding Subdivision (4), to redefine "core curriculum" and define "statewide articulated transfer curricula."

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.822 (b), Education Code, to require the minimum core curriculum requirement for all academic associate's degrees to be 42 semester credit hours. Creates an exception.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.833, as follows:

> Sec. 61.833. STATEWIDE ARTICULATED TRANSFER CURRICULA FOR ENGINEERING DISCIPLINES; PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a pilot program to develop and assess methods to increase the number of students earning a baccalaureate degree in engineering. Requires the program to develop levels of academic attainment, including, if feasible, standard associate's degrees of certain engineering subjects; develop a well-defined process for transitioning students who earn an associate's degree or other level of academic attainment in an engineering discipline into an accredited engineering degree program at a four-year institution; and establish methods to provide orientation and advising to support students in choosing an engineering discipline and in completing a baccalaureate degree in engineering.
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> (b) Requires THECB, with the assistance of advisory committees equitably composed of representatives of institutions of higher education, not later than January 1, 2011, to develop statewide articulated transfer curricula for the purpose of developing levels of academic attainment, including, if feasible, standard associate's degrees, for engineering disciplines. Authorizes each university system or independent institution of higher education that offers a degree program for which a statewide articulated transfer curriculum is proposed to nominate an

individual to participate on the advisory committee for that particular engineering curriculum.

(c) Requires the statewide articulated transfer curricula to have the same rigor and content as the equivalent course work at an engineering program accredited by ABET, Incorporated, that is offered at a general academic teaching institution; minimize the time and course work required to complete a baccalaureate degree in engineering; and be consistent with the common course numbering system approved by THECB and the recommendations and rules of THECB.

(d) Authorizes each institution of higher education that offers an undergraduate degree program in an engineering discipline to participate in the pilot program by adopting the statewide articulated transfer curriculum for that discipline.

(e) Provides that a student who meets institutional and engineering degree program admission requirements and successfully completes the statewide articulated transfer curriculum for an engineering discipline developed by THECB under the pilot program may transfer the credit hours earned under that curriculum and apply those credit hours to a participating four-year institution's engineering degree program in a discipline for which the curriculum was developed and shall receive full academic credit toward that engineering degree program for the credit hours transferred.

(f) Requires a student who meets institutional and degree program admission requirements and who transfers from one institution of higher education to another without completing the statewide articulated transfer curriculum developed by THECB for that engineering discipline to receive full academic credit from a participating institution for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed in the statewide articulated transfer curriculum. Requires the student, following receipt of credit for each of those courses, to be required to satisfy any additional course requirements in the degree program of the receiving institution.

(g) Requires THECB, with the assistance of advisory committees established under this section, to periodically evaluate whether the statewide articulated transfer curricula for engineering disciplines effectively facilitate the transition of junior college students and students of other two-year institutions of higher education into accredited four-year engineering degree programs and have contributed to increasing the number of transfer students who successfully complete baccalaureate degree programs in engineering.

(h) Requires THECB, not later than January 1, 2011, to report to the legislature regarding THECB's progress in developing and evaluating statewide articulated transfer curricula for engineering disciplines required by this section.

(i) Provides that this section expires January 1, 2017.

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