

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 1764
By: Watson
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

C.S.S.B. 1764 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to prescribe uniform standards to ensure that information regarding the cost of attendance at institutions of higher education is available to the public in a manner that is consumer friendly and readily understandable to prospective students and their families. The bill requires the standards to address all the elements that constitute the total cost of attendance and requires the information to be displayed on an institution's website, along with information on financial assistance and a link to the primary federal student aid website.

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.S.B. 1764 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to prescribe uniform standards intended to ensure that information regarding the cost of attendance at institutions of higher education is available to the public in a manner that is consumer-friendly and readily understandable to prospective students and their families. The bill requires the coordinating board, in developing the standards, to examine common and recommended practices regarding the publication of such information and to solicit recommendations and comments from institutions of higher education and interested private or independent institutions of higher education.

C.S.S.B. 1764 requires the standards to address all of the elements that constitute the total cost of attendance, including tuition and fees, room and board costs, book and supply costs, transportation costs, and other personal expenses, and to prescribe model language to be used to describe each element of the cost of attendance. The bill requires each institution of higher education that offers an undergraduate degree or certificate program to prominently display on its Internet website in accordance with the uniform standards information regarding the cost of attendance at the institution by a full-time entering first-year student and to conform to the uniform standards in any electronic or printed materials intended to provide to prospective undergraduate students information regarding the cost of attendance.

C.S.S.B. 1764 requires each institution to consider the uniform standards when providing information to the public or to prospective students regarding the cost of attendance at the institution by nonresident students, graduate students, or students enrolled in professional programs and requires the coordinating board to prescribe requirements for an institution to provide on the institution's website consumer-friendly and readily understandable information regarding student financial aid opportunities. The bill requires such information to be provided in connection with the displayed information regarding the cost of attendance by a full-time entering first-year student and to include a link to the primary federal student financial aid website intended to assist persons applying for student financial aid.

C.S.S.B. 1764 requires the coordinating board to provide on the board's Internet website a program or similar tool that will compute for a person accessing the website the estimated net cost of attendance for a full-time entering first-year student attending an institution of higher education. The bill requires the coordinating board to require each institution to provide the coordinating board with the information the coordinating board requires to administer this provision.

C.S.S.B. 1764 adds a temporary provision, set to expire January 1, 2011, to require the coordinating board to prescribe the initial standards and requirements under the bill's provisions not later than January 1, 2010, and to require institutions of higher education to comply with the standards and requirements not later than April 1, 2010.

C.S.S.B. 1764 requires the coordinating board to encourage private or independent institutions of higher education approved under applicable state law to participate in the tuition equalization grant program, to the greatest extent practicable, to prominently display the information described in the uniform standards on their Internet websites in accordance with the standards and to conform to those standards in electronic and printed materials intended to provide to prospective undergraduate students information regarding the cost of attendance at the institutions. The bill requires the coordinating board also to encourage those institutions to include on their websites a link to the primary federal student financial aid website intended to assist persons applying for student financial aid. The bill requires the coordinating board to make the net cost computation program or tool described above available to private or independent institutions of higher education and requires those institutions to make that program or tool, or another program or tool that complies with the requirements for the net price calculator required under the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, available on their websites not later than the date by which the institutions are required under such law to make the net price calculator publicly available on their websites.

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.S.B. 1764 removes a provision in the original including the cost of attendance at private or independent institutions of higher education approved to receive tuition equalization grant funds in the information for which the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is required to prescribe uniform standards for purposes of public dissemination in a consumer-friendly and readily understandable manner. The substitute removes a provision in the original requiring each such private or independent institution to prominently display on its website in accordance with the coordinating board's uniform standards information regarding the cost of attendance at the institution by a full-time entering first-year student and to conform to the uniform standards in any electronic or printed materials intended to provide to prospective undergraduate students information regarding the cost of attendance at the institution and makes conforming changes.

C.S.S.B. 1764 differs from the original by requiring the coordinating board, in developing the standards, to solicit recommendations and comments from interested private or independent institutions of higher education, whereas the original requires the coordinating board to solicit recommendations and comments from affected private or independent institutions of higher education.

C.S.S.B. 1764 adds provisions not in the original requiring the coordinating board to encourage private or independent institutions of higher education approved to participate in the tuition equalization grant program, to the greatest extent practicable, to prominently display the

information contained in the uniform standards on their websites and to conform to those standards in electronic and printed materials intended to provide to prospective undergraduate students information regarding the cost of attendance. The substitute adds provisions not in the original requiring the coordinating board also to encourage those institutions to include on their websites a link to the primary federal student financial aid website intended to assist persons applying for student financial aid; requiring the coordinating board to make the net cost computation program or tool, which the coordinating board is required to provide on the board's website, available to private or independent institutions of higher education; and requiring those institutions to make that program or tool, or another program or tool that complies with the requirements for the net price calculator required under federal law, available on their websites not later than the date by which the institutions are required under such law to make the net price calculator publicly available on their websites.