

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3025  
By: Branch  
Higher Education  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Each year thousands of students enter community colleges with the intent to transfer to a four-year university, but some reports indicate that only a minority succeed in doing so. Interested parties argue that students are more likely to succeed if given early and consistent advising and a clear degree plan to follow. Those parties therefore argue that Texas should invest in creating a seamless transfer pathway that decreases the time a student takes to complete a degree and simplifies the process for a student who wants to continue his or her education beyond a certificate or associate's degree. C.S.H.B. 3025 seeks to implement certain measures to facilitate the transfer of students within the public higher education system and the timely graduation of students from public institutions of higher education.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 7 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3025 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in collaboration with institutions of higher education, to develop transfer compacts that identify learning objectives for coursework in major degree fields that are acceptable across institutions offering coursework or degrees in those fields in an effort to facilitate the universal articulation of specific courses completed at public junior colleges, public state colleges, public technical institutes, general academic teaching institutions, and qualified degree-granting career schools or colleges and transferred to general academic teaching institutions. The bill requires an institution of higher education or a qualified degree-granting career school or college to comply with any applicable compact entered into by the institution, school, or college and the coordinating board.

C.S.H.B. 3025 requires a general academic teaching institution designated as a research institution under the coordinating board's higher education accountability system that elects not to participate in an applicable transfer compact to publish on the institution's website for use by prospective undergraduate students a detailed description, developed by the institution's faculty, of the learning objectives, content, and prior knowledge requirements for at least 12 courses for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education and to establish honors articulation agreements with at least two public junior colleges designed to strengthen the lower-division course offerings of those public junior colleges and improve the persistence and success rates of students who transfer to the institution from public junior colleges.

C.S.H.B. 3025 prohibits a student from being required by an institution of higher education, in order to earn an associate degree, to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency unless

academic accreditation or professional licensure requirements require the completion of additional semester hours for the degree. The bill makes this same exception applicable to a student earning a baccalaureate degree, as a replacement for an exception based on a general academic teaching institution determining that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring completion of additional semester credit hours, and makes this change applicable beginning with undergraduate students who initially enroll in a general academic teaching institution for the 2013 fall semester. The bill changes a reference with regard to the exception to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor to the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency. The bill exempts from these provisions an associate degree awarded by an institution to a student enrolled in the institution before the 2013 fall semester and authorizes the coordinating board to review one or more of an institution's associate degree programs to ensure compliance.

C.S.H.B. 3025 requires the comprehensive list of courses for each public institution of higher education submitted to the coordinating board by the institution's governing board to specifically identify any course included in the common course numbering system that has been added to or removed from the institution's list for the current academic year and requires the coordinating board to distribute that information as necessary to accomplish the purposes of the common course numbering system. The bill includes any changes relating to offering a course included in the common course numbering system among the changes in the comprehensive list of courses that is required to be submitted by an institution's governing board to the coordinating board on the date designated by the coordinating board. The bill requires each governing board to certify at the time of submission that the institution does not prohibit the acceptance of transfer credit based solely on the accreditation of the sending institution or include language in any materials published by the institution, whether in printed or electronic form, suggesting that such a prohibition exists. The bill makes these provisions applicable to the comprehensive list of courses offered by public institutions of higher education beginning with lists required to be submitted for the 2012-2013 academic year.

C.S.H.B. 3025 requires at least a majority of the members of any advisory committee assisting the coordinating board in developing a recommended core curriculum to be administrators of an institution of higher education, as an alternative to faculty members of such an institution. The bill requires the coordinating board, with the assistance of the advisory committees and in an effort to facilitate the transfer of major-related coursework beyond the core curriculum, to develop a course-specific core curriculum for each broad academic discipline within the general core curriculum and to identify those degree programs offered at institutions of higher education to which the course-specific core curriculum, if successfully completed by a student at another institution of higher education or at a qualified degree-granting career school or college, is fully transferrable.

C.S.H.B. 3025 requires the coordinating board, not later than May 31, 2012, to develop a core curriculum, including the core curricula for broad academic disciplines included within the general core curriculum, that conforms to the bill's provisions.

C.S.H.B. 3025 requires a student who transfers from one institution of higher education to another to receive academic credit from the receiving institution for each course that the student has successfully completed that serves as an equivalent course under the common course numbering system at the institution from which the student transfers. The bill makes this provision applicable beginning with the 2011 fall semester.

C.S.H.B. 3025 requires each student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at an institution of higher education to file a degree plan with the institution not later than the semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 30 or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including any other course for which the institution the student attends has awarded the student college course credit, including by examination. The bill requires such a student who begins the

student's first semester or term at an institution of higher education with 30 or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses already completed to file a degree plan with the institution during the student's first regular semester at the institution.

C.S.H.B. 3025 prohibits such a student from registering for any course offered by the institution of higher education for a semester or term succeeding the semester or term in which the student is required to file a degree plan unless the student has done so. The bill prohibits such a student, after filing a degree plan, from changing the degree plan or enrolling in a course that is not included in the degree plan unless the student has consulted with the student's academic advisor and satisfied any applicable prerequisite or other requirement imposed by the institution regarding that degree plan change or course enrollment, as applicable. The bill authorizes the coordinating board, in consultation with institutions of higher education, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of these provisions on filing a degree plan and makes such provisions applicable beginning with undergraduate students who initially enroll in a general academic teaching institution for the 2011 fall semester.

C.S.H.B. 3025 defines "qualified degree-granting career school or college" and "degree plan" and provides for the meaning of "career school or college" and "institution of higher education" by reference.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2011.

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 3025 omits provisions included in the original relating to the development of a fixed tuition rate program for certain qualified transfer students, including a provision authorizing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in consultation with general academic teaching institutions, to adopt any rules the coordinating board considers appropriate for the administration of the program. The substitute omits provisions included in the original defining "coordinating board" and "lower-division institution of higher education" and providing for the meaning of "general academic teaching institution."

C.S.H.B. 3025 contains provisions not included in the original defining "qualified degree-granting career school or college" and providing for the meaning of "career school or college" by reference. The substitute contains a specification not included in the original adding general academic teaching institutions and qualified degree-granting career schools or colleges to the institutions offering specified courses to be included in the transfer compacts developed by the coordinating board in collaboration with institutions of higher education, as in the original. The substitute contains a provision not included in the original requiring a qualified degree-granting career school or college, in addition to an institution of higher education, as in the original, to comply with any applicable transfer compact entered into by the institution, school, or college and the coordinating board. The substitute contains a provision not included in the original requiring a general academic teaching institution designated as a research institution under the coordinating board's higher education accountability system that elects not to participate in an applicable transfer compact to take certain specified actions.

C.S.H.B. 3025 differs from the original, in provisions prohibiting a student from being required by an institution of higher education, in order to earn an associate or baccalaureate degree, to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required, by specifying the minimum number of hours required by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency, rather than the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor, as in the original. The substitute differs from the original by making provisions related to the number of semester credit hours required for an associate degree inapplicable to an associate degree awarded by an institution to a student enrolled before the 2013 fall semester, rather than the 2011 semester, as in

the original. The substitute omits a provision included in the original setting that applicability provision to expire January 1, 2012.

C.S.H.B. 3025 contains a provision not included in the original requiring each institution's governing board to certify at the time of submission of the comprehensive course list that the institution does not prohibit the acceptance of transfer credit based solely on the accreditation of the sending institution or include language in any materials published by the institution, whether in printed or electronic form, suggesting that such a prohibition exists.

C.S.H.B. 3025 omits provisions included in the original lowering from 42 to 36 the minimum number of semester credit hours required in the core curriculum developed by the coordinating board and making related conforming changes. The substitute omits provisions included in the original removing a specification that the core curriculum is recommended and removing an authorization for an institution of higher education to have a curriculum of other than 42 semester credit hours only if approved by the coordinating board. The substitute contains a provision not included in the original requiring at least a majority of the members of any advisory committee assisting the coordinating board in developing a recommended core curriculum to be administrators of an institution of higher education, as an alternative to faculty members of such an institution.

C.S.H.B. 3025, in provisions on filing a degree plan, differs from the original by providing for the meaning of "institution of higher education" by reference, whereas the original provides for the meaning of "general academic teaching institution" by reference. The substitute differs from the original by making the bill's requirements relating to filing a degree plan applicable to each student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at an institution of higher education, rather than to each undergraduate student enrolled in a general academic teaching institution, as in the original, and by making related conforming changes. The substitute differs from the original by including courses for which an institution a student attends has awarded the student college course credit by examination among the courses the completion of which helps determine when an applicable student is required to file a degree plan, whereas the original includes advanced placement courses among such courses. The substitute contains a specification not included in the original that the coordinating board consult with institutions of higher education in adopting rules as necessary for the administration of the bill's provisions relating to degree plans.

C.S.H.B. 3025 differs from the original by making the bill's change in law relating to a certain exception to the prohibition against a student seeking a baccalaureate degree completing more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required for the degree applicable beginning with students who initially enroll in a general academic teaching institution for the 2013 fall semester, rather than the 2011 fall semester, as in the original. The bill omits temporary provisions included in the original requiring each Texas public institution of higher education to revise its core curriculum as necessary to conform with the bill's provisions, requiring students to comply with the institution's revised core curriculum beginning with the 2014 fall semester, with a certain exception, and requiring each institution of higher education to issue course catalogs that reflect the applicable core curriculum consistent with the bill's provisions.

C.S.H.B. 3025 differs from the original in nonsubstantive ways by making conforming and clarifying changes.