

By: Birdwell, Schwertner

S.B. No. 441

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Fast Start Program to promote rapid delivery of workforce education and development.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, is amended by adding Section 302.0032 to read as follows:

Sec. 302.0032. TEXAS FAST START PROGRAM. (a) In this section:

(1) "Fast start program" means a career and technical education program designed to help students earn postsecondary certificates and degrees and enter into the workforce quickly.

(2) "Public junior college," "public state college," and "public technical institute" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003, Education Code.

(b) The commission, in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, shall establish and administer the Texas Fast Start Program to identify and develop methods to support, and shall provide support for, competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models for use by public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes. The models must be designed to assist students in maximizing academic or workforce education program credit from public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to expedite the entry of those students into the workforce.

1       (c) The commission shall work collaboratively with the  
2 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, public junior colleges,  
3 public state colleges, and public technical institutes to  
4 accomplish the purposes of this section.

5       (d) A public junior college, public state college, or public  
6 technical institute may use the competency-based, rapid-deployment  
7 education delivery models described by Subsection (b) in developing  
8 or expanding a fast start program at the college or institute.

9       (e) A fast start program offered by a public junior college,  
10 public state college, or public technical institute must:

11           (1) focus on the current and future needs of employers  
12 in this state;

13           (2) enable students to obtain postsecondary  
14 certificates and degrees at an accelerated pace in high-demand  
15 fields or occupations, as identified by local employers;

16           (3) incorporate competency-based learning techniques;

17           (4) feature a variety of access channels that are  
18 uniquely designed to maximize job preparedness for identified  
19 groups such as veterans, high school graduates, and current  
20 workforce members seeking retraining; and

21           (5) be designed for rapid deployment statewide.

22       (f) Through the collaboration, the commission may award  
23 grants to public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public  
24 technical institutes for:

25           (1) the expansion of existing fast start programs;

26           (2) the development of new fast start programs; and

27           (3) any other activities related to the purposes of

1 this section.

2 (g) A grant received under this section may be used only to:

3 (1) support a course or program that prepares students  
4 for career employment in fields or occupations that are identified  
5 as high-demand by local employers;

6 (2) finance the initial costs of developing a fast  
7 start program, including the costs of constructing or renovating  
8 facilities, purchasing equipment, and other associated expenses;

9 (3) finance the development or expansion of a fast  
10 start program leading to a postsecondary certificate or degree; or

11 (4) offer a new or expanded dual credit fast start  
12 program jointly with a public high school.

13 (h) The commission and the Texas Higher Education  
14 Coordinating Board shall administer the program using money  
15 appropriated to the commission or board, money received from  
16 federal or other sources, or money from holding accounts that may be  
17 used by the commission for the purpose of skills development.

18 (i) The commission and the Texas Higher Education  
19 Coordinating Board may adopt rules as necessary for the  
20 administration of this section.

21 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
22 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
23 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
24 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
25 Act takes effect September 1, 2013.