

By: Birdwell

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 educational program designed to help students earn career certifications and enter into the workforce quickly.

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

(b) The commission shall establish and administer the Texas Fast Start Program to identify, develop, and support methods to maximize academic or workforce education credit from public junior colleges and public technical institutes to expedite the entry of postsecondary students into the workforce.

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

(d) Through the collaboration, the commission shall develop

1 new competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models  
2 for use by a public junior college or public technical institute in  
3 developing or expanding a fast start program as described by this  
4 section.

5 (e) A fast start program under this section must:

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

8 (2) enable students to obtain certifications at an  
9 accelerated pace in high-demand fields or occupations, as  
10 identified by local employers;

11 (3) incorporate competency-based learning techniques;

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

16 (5) be designed for rapid deployment statewide.

17 (f) Through the collaboration, the commission:

18 (1) may award grants to public junior colleges and  
19 public technical institutes for:

20 (A) the expansion of existing fast start  
21 programs;

22 (B) the development of new fast start programs;  
23 and

24 (C) any other activities related to the purposes  
25 of this section; and

26 (2) shall create a variety of incentives that  
27 encourage public junior colleges and public technical institutes to

1 expand any existing fast start programs.

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 license, certificate, or postsecondary  
11 degree; and

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

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

18 (i) The commission may adopt rules as necessary for the  
19 administration of this section.

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