

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 298
By: Wu
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that many students take courses at a lower-division institution of higher education, including a public junior college, with the intention of transferring that course credit to a university offering bachelor's degrees but are too often frustrated when they learn that the earned credit is not accepted. The parties contend that the lack of transferability between public junior colleges and these universities causes students to waste valuable time and money that could be avoided by requiring the universities to post the courses for which they accept transfer credits from public junior colleges, which would also contribute to more timely student graduation.

C.S.H.B. 298 seeks to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTIONS 1, 2, and 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 298 amends the Education Code to require each general academic teaching institution 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 offered by the institution for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education, defined by the bill as a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute;
- identify the public junior colleges from which the general academic teaching institution regularly receives transfer students; and
- establish, for at least five degree plans for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education, articulation agreements with each public junior college from which the general academic teaching institution has received an average of at least five percent of the institution's transfer students in the three preceding academic years that identify courses offered by the public junior college that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general

academic teaching institution.

C.S.H.B. 298 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in consultation with general academic teaching institutions and public junior colleges and using the negotiated rulemaking procedures under the Negotiated Rulemaking Act, to adopt any rules the coordinating board considers necessary for the administration of these requirements. The bill requires each general academic teaching institution to publish the information on the institution's website and to establish articulation agreements not later than May 31, 2017. The bill establishes that a general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

C.S.H.B. 298 requires the coordinating board, using the negotiated rulemaking procedures under the Negotiated Rulemaking Act, to adopt any rules the coordinating board considers necessary for the administration of the limitation on the number of semester credit hours that a student may be required to complete to earn a baccalaureate degree or associate degree. This requirement applies beginning with undergraduate students who initially enroll in an institution of higher education for the 2017 fall semester.

C.S.H.B. 298 authorizes administrators of an institution of higher education to serve as representatives of the institution on any advisory committee formed to assist the coordinating board in developing a recommended core curriculum for purposes of course credit transfers. The bill requires the coordinating board, in an effort to facilitate the transfer of major-related coursework beyond the general education core curriculum and with the assistance of such an advisory committee, 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, is fully transferrable. The bill requires the coordinating board to develop the core curricula not later than May 31, 2017.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 298 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

INTRODUCED

SECTION 1. Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.96852 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.96852. TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM LOWER-DIVISION INSTITUTIONS; ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS. (a) In this section:

(1) "Articulation agreement" means a formal written agreement between a public junior college and a general academic teaching institution identifying courses offered by the public junior college that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general academic

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

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(1) "Articulation agreement" means a formal written agreement between a public junior college and a general academic teaching institution identifying courses offered by the public junior college that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general academic

teaching institution.

(2) "Lower-division institution of higher education" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute.

(3) "Public junior college" and "general academic teaching institution" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) Each general academic teaching institution shall:

(1) publish on the institution's Internet 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 offered by the institution for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education;

(2) identify the public junior colleges from which the general academic teaching institution regularly receives transfer students; and

(3) establish, for at least five degree plans for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education, articulation agreements with each public junior college from which the general academic teaching institution has received an average of at least five percent of the institution's transfer students in the three preceding academic years.

(c) A general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement under this section does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

(d) In consultation with general academic teaching institutions and public junior colleges, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt any rules the coordinating board considers necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 2. Section 61.0515, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (d) to read as follows:

(a) To earn a baccalaureate degree, a student may not be required by a general academic teaching institution to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit

teaching institution.

(2) "Lower-division institution of higher education" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute.

(3) "Public junior college" and "general academic teaching institution" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) Each general academic teaching institution shall:

(1) publish on the institution's Internet 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 offered by the institution for which credit is frequently transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of higher education;

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(c) A general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement under this section does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

(d) In consultation with general academic teaching institutions and public junior colleges, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, using the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code, shall adopt any rules the coordinating board considers necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 2. Section 61.0515, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (d) to read as follows:

(a) To earn a baccalaureate degree, a student may not be required by a general academic teaching institution to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit

hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency [~~Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor~~] unless the institution determines that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

(d) The board shall adopt any rules the board considers necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 3. Section 61.05151, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (d) to read as follows:

(a) To earn an associate degree, a student may not be required by an institution of higher education to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency [~~Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor~~] unless the institution determines that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

(d) The board shall adopt any rules the board considers necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 4. Section 61.822, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a-1) and adding Subsection (f) to read as follows:

(a-1) The board, with the assistance of advisory committees composed of representatives of institutions of higher education, shall develop a recommended core curriculum of at least 42 semester credit hours, including a statement of the content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum. Administrators of an institution of higher education may serve as representatives of the institution on any advisory committee under this section. At least a majority of the members of any advisory committee named under this

hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency [~~Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor~~] unless the institution determines that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

(d) The board shall adopt any rules the board considers necessary for the administration of this section. In adopting rules under this subsection, the board shall use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

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(a) To earn an associate degree, a student may not be required by an institution of higher education to complete more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required for the degree by the institution's board-recognized accrediting agency [~~Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or its successor~~] unless the institution determines that there is a compelling academic reason for requiring completion of additional semester credit hours for the degree.

(d) The board shall adopt any rules the board considers necessary for the administration of this section. In adopting rules under this subsection, the board shall use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

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(a-1) The board, with the assistance of advisory committees composed of representatives of institutions of higher education, shall develop a recommended core curriculum of at least 42 semester credit hours, including a statement of the content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum. Administrators of an institution of higher education may serve as representatives of the institution on any advisory committee under this section. At least a majority of the members of any advisory committee named under this

section shall be faculty members of an institution of higher education. An institution shall consult with the faculty of the institution before nominating or recommending a person to the board as the institution's representative on an advisory committee.

(f) In an effort to facilitate the transfer of major-related coursework beyond the general education core curriculum, the board, with the assistance of the advisory committees described by Subsection (a), shall:

(1) develop a course-specific core curriculum for each broad academic discipline within the general core curriculum; and

(2) 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, is fully transferable.

SECTION 5. Not later than May 31, 2017, each general academic teaching institution shall publish on the institution's Internet website the information required by Section 51.96852, Education Code, as added by this Act, and establish articulation agreements in accordance with that section.

SECTION 6. The changes in law made by this Act to Sections 61.0515(a) and 61.05151(a), Education Code, apply beginning with undergraduate students who initially enroll in an institution of higher education for the 2017 fall semester. An undergraduate student who initially enrolls in an institution of higher education before that semester is covered by the law in effect before the effective date of this Act, and that law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 7. Not later than May 31, 2017, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall develop core curricula for broad academic disciplines included within the general core curriculum that conform to the requirements of Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 8. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each

section shall be faculty members of an institution of higher education. An institution shall consult with the faculty of the institution before nominating or recommending a person to the board as the institution's representative on an advisory committee.

(f) In an effort to facilitate the transfer of major-related coursework beyond the general education core curriculum, the board, with the assistance of the advisory committees described by Subsection (a-1), shall:

(1) develop a course-specific core curriculum for each broad academic discipline within the general core curriculum; and

(2) 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, is fully transferable.

SECTION 5. Same as introduced version.

SECTION 6. Same as introduced version.

SECTION 7. Same as introduced version.

SECTION 8. Same as introduced version.

house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2015.