

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 1583
By: Clardy (Zaffirini)
Higher Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Approximately one-half of all college students in Texas attend school part-time while they work to help pay for school, and this is especially true at two-year institutions that offer associate degrees and specialty certificate programs. Because part-time students lack predictability in their school schedule, it is difficult for them to accommodate work schedules, child care, and other obligations. The decision between taking a class and working often leads to slower completion rates, and many times the student does not finish the degree at all.

Many states, such as Tennessee and New York, have implemented block scheduling and have seen graduation rates rise significantly. In addition to this, after the 2011 legislative session, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) produced a report pertaining to improved student outcomes. One of THECB's recommendations was "block schedules with consistent meeting times to provide predictability and stability."

H.B. 1583 would promote the use of block scheduling for community college programs.

H.B. 1583 amends current law relating to block scheduling for certain associate degree and certificate programs at public junior colleges.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 130.0095, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 130, Education Code, by adding Section 130.0095, as follows:

Sec. 130.0095. BLOCK SCHEDULING FOR CERTAIN ASSOCIATE DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM. (a) Requires each public junior college, to facilitate timely degree completion by students at public junior colleges, to establish, for each allied health or nursing associate degree or certificate program offered by the college and for at least 50 percent of the career and technology associate degree or certificate programs offered by the college, a block schedule curriculum under which:

- (1) courses required for a student's enrollment in the program as a full-time student are offered each semester in scheduled blocks, such as a morning, full-day, afternoon, evening, or weekend block schedule, designed to provide scheduling predictability from semester to semester to students enrolled in the program; and
- (2) students may enroll in an entire block schedule curriculum offered under the program in a semester, rather than enrolling in individual courses leading toward the degree or certificate.

(b) Requires each public junior college to publish in advance of each semester the available block schedule curricula for each associate degree or certificate program described by Subsection (a) offered by the college for that semester.

(c) Authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 2. Provides that Section 130.0095, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2016 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.