

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1066  
By: Zaffirini  
Higher Education  
3/23/2015  
As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship program provides financial awards to students in STEM programs at certain public junior colleges and public technical institutes. To maintain eligibility to participate in the program, an institution, beginning in the second year after implementation, must demonstrate to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that, three months after graduating, at least 70 percent of the institution's T-STEM scholarship recipients either are employed in a STEM field, or are enrolled in an upper-division program leading to a STEM baccalaureate.

The foregoing requirement has proven unduly burdensome, however. The above-mentioned three-month requirement is unrealistic, for example, since spring graduates who enroll in upper-division classes do not appear on universities' enrollment lists until October—more than three months after graduation—making it essentially impossible for a T-STEM-participating college or institute to establish qualifying upper-division enrollment in the time allowed by statute. Similarly, the Texas Workforce Commission compiles employment data by industry, not field, making it difficult to or impossible for an institution to demonstrate field-specific employment.

To ameliorate some of these practical difficulties, THECB recommends amending the program's enabling legislation to provide that institutions may demonstrate continuing eligibility in the third year following implementation (so that institutions will have adequate time to gather all the relevant data) and that, with respect to the employment requirement they be allowed to demonstrate employment without regard to a particular field.

S.B. 1066 would make these changes to improve the administration of the T-STEM Challenge Scholarship program.

As proposed, S.B. 1066 amends current law relating to continuing eligibility requirements for institutions of higher education to participate in the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship Program.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.9794(b), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires that an institution, to maintain eligibility, demonstrate to the Texas Higher Education Board (THECB) each year beginning with the third year following implementation of a scholarship program under this subchapter, that at least 70 percent of the institution's T-STEM Challenge Scholarship recipients, within twelve months of receipt of a scholarship are:

(1) employed; or

(2) enrolled in courses, leading to a certificate, associate, or baccalaureate degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field.

Deletes existing text requiring that an institution, to maintain eligibility, demonstrate to THECB beginning with the second year following implementation of a scholarship program under this subchapter, must demonstrate to THECB that at least 70 percent of the institution's T-STEM Challenge Scholarship graduates, within three months after graduation, are employed by a business in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field and upper-division courses.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to award scholarships under Subchapter GG (Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship Program), Chapter 61, Education Code, as amended by this Act, beginning with the 2015-2016 academic year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2015.