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H.B. No. 298

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress,  
and timely graduation of students in public higher education.

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

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 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

1 transferred to the institution from lower-division institutions of  
2 higher education;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 SECTION 4. Section [61.822](#), Education Code, is amended by  
26 amending Subsection (a-1) and adding Subsection (f) to read as  
27 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 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. 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.

1           SECTION 6. The changes in law made by this Act to Sections  
2   61.0515(a) and 61.05151(a), Education Code, apply beginning with  
3   undergraduate students who initially enroll in an institution of  
4   higher education for the 2017 fall semester. An undergraduate  
5   student who initially enrolls in an institution of higher education  
6   before that semester is covered by the law in effect before the  
7   effective date of this Act, and that law is continued in effect for  
8   that purpose.

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

14          SECTION 8. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
15   a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
16   provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
17   Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
18   Act takes effect September 1, 2015.