

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3768
By: Howard
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to interested parties, students seeking to transfer between institutions of higher education are faced with a confusing array of choices and little in the way of guidance to help them understand which courses will transfer and apply to the major they intend to pursue, all of which results in lost time and money for students and taxpayers. C.S.H.B. 3768 seeks to address this problem by providing for the establishment of the Texas Guided Pathways program to facilitate the completion by students of undergraduate certificate and degree programs.

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 SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3768 amends the Education Code to establish the Texas Guided Pathways program to inform, empower, and support current and prospective students at institutions of higher education by providing those students clear and efficient pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs. The bill sets out the goals of the program and requires each public institution of higher education to develop a recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. The bill requires each recommended course sequence to be designed to enable a student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within four semesters or other academic terms for an associate degree or certificate program or within eight semesters or other academic terms for a baccalaureate degree program, to include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the specified time frame, and to be aligned with the applicable certificate or degree requirements published by the institution.

C.S.H.B. 3768 requires each institution of higher education, not later than June 1 of each year, to adopt a version of each recommended course sequence, after review and any necessary update, to take effect beginning with entering freshmen and undergraduate transfer students for the following academic year; to submit each recommended course sequence to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in an electronic format specified by the coordinating board and, if the institution does not use the common course numbering system, information regarding the course equivalent under that system, if any, for each included course; and to post each recommended course sequence, including any applicable course equivalent information under the common course numbering system, on the institution's website in a location that is accessible from the home page by use of not more than three links. The bill requires each institution to

adopt, submit to the coordinating board, and post on the institution's website the initial recommended course sequences not later than August 15, 2018.

C.S.H.B. 3768 requires each institution of higher education to do the following:

- inform students about the recommended course sequences, including how to use those course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection, and incorporate those course sequences into student advising;
- post on the institution's website a link to the web-based platform on recommended course sequences developed by the coordinating board under the bill's provisions to enable students to compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education;
- honor each version of a recommended course sequence adopted by the institution, including any necessary modifications made for compliance purposes, for at least the four academic years occurring after the date on which that version of the course sequence is adopted.

The bill authorizes an institution of higher education, after notice to the coordinating board, to modify the institution's recommended course sequences as necessary to incorporate recommended changes identified as a result of any program evaluation conducted by the institution or to comply with applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state or federal law.

C.S.H.B. 3768 requires the coordinating board, in consultation with the Texas OnCourse initiative and its partnering institutions of higher education, to establish, not later than March 15, 2019, a statewide web-based platform that enables a student to search for and compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education and to determine whether a specific lower-division course offered by an institution of higher education and identified using the common course numbering system would transfer to another institution of higher education for course credit applied toward the student's undergraduate certificate or degree program and would count toward that institution's recommended course sequence for that program. The bill authorizes the coordinating board, in establishing the web-based platform, to use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices. The bill requires the coordinating board to ensure that an electronic link to the web-based platform is posted on the website of any electronic common application system developed by the coordinating board.

C.S.H.B. 3768 requires each institution of higher education, not later than March 15 of each year, to submit to the coordinating board in an electronic format specified by the coordinating board a list of the transfer compacts in which the institution participates and a copy of, or an electronic link to a copy of, each transfer compact listed.

C.S.H.B. 3768 requires the coordinating board to provide any necessary support for the development of transfer compacts between institutions of higher education and, in consultation with the Texas OnCourse initiative and its partnering institutions of higher education, to establish, not later than March 15, 2019, a statewide web-based platform that provides to students information regarding transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, including an electronic link to each transfer compact submitted to the coordinating board. The bill authorizes the coordinating board, in establishing the web-based platform, to use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

C.S.H.B. 3768 requires the coordinating board, not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, to submit to the members of the legislature the following reports:

- beginning with an initial report required not later than November 1, 2018, a report on the recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education, which must include

an analysis of the alignment of courses taken by students in each undergraduate certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education with the institution's recommended course sequence for that program; and

- beginning with an initial report required not later than November 1, 2020, a report on transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, which must include an analysis of the impact of those compacts on students' efficient progress toward completion of an undergraduate certificate or degree program.

C.S.H.B. 3768 authorizes the coordinating board to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source for any expenses related to the Texas Guided Pathways program and to adopt rules as necessary to implement the program in consultation with institutions of higher education. The bill requires the coordinating board in consultation with institutions of higher education to adopt rules for the electronic submission of information required to be submitted to the board under the bill's provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2017.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3768 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. Title 3, Subtitle A, Education Code, is amended by adding Chapter 51B to read as follows:

CHAPTER 51B. TEXAS GUIDED PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Sec. 51B.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Board" means the board of regents of a university system or independent institution.

(2) "Commissioner" means the Texas Higher Education Commissioner.

(3) "Institution of higher education" means any public, state, and technical four-year college or university in the state.

(4) "Lower-division institution" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute.

(5) "Program" means the Texas Guided Pathways Program described by this chapter.

(6) "Public senior college or university" means any college or university designated as a general academic institution as defined in statute or as created and so classified, expressly or impliedly, by law.

(7) "Recommended course sequence" means a curricular pathway designed to enable a

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter S-1 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER S-1. TEXAS GUIDED PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Sec. 61.841. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Program" means the Texas Guided Pathways program established under this subchapter.

student to obtain a degree or certificate in a chosen field of study in a timely manner, including completion of specific courses.

(8) "Successfully completed" means that a student has met all of the necessary requirements for completing a course offered by an institution and has received a grade for the course of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, or an equivalent grade or determination of mastery.

(9) "Transfer compact" means an agreement between two or more institutions to facilitate the efficient transfer of courses and students.

Sec. 51B.002. PROGRAM PURPOSE AND GOALS. (a) The Texas Guided Pathways Program is created for public institutions of higher education to inform, empower, and support students by providing clear and efficient pathways to completion of undergraduate certificates and degrees, including transparent and easily-accessible recommended higher education course sequences and transfer compacts.

(b) The goals of the program are to:

(1) provide recommended course sequences for all undergraduate degrees and certificates offered by public institutions of higher education;

(2) increase efficiencies in credit transferability between lower-division institutions of higher education and public senior colleges and universities;

(3) make useful electronic course planning information available to students, empowering students to make well-informed choices;

(4) decrease student costs by minimizing the risks of pursuing courses that fail to count towards degree and certificate requirements; and

(5) streamline student pathways to completion of certificates and degrees, in line with state goals, to increase educational attainment across the state.

Sec. 51B.003. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) Not later than March 15

(2) "Texas OnCourse initiative" means the postsecondary education and career counseling academy developed by The University of Texas at Austin under Section 33.009.

Sec. 61.842. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM. (a) The Texas Guided Pathways program is established to inform, empower, and support current and prospective students at institutions of higher education by providing those students clear and efficient pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs.

(b) The goals of the program are to:

(1) provide recommended course sequences for all undergraduate certificate and degree programs offered at institutions of higher education;

(2) increase the efficiency of transferring course credit between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education;

(3) empower students to make well-informed choices by making useful course planning information available to students electronically;

(4) decrease the cost of completing undergraduate certificate and degree programs by helping students avoid taking courses that do not count toward the programs; and

(5) streamline student pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs in a manner aligned with state goals to increase educational attainment.

Sec. 61.843. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) Each institution of higher

of each year, each institution of higher education shall:

(1) develop recommended course sequences for each undergraduate degree and certificate program offered by the institution that would enable full-time students to complete 60 hour programs within four semesters, and 120 hour programs within eight semesters;

(2) submit to the commissioner the recommended course sequences for each undergraduate degree and certificate program, in an electronic format specified by the commissioner;

(3) for institutions that do not use the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCN), provide data, in an electronic format specified by the commissioner, indicating transfer equivalencies for institutions' compatible courses with TCCN courses, where compatible courses are offered by the institution and are included in recommended course sequences; and

(4) publish the recommended course sequences and transfer equivalencies on the institution's website, accessible within three clicks from the institution's home page.

(b) Not later than March 15 of each year, each lower-division institution shall:

(1) inform students about recommended

education shall develop a recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution.

Each recommended course sequence must:

(1) be designed to enable a student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within:

(A) for an associate degree or certificate program, four semesters or other academic terms; or

(B) for a baccalaureate degree program, eight semesters or other academic terms;

(2) include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the time frame described by Subdivision (1); and

(3) be aligned with the applicable certificate or degree requirements published by the institution.

(b) Not later than June 1 of each year, each institution of higher education shall:

(1) after reviewing and, if necessary, updating each recommended course sequence, adopt a version of each recommended course sequence to take effect beginning with entering freshmen and undergraduate transfer students for the following academic year;

(2) submit to the board, in an electronic format specified by the board, each recommended course sequence and,

if the institution does not use the common course numbering system, information regarding the course equivalent under the common course numbering system, if any, for each course included in that course sequence; and

(3) post each recommended course sequence, including any information required to be provided under Subdivision (2) for that course sequence, on the institution's Internet website in a location that is accessible from the institution's website home page by use of not more than three links.

(c) Each institution of higher education shall inform students about the recommended course sequences, including how to use

course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection;

(2) incorporate recommended course sequences into advising;

(3) inform all students during orientation of the the importance of selecting an intended major or field of study before, or as soon as possible after, enrollment in an institution of higher education, and potential consequences and costs of delaying that decision, particularly if the student intends to transfer between postsecondary educational institutions;

(4) provide links to a searchable, web-based platform identified by the commissioner that enables students to compare institutions' recommended course sequences; and

(5) ensure that the institution's own recommended course sequences, or their institutional equivalents if the institution's course offerings have been updated, and transfer equivalencies will be honored by the institution for not less than four years from the beginning of the academic year following initial publication date of the recommended course sequence or transfer equivalencies, subject to applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state and federal law.

(c) Not later than March 15 of each year, each public senior college or university shall:

(1) inform students about recommended course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection;

(2) incorporate recommended course sequences into advising;

(3) inform all students during orientation of the importance of selecting an intended major or field of study before, or as soon as possible after enrollment in an institution of higher education, and potential consequences and costs of delaying that decision, particularly if the student intends to transfer between postsecondary educational institutions;

(4) provide links to a searchable, web-based platform identified by the commissioner that enables students to compare institutions' recommended course sequences; and

(5) ensure that the institution's own

those course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection, and incorporate those course sequences into student advising.

(d) To enable students to compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education, each institution of higher education shall post on the institution's Internet website a link to the web-based platform on recommended course sequences developed by the board under Subsection (g).

(f) An institution of higher education shall honor each version of a recommended course sequence adopted by the institution under Subsection (b)(1), including any necessary modifications made to the course sequence under Subsection (e), for at least the four academic years occurring after the date on which that version of the course sequence is adopted.

(See Sec. 61.843(c), (d), and (f) above.)

recommended course sequences, or their institutional equivalents if the institution's course offerings have been updated, and transfer equivalencies will be honored by the institution for not less than four years from the beginning of the academic year following initial publication date of the recommended course sequence or transfer equivalencies, subject to applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state and federal law.

(d) An institution of higher education may update or amend recommended course sequences for certificates or degree programs, with prior notification to the commissioner, subject to applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state and federal law.

Sec. 51B.004. POWERS AND DUTIES RELATED TO COURSE SEQUENCES.

(a) The commissioner shall:

(1) work in consultation with institutions of higher education to develop rules for the electronic submission of data by institutions about recommended course sequences and transfer equivalencies for institutions' course numbers with corresponding Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCN) courses;

(2) work with the Texas OnCourse initiative of The University of Texas at Austin and its partner institutions to establish a singular, searchable, web-based platform that enables students to compare institutions' recommended course sequences and that enables students to

query whether specific lower-division TCCN courses offered by an institution of higher education would be accepted by another institution to meet state core curriculum requirements and would apply to institutions' recommended course sequences for specific undergraduate certificates or degree programs;

(3) link to the web-based platform from the ApplyTexas webpage or similar webpage; and

(e) After notice to the board, an institution of higher education may modify the institution's recommended course sequences as necessary to:

- (1) incorporate recommended changes identified as a result of any program evaluation conducted by the institution; or
- (2) comply with applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state or federal law.

(g) The board,

in consultation with the Texas OnCourse initiative and its partnering institutions of higher education, shall establish a statewide web-based platform that enables a student to:

- (1) search for and compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education; and
- (2) determine whether a specific lower-division course offered by an institution of higher education and identified using the common course numbering system would transfer to another institution of higher education for course credit applied toward the student's undergraduate certificate or degree program and count toward that institution's recommended course sequence for that program.

(i) The board shall ensure that an electronic link to the web-based platform established under Subsection (g) is posted on the

(4) not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, provide a written report on the program to the members of the Texas Legislature that includes an analysis of the alignment of courses that have been taken and successfully completed by students with institutions' recommended course sequences.

(b) The commissioner may:

(1) adopt rules for implementation of the program, in consultation with institutions of higher education;

(2) accept grants or gifts for the purpose of supporting the program; and

(3) utilize technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse, or other approved electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices, to collect and store data regarding institutions' recommended course sequences or to provide a web-based application that enables students to compare institutions' recommended course sequences.

Sec. 51B.005. TRANSFER COMPACTS.

(a) The commissioner shall:

(1) encourage institutions of higher education, other than research universities, to develop and participate in regional transfer compacts, in order to coordinate regional transfers of courses and students among institutions, increase clarity of program requirements, reduce costs for students and for the state, and reduce excess courses that do not contribute to completion of degrees or certificates;

(2) work with the Texas OnCourse initiative of The University of Texas at Austin and its partner institutions to develop a singular, searchable, web-based platform that provides information to students about regional transfer compacts across the state, including links to regional transfer agreements that each institution participates in; and

(3) not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, provide a written report to the members of the Texas Legislature that

Internet website of any electronic common application system developed by the board.

(j) Not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, the board shall submit to the members of the legislature a report on the recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education. The report must include an analysis of the alignment of courses taken by students in each undergraduate certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education with the institution's recommended course sequence for that program.

(See Sec. 61.846 below.)

(See Sec. 61.845 below.)

(h) In establishing the web-based platform under Subsection (g), the board may use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

Sec. 61.844. TRANSFER COMPACTS.

includes an analysis of the impact of regional transfer compacts and research university transfer compacts on students' efficient progress towards completion of certificates and degree programs.

(b) All institutions other than research universities shall participate in the development of regional transfer compacts that facilitate efficient transfers of course credits and students among regional institutions, including agreements regarding processes for faculty to develop cross-walks between courses and recommended course sequences from participating institutions, and processes for updating cross-walks and institutions' recommended course sequences as program requirements change.

(c) Research universities shall develop and participate in an agreement with at least one lower-division institution to establish research university transfer compacts that provide a guaranteed transfer into the research university for Texas resident students upon successful completion of at least 15 semester credit hours at the lower-division institution and other requirements specified by the research university, which may include grade point averages and successful completion of specific courses or course sequences. Research university transfer compacts must enable eligible full-time students to complete at least one 120 hour undergraduate degree program at the research university within eight semesters, including students' full-time enrollment at the lower-division institution prior to the students' transfer, provided that students follow the university's recommended course sequence for the program.

(d) Not later than March 15 of each year, each institution of higher education shall submit to the commissioner

a list of all transfer compacts in which the institution participates, and a website hyperlink to or copy of applicable inter-institutional agreements, in an electronic form to be specified by the commissioner.

Sec. 51B.006. The commissioner may, in consultation with institutions of higher education, adopt rules for implementation of the program.

(a) Not later than March 15 of each year, each institution of higher education shall submit to the board in an electronic format specified by the board:

(1) a list of the transfer compacts in which the institution participates; and

(2) a copy of, or an electronic link to a copy of, each transfer compact listed under Subdivision (1).

(See Sec. 61.846 below.)

(b) The board shall provide any necessary support for the development of transfer

compacts between institutions of higher education.

(c) The board, in consultation with the Texas OnCourse initiative and its partnering institutions of higher education, shall establish a statewide web-based platform that provides to students information regarding transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, including an electronic link to each transfer compact submitted to the board under Subsection (a).

(d) In establishing the web-based platform under Subsection (c), the board may use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

(e) Not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, the board shall submit to the members of the legislature a report on transfer compacts between institutions of higher education. The report must include an analysis of the impact of those compacts on students' efficient progress toward completion of an undergraduate certificate or degree program.

(See Sec. 51B.004(b)(2) above.)

(See Sec. 51B.004(b)(1) and 51B.006 above.)

SECTION 2. Not later than 30 days of the effective date of this Act, the Commissioner of Higher Education shall notify boards and presidents of each Texas institution of higher education of the requirement to develop recommended course sequences for each undergraduate degree and certificate program offered at their institutions.

No equivalent provision.

Sec. 61.845. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. The board may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source for any expenses related to the program.

Sec. 61.846. RULES. The board, in consultation with institutions of higher education:

(1) shall adopt rules for the electronic submission of information required to be submitted to the board under this subchapter; and

(2) may adopt rules as necessary to implement the program.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 2. Subchapter S-1, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2018-2019

academic year.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 3. Notwithstanding Section 61.843(b), Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than August 15, 2018, each public institution of higher education shall adopt, submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and post on the institution's Internet website the initial recommended course sequences as required under that section.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 4. Not later than November 1, 2018, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall submit its initial report required under Section 61.843(j), Education Code, as added by this Act.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 5. Not later than March 15, 2019, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall establish the statewide web-based platforms required under Sections 61.843(g) and 61.844(c), Education Code, as added by this Act.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 6. Not later than November 1, 2020, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall submit its initial report required under Section 61.844(e), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all members elected to each 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, 2017.

SECTION 7. Substantially the same as introduced version.