

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
85R13425 MM-D

C.S.S.B. 331
By: West
Higher Education
2/22/2017
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Current law requires a private or independent college or university to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to participate in the tuition equalization grant program. Interested parties note that, in some instances, a private or independent college or university may lose its accreditation and contend that if the college or university is on track to restore its accreditation it should be granted temporary approval to continue participating in the grant program. S.B. 331 seeks to clarify accreditation language and extend the number of possible renewals granted from once to twice.

S.B. 331 amends the Education Code to clarify the authorization of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to temporarily approve for participation in the tuition equalization grant program a private or independent institution of higher education that previously qualified as an approved institution but no longer holds the same accreditation as public institutions of higher education. The bill requires such an institution, in order to qualify, to be accredited by an accreditor recognized by the coordinating board; to be actively working toward the same accreditation as public institutions of higher education; to be participating in the federal financial aid program; and to be a "part B institution" as defined by federal law. The bill extends the authorization of the coordinating board to grant temporary approval for a period of two years with one renewal to authorizing two renewals. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

Committee Substitute:

Under existing law, students at a private or independent institution of higher education that previously lost its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) regional accreditation are eligible to continue receiving the tuition equalization grant only under the following conditions:

1. That the institution was previously accredited by an accreditor recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board;
2. That the institution is working toward reacquiring regional accreditation from SACS-COC;
3. That the institution is participating in federal financial aid; and
4. That the institution is a federally-recognized Historically Black College or University.

None of these four statutory conditions have changed in the committee substitute, which makes one change to existing law: it gives the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board the authority to grant temporary two-year approval not once, but twice, to a private or independent institution of higher education that meets the four statutory conditions.

C.S.S.B. 331 amends current law relating to the temporary approval of a private or independent college or university to continue to participate in the tuition equalization grant 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 61.222(c), Education Code, to authorize the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to grant temporary approval for a period of two years and to renew the approval twice, rather than once.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.