

By: West
(Howard)

S.B. No. 2131

Substitute the following for S.B. No. 2131:

By: Bernal

C.S.S.B. No. 2131

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT
2 relating to efforts to facilitate the completion by students of
3 undergraduate certificate and degree programs.

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

5 SECTION 1. Section 33.007, Education Code, is amended by
6 amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsections (b-1), (b-2), and
7 (d) to read as follows:

8 (b) During the first school year a student is enrolled in a
9 high school or at the high school level in an open-enrollment
10 charter school, and again during each year of a student's
11 enrollment in high school or at the high school level, a school
12 counselor shall provide information about postsecondary education
13 to the student and the student's parent or guardian. The
14 information must include information regarding:

15 (1) the importance of postsecondary education;

16 (2) the advantages of earning an endorsement and a
17 performance acknowledgment and completing the distinguished level
18 of achievement under the foundation high school program under
19 Section 28.025;

20 (3) the disadvantages of taking courses to prepare for
21 a high school equivalency examination relative to the benefits of
22 taking courses leading to a high school diploma;

23 (4) financial aid eligibility;

24 (5) instruction on how to apply for federal financial

1 aid;

2 (6) the center for financial aid information
3 established under Section 61.0776;

4 (7) the automatic admission of certain students to
5 general academic teaching institutions as provided by Section
6 51.803;

7 (8) the eligibility and academic performance
8 requirements for the TEXAS Grant as provided by Subchapter M,
9 Chapter 56; ~~and~~

10 (9) the availability of advanced academic programs in
11 the district under which a student may earn college credit,
12 including advanced placement programs~~[, dual credit programs,~~
13 ~~joint high school and college credit programs,~~] and international
14 baccalaureate programs;

15 (10) the availability of dual credit and joint high
16 school and college credit programs, including:

17 (A) the types of courses offered under each
18 program, such as whether the courses are in the core curriculum of a
19 certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education
20 or are career and technology education courses; and

21 (B) whether the courses offered under each
22 program would transfer to an institution of higher education for
23 course credit applied toward a certificate or degree program; and

24 (11) recommended course sequences at and transfer
25 compacts between institutions of higher education, including the
26 web-based platforms developed under Sections 61.843(g) and
27 61.844(c).

1 (b-1) Each school district and open-enrollment charter
2 school shall post the information described by Subsection (b)(10)
3 on the district's or school's Internet website. The district or
4 school shall annually review and, if necessary, update that
5 information.

6 (b-2) Each school district and open-enrollment charter
7 school, in consultation with school counselors employed by the
8 district or school, shall develop a procedure for documenting on
9 each student's transcript any postsecondary advising services
10 provided to the student under this section, including the name of
11 the person or counseling provider who provided the services.

12 (d) In this section, "institution of higher education" has
13 the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

14 SECTION 2. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding
15 Subchapter S-1 to read as follows:

16 SUBCHAPTER S-1. TEXAS GUIDED PATHWAYS PROGRAM

17 Sec. 61.841. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

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

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

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

1 (b) The goals of the program are to:

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

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

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

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

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

17 Sec. 61.843. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) Each
18 institution of higher education shall develop a recommended course
19 sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program
20 offered by the institution. Each recommended course sequence must:

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

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

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

27 (2) include a specific sequence in which courses

1 should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program
2 within the time frame described by Subdivision (1); and

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

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

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

11 (2) submit to the board, in an electronic format
12 specified by the board, each recommended course sequence and, if
13 the institution does not use the common course numbering system,
14 information regarding the course equivalent under the common course
15 numbering system, if any, for each course included in that course
16 sequence; and

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

22 (c) Each institution of higher education shall inform
23 students about the recommended course sequences, including how to
24 use those course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection, and
25 incorporate those course sequences into student advising.

26 (d) To enable students to compare recommended course
27 sequences at institutions of higher education, each institution of

1 higher education shall post on the institution's Internet website a
2 link to the web-based platform on recommended course sequences
3 developed under Subsection (g).

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

7 (1) align the course sequence with the applicable
8 certificate or degree requirements published by the institution;

9 (2) incorporate recommended changes identified as a
10 result of any program evaluation conducted by the institution; or

11 (3) comply with applicable institutional policies,
12 accreditation requirements, and state or federal law.

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

19 (g) The Texas OnCourse initiative, in consultation with its
20 partnering institutions of higher education and the board, shall
21 develop a statewide web-based platform that enables a student to:

22 (1) search for and compare recommended course
23 sequences at institutions of higher education; and

24 (2) determine whether a specific lower-division
25 course offered by an institution of higher education and identified
26 using the common course numbering system would transfer to another
27 institution of higher education for course credit applied toward

1 the student's undergraduate certificate or degree program and count
2 toward that institution's recommended course sequence for that
3 program.

4 (h) In developing the web-based platform under Subsection
5 (g), the Texas OnCourse initiative may use technology platforms
6 provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other
7 electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally
8 accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

9 (i) The board shall maintain the web-based platform
10 developed under Subsection (g) and ensure that an electronic link
11 to the platform is posted on the Internet website of any electronic
12 common application system developed by the board.

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

20 Sec. 61.844. TRANSFER COMPACTS. (a) Not later than March
21 15 of each year, each institution of higher education shall submit
22 to the board in an electronic format specified by the board:

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

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

27 (b) The board shall provide any necessary support for the

1 development of transfer compacts between institutions of higher
2 education.

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

9 (d) In developing the web-based platform under Subsection
10 (c), the Texas OnCourse initiative may use technology platforms
11 provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other
12 electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally
13 accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

14 (e) The board shall maintain the web-based platform
15 developed under Subsection (c).

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

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

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

27 (1) shall adopt rules for the electronic submission of

1 information required to be submitted to the board under this
2 subchapter; and

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

5 SECTION 3. Section 33.007, Education Code, as amended by
6 this Act, applies beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

7 SECTION 4. Subchapter S-1, Chapter 61, Education Code, as
8 added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2018-2019 academic
9 year.

10 SECTION 5. Notwithstanding Section 61.843(b), Education
11 Code, as added by this Act, not later than August 15, 2018, each
12 public institution of higher education shall adopt, submit to the
13 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and post on the
14 institution's Internet website the initial recommended course
15 sequences as required under that section.

16 SECTION 6. Not later than November 1, 2018, the Texas Higher
17 Education Coordinating Board shall submit its initial report
18 required under Section 61.843(j), Education Code, as added by this
19 Act.

20 SECTION 7. Not later than March 15, 2019, the Texas OnCourse
21 initiative shall develop the statewide web-based platforms
22 required under Sections 61.843(g) and 61.844(c), Education Code, as
23 added by this Act.

24 SECTION 8. Not later than November 1, 2020, the Texas Higher
25 Education Coordinating Board shall submit its initial report
26 required under Section 61.844(f), Education Code, as added by this
27 Act.

1 SECTION 9. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
2 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
3 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
4 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
5 Act takes effect September 1, 2017.