

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1923
By: West
Higher Education
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many students in Texas attend more than one institution of higher education before they earn a degree. In fiscal year 2016, 73 percent of bachelor graduates in Texas earned one or more semester credit hour(s) from a two-year college and more than half of all Texas students entered higher education through a public two-year college.

Texas' higher education landscape is large and diverse which can make transferring from one institution to another complicated. Baccalaureate graduates who transfer accumulate more excess hours than those who do not transfer, which increases student costs and impacts general revenue. Recent data show bachelor's degree graduates in fiscal year 2017 who transferred paid an estimated \$45 million in tuition and fees due to excess hours and the impact to general revenue was an estimated to be \$15 million.

Credit transfer inefficiency is a major impediment to student success. With legislative support, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is actively developing Fields of Study (FOS) for the most popular majors among transfer students. Per law, institutions of higher education are required to accept courses in the FOS from student transfers and apply them toward the student's major. The goal is to guarantee attempted credit hours are applicable to a student's major upon transfer to another institution in Texas. The FOS work is moving on an aggressive timeline and once used by students and promoted by institutions of higher education, are expected to save students time and money toward a higher education credential.

S.B. 1923 will:

- Bolster the implementation of FOS curriculum by developing uniform public outreach materials to share with students and advisors;
- Develop meta-major academic pathways to help students determine an area of interest;
- Make explicit the core curriculum shall consist of lower division coursework to help ensure students take courses that count toward their degrees;
- Support an interactive online degree site that allows students to input their majors and receive a list of the required courses needed to complete a specific degree in four years; and
- Study the feasibility of a transfer admissions guarantee and make recommendations to the legislature about student and institutional criteria for such a system.

As proposed, S.B. 1923 amends current law relating to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is modified in SECTION 2 (Section 51.9685, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 51.9685(a)(2), Education Code, to define "institution of higher education," rather than defining "institution of higher education" and "public junior college" and to make nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 51.9685(b), (c), and (g), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires, except as otherwise provided by Subsection (c), each student enrolled at an institution of higher education in an associate or bachelor's degree program or a course for joint high school and junior college credit under Section 130.008 (Courses for Joint High School and Junior College Credit), rather than each student enrolled at an institution of higher education, to file a degree plan with the institution not later than the first day of the regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 30 or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including certain other credits, rather than file a degree plan with the institution not later than the end of the second regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 45 or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including certain other credits.

(c) Requires a student to whom this section applies who begins the student's first semester or term at an institution of higher education with 30 or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses described by Subsection (b), rather than 45 or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses described by Subsection (b), to file a degree plan with the institution not later than the 12th class day of that semester or term, rather than not later than the end of the student's second regular semester or term at the institution.

(g) Requires the Texas Higher Education Board (THECB), in consultation with institutions of higher education, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section, including rules to ensure compliance with this section (Required Filing of Degree Plan), rather than authorizing THECB, in consultation with institutions of higher education, to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 61.059(p), Education Code, as follows:

(p) Prohibits THECB, in its instruction and operations formula applicable to an institution of higher education, from including any semester credit hours earned for dual course credit by a high school student for high school and college credit at the institution unless those credit hours are earned through any of the following:

(1) makes no changes to this subdivision;

(2) a course offered by the institution providing course credit in:

(A) a field of study curriculum developed by THECB under Section 61.823 (Field of Study Curriculum); or

(B) a program of study curriculum established by THECB under Section 61.8235 (Career and Technical Education Program of Study Curricula);

(3) creates this subdivision from existing Subdivision (2) and renumbers the subsequent subdivision accordingly; or

(4) makes no further changes to this subdivision.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 61.821(1), Education Code, to define "core curriculum" as the lower division curriculum in liberal arts, humanities, and sciences and political, social, and cultural history that provides the knowledge and academic competencies foundational for all future learning and that all undergraduate students of an institution of higher education are required to complete before receiving an academic undergraduate degree, rather than as the curriculum in liberal arts, humanities, and sciences and political, social, and cultural history that all undergraduate students of an institution of higher education are required to complete before receiving an academic undergraduate degree.

SECTION 5. Amends Sections 61.822(b) and (c), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires the core curriculum adopted by each institution of higher education to:

(1) consist of general education courses that are selected for inclusion in the core curriculum based on a coherent rationale and that ensure a breadth of knowledge rather than being narrowly focused on knowledge or competencies specific to a certain profession or discipline;

(2) creates this subdivision from existing text and makes nonsubstantive changes to this subdivision; and

(3) be approved by THECB in accordance with the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by THECB, rather than with the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by THECB. Deletes existing text authorizing an institution to have a core curriculum of other than 42 semester credit hours only if approved by THECB.

(c) Requires a student to receive academic credit for each of the courses transferred and prohibits the student from being required to take additional core curriculum courses at the receiving institution, rather than prohibiting the student from being required to take additional core curriculum courses at the receiving institution unless THECB has approved a larger core curriculum at the institution.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 61.823, Education Code, by adding Subsection (f), as follows:

(f) Requires a public junior college or public technical institute to adopt in whole or in part each field of study curriculum developed by THECB under this section for an academic area in which the college or institute offers courses.

SECTION 7. Amends Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Sections 61.8231 and 61.8232, as follows:

Sec. 61.8231. META-MAJOR ACADEMIC PATHWAYS. (a) Requires THECB, to assist in advising students regarding the selection of courses aligned with the student's academic and career goals, to develop a meta-major academic pathway for each broad academic discipline that consists of a set of courses commonly required by institutions of higher education for that discipline that are in the core curriculum recommended by THECB under Section 61.822 (Transfer of Credits; Core Curriculum) or that are the applicable field of study curriculum developed by THECB under Section 61.823.

(b) Requires THECB to make the meta-major academic pathways available to each institution of higher education for use in advising students enrolled at the institution.

Sec. 61.8232. STUDY ON TRANSFER ADMISSION GUARANTEE. (a) Requires THECB to conduct a study on the feasibility of guaranteeing transfer admission to an institution of higher education for students who complete certain courses in the core curriculum or a field of study curriculum at another institution of higher education.

(b) Requires THECB, not later than September 1, 2020, to submit to the members of the legislature a report on the results of the study and recommendations for legislative or other action. Requires the report to include recommendations regarding eligibility criteria for a student to receive or an institution of higher education to participate in the transfer admission guarantee.

(c) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2021.

SECTION 8. Amends Section 130.0104(c), Education Code, as follows:

(c) Requires a student enrolled in a multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established under this section (Multidisciplinary Studies Associate Degree Program), in complying with the requirements regarding the filing of a degree plan under Section 51.9685 (Required Filing of Degree Plan), to meet with an academic advisor to complete a degree plan that meets certain criteria, rather than requiring a student, notwithstanding Section 51.9685, before the beginning of the regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which a student successfully completes a cumulative total of 30 or more semester credit hours for coursework in a multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established under this section, to meet with an academic advisor to complete a degree plan, as defined by Section 51.9685(a)(1) (relating to the definition of "degree plan"), that meets certain criteria.

SECTION 9. Repealer: Section 51.9685(c-1) (relating to requiring a student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at a public junior college, notwithstanding certain other provisions, to file a degree plan with the college no later than certain dates), Education Code.

SECTION 10. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2019–2020 academic year.

SECTION 11. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.