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By:  Zaffirini S.B. No. 1787

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 Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.96852.  RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) In this section, "institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(b)  Each institution of higher education shall develop a recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. Each recommended course sequence must identify the required courses for the applicable certificate or degree program in the general core curriculum or the academic discipline core curriculum as described by Section 61.822.

(c)  Each institution of higher education shall include the recommended course sequences developed under this section in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's Internet website.

Sec. 51.96853.  TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM LOWER-DIVISION INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION; ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS. (a) In this section:

(1)  "Articulation agreement" means a formal written agreement between a lower-division institution of higher education and a general academic teaching institution identifying courses offered by the lower-division institution that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general academic teaching institution.

(2)  "General academic teaching institution" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(3)  "Lower-division institution of higher education" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003.

(b)  Each general academic teaching institution shall:

(1)  identify each lower-division institution of higher education from which the general academic teaching institution regularly receives at least 20 percent of its transfer students; and

(2)  establish an articulation agreement with each lower-division institution of higher education identified under Subdivision (1) for each certificate or degree program for which at least five percent of students transferring from the lower-division institution to the general academic teaching institution receive transfer credit.

(c)  An articulation agreement established under Subsection (b)(2) must enable a transfer student to receive up to 60 semester credit hours for courses completed at the lower-division institution of higher education.

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

SECTION 2.  Section 61.822, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsections (a-2) and (b-1) and amending Subsection (b) to read as follows:

(a-2)  The recommended core curriculum developed under Subsection (a-1) must have the following components:

(1)  a general core curriculum of at least 24 semester credit hours that includes:

(A)  six semester credit hours in:

(i)  American or Texas history;

(ii)  government or political science; and

(iii)  communication; and

(B)  three semester credit hours in:

(i)  language, philosophy, or culture; and

(ii)  creative arts; and

(2)  for each broad academic discipline, an academic discipline core curriculum of at least 18 semester credit hours specific to that discipline and that includes relevant courses in mathematics and physical sciences.

(b)  Each institution of higher education shall adopt a core curriculum of no less than 42 semester credit hours, including specific courses comprising the curriculum. The core curriculum shall:

(1)  include a general core curriculum and an academic discipline core curriculum as described by Subsection (a-2); and

(2)  be consistent with the common course numbering system approved by the board and with the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by the board.

(b-1)  An institution may have a core curriculum of other than 42 semester credit hours only if approved by the board.

SECTION 3.  Section 130.0104(b), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  A multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established at a junior college under this section must require a student to successfully complete:

(1)  the junior college's core curriculum adopted under Section 61.822 [~~61.822(b)~~]; and

(2)  after completion of the core curriculum under Subdivision (1), the courses selected by the student in the student's degree plan completed under Subsection (c).

SECTION 4.  Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853, Education Code, as added by this Act, and Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act, apply beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year.

SECTION 5.  Not later than May 31, 2021, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall develop a recommended core curriculum that conforms to the requirements of Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 6.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.