



**Response to House Higher Education Committee
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Submitted by: President Suzanne Shipley
Midwestern State University
3410 Taft Boulevard
Wichita Falls, Texas
Suzanne.Shipley@msutexas.edu
940-397-4211

Interim Charge 1

(Please note that a link to additional information is embedded in a response below)

Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure the intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:

- HB 1638 (85R), which relates to statewide goals for dual credit programs. Review best practices for providing opportunities to high school students to earn college credit while ensuring that courses taken reflect authentic, college-level rigor.
- 1. What challenges have institutions faced with dual credit prior to and as a result of the pandemic?

Challenges in our region, which is Region IX, include a flat, and in some instances, declining high school population from which to provide dual credit. The community college in our region has a foothold on dual credit, so trying to enter that market has proven difficult. Additionally, the online options students can take through UT on Ramps can hinder our ability to attract students to the MSU dual credit program. Many high schools want face-to-face instruction on the high school campus, and we do not have a deep pool to choose instructors with the proper qualifications. Larger metro areas have more access to qualified instructors.

The pandemic has caused employment losses for families, which will prevent many students from being able to afford dual credit tuition. In many rural settings, such as Region IX, some of the only employment options are service-oriented professions, and much of that sector has been hit hard by layoffs and furloughs due to COVID-19.

2. How have institutions addressed these challenges?

To help with some of these obstacles, MSU has provided dual credit courses at a lower rate than our community college partner and have expanded offerings. To address the qualifications of high school teachers being able to teach college courses, we have offered discounts for tuition for master's level courses/degrees to incentivize teachers to become qualified to teach at the college level.

3. What changes, if any, are needed to ensure that students have opportunities to earn college credit, which fulfills the criteria outlined above?

Providing high school teachers with more opportunities to become qualified to teach at the college level would open the doors for more course offerings on high school campuses. Additionally, not all school districts weigh dual credit equally against Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses when computing GPAs, with dual credit weighted at a lower value. Uniformity in calculating GPAs among all of these options might encourage more students to take dual credit.

- SB 18, which relates to the protection of expressive activities at public institutions of higher education. Monitor the process by which institutions of higher education implement policies to protect the expressive rights of persons guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States and this state.

1. What have institutions done to protect the expressive rights of persons while also maintaining an orderly and safe learning environment?

In response to SB 18, MSU Texas updated its previous policy on Off-Campus Speakers and replaced it with [UPP 3-160, Expressive Activities on Campus](#). The university's Board of Regents approved this policy on May 14, 2020. As required, this policy is included in the *MSU Texas Student Handbook* and the *MSU Policies and Procedures Manual*, a copy is provided to each student during freshman or transfer student orientation, and a copy of the policy is available on the university's website.

- SB 25, which relates to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education. Monitor the process by which the Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts rules via negotiated rulemaking. Monitor the progress of institutions developing recommended course sequences and the progress of the feasibility study to implement statewide meta majors.

1. In what ways can data collection and sharing between THECB and TEA improve and assist institutions with college credit transferability?

We need better data on the content, quality assurance, and alignment of the courses taught and the degree programs accepting them. In our experience, the issues stem from the alignment of college credit courses being offered by other institutions for transfer to the curriculum of the College of Education degree program that is held accountable. More specifically, a core course transferred in becomes the responsibility of the receiving institution in terms of student mastery on a certification exam at the end of the program. There are no data or information available as to the exact content of the transfer or dual credit course. Standardization of the content and quality of the courses intended for transfer would help both with the transferability and, ultimately, the success of the student on certification exams.

2. What role can school counselors and advisors play in the success of transferable credits? Are there ways in which the state can utilize their expertise and student relationships more effectively?

High school counselors are not initially trained to guide students in the processes of higher education admission, course selection, schedule creation, testing, transferability, etc. Cooperative training between high school personnel and higher education personnel to provide this specialty guidance would be of benefit. Secondly, partnerships between high school counselors/advisors and higher education institutions allow expertise development in curricula and needs of specific disciplines and degree programs. We have leeway within the 42-hour core curriculum. Each degree program may prescribe a pathway through the core curriculum that would best serve the student. Advising without such considerations results in poor acceptance and application of transfer courses.