

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 200
By: Eckhardt
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas residents who wish to re-enroll in higher education as an undergraduate are able to waive their previous academic record, under certain conditions, and begin a new course of study with a clear academic record for an "academic fresh start." However, under current statute, only courses taken 10 or more years before the applicable semester start date are eligible to be waived. Some Texans, primarily adult learners, are struggling with being admitted into institutions of higher education because of courses that were taken nearly 10 years prior and that can adversely impact their GPA. S.B. 200 seeks to address this issue by authorizing a public institution of higher education to disregard course credits or grades earned five years or more before to the applicable semester start date.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 200 amends the Education Code to revise statutory provisions relating to a Texas resident's right to an academic fresh start in applying for admission and enrollment as an undergraduate student as follows:

- authorizes a public institution of higher education, in considering such an applicant for admission, to disregard academic course credits or grades earned by the applicant more recently than 10 years before the starting date of the semester in which the applicant seeks to enroll, except the institution may not disregard any credits or grades earned during the five-year period preceding that date;
- requires an institution of higher education that chooses to disregard course credits or grades earned during the additional permitted period to disregard all course credits or grades earned during that period and prohibits the institution from awarding any credit for those courses; and
- establishes that applicable credit hours that are disregarded by an institution are not counted for purposes of determining whether the student has earned excess undergraduate credit hours.

S.B. 200 requires each institution of higher education to adopt, post on the institution's website, and submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) a policy regarding the admissions made by the institution relating to an academic fresh start, including the period for which an admission applicant's course credits or grades will be considered by the institution

under the policy. The bill's provisions relating to an academic fresh start for an admission applicant apply beginning with admissions to an institution of higher education for the 2023 fall semester.

S.B. 200, with respect to its provisions relating to excess undergraduate credit hours, applies beginning with funding recommendations by the THECB for the 2026-2027 state fiscal biennium, for semester credit hours earned by students enrolling in a baccalaureate degree program at an institution of higher education under provisions relating to the right to an academic fresh start for the 2023 fall semester or a subsequent semester or term. Funding recommendations for semester credit hours earned by a student who enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at an institution of higher education under provisions relating to the right to an academic fresh start before the 2023 fall semester are governed by the law in effect immediately before the bill's effective date, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.