

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1887
By: West
Subcommittee on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In the 86th Session, the Senate unanimously passed SB 25, groundbreaking legislation to help students who transfer from Texas' public two-year institutions to a public university have their credits transfer and count toward their degree.

That bill created important new procedures and protections for students to understand how their credits will apply after transfer and ensure that they do not waste time and money on unnecessary or duplicative courses.

WHAT S.B. 1887 WILL DO

S.B. 1887 would require early college high schools to enroll students in either an applied associate degree program or an academic associate degree program with an embedded field of study to ensure that students complete a degree that will either be directly applicable to the workforce or will transfer and count toward a bachelor's degree.

S.B. 1887 moves the due date for two reports created by S.B. 25—the Report on Non-transferable Credit and the Report of Courses Taken at Junior Colleges—from March 1 to May 1. This will better align with institutional reporting deadlines and provide more time for Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board staff to analyze the data for the reports.

S.B. 1887 amends statutes regarding field of study curricula to clarify and better align the statute with the best practices developed and implemented through the Texas Transfer Advisory Committee (TTAC).

This bill makes changes to the transfer dispute resolution process to create clear expectations and standards of accountability for students and institutions regarding timeline, how parties are informed, and how a dispute is finally resolved.

Finally, the introduced bill creates the "Texas Direct" associate degree which would be notated on a community college student's transcript that he or she has completed a field of study and either the core curriculum or 42 hours of lower division courses transferable to one or more general academic teaching institutions.

As proposed, S.B. 1887 amends current law relating to the requirements for the early college education program and the transfer of course credit among public institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 4 (Section 61.823, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 29.908(b), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires that the program:

(1) makes no changes to this subdivision;

(2) allow a participating student to complete high school and enroll in a program at an institution of higher education that will enable the student to, on or before the fifth anniversary of the date of the student's first day of high school, receive a high school diploma and either:

(A) an applied associate degree, as defined by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rule; or

(B) an academic associate degree, as defined by THECB rule, with a completed field of study curriculum developed under Section 61.823 (Field of Study Curriculum) that is transferable toward a baccalaureate degree, rather than at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree, at one or more general academic teaching institutions, as defined by Section 61.003 (Definitions);

(3)-(4) makes no changes to these subdivisions.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 51.4033, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 51.4033. REPORT OF NONTRANSFERABLE CREDIT. (a) Requires each general academic teaching institution, not later than May 1, rather than March 1, of each year and in the form prescribed by THECB, to provide to THECB and the legislature a report describing any courses in the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual or its successor adopted by THECB for which a student who transfers to the institution from another institution of higher education is not granted:

(1)-(2) makes no changes to these subdivisions.

(b) Requires that a report required by this section indicate:

(1)-(2) makes no changes to these subdivisions: and

(3) the reason why the receiving institution did not grant academic credit for the course as described by Subsection (a), including whether the institution complied with the dispute resolution process under Section 61.826 (Dispute Resolution).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 51.4034(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires each public junior college not later than May 1, rather than March 1, of each year and in the form prescribed by THECB, to provide to THECB and the legislature a report on courses taken by students who, during the preceding academic year, transferred to a general academic teaching institution or earned an associate degree at the college.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 61.823, Education Code, by adding Subsection (a-1) and amending Subsection (b), as follows:

(a-1) Authorizes THECB by rule to authorize a general academic teaching institution to adopt, for each field of study curriculum developed by THECB for which the institution offers a degree program, a set of courses specific to that field of study, not to exceed a total of six semester credit hours or the equivalent, that is required to be completed as part of the field of study curriculum for that institution. Requires each general academic teaching institution that adopts a set of courses for a field of study curriculum under this subsection to post on the institution's Internet website in a manner easily accessible to students the set of courses with the associated course numbers under the common course numbering system.

(b) Provides that if a student successfully completes a field of study curriculum developed by THECB, that block of courses is authorized to be transferred to a general academic teaching institution and, subject to completion of the set of courses adopted by the institution for that field of study under Subsection (a-1), is required to be substituted for that institution's lower division requirements for the degree program for the field of study into which the student transfers, and the student is required to receive full academic credit toward the degree program for the block of courses transferred.

SECTION 5. Amends Sections 61.826(c), (d), and (e), Education Code, as follows:

(c) Provides that if an institution of higher education proposes to deny the application toward a student's degree requirements of course credit earned by the student at another institution of higher education in the other institution's core curriculum or in a field of study curriculum developed by THECB under Section 61.823, that institution is required to:

- (1) give written notice to the student and the other institution of that institution's intent to deny the application of the course credit to the student's degree requirements and the reasons for the proposed denial;
- (2) attempt to resolve the application of the course credit to the student's degree requirements with the other institution and the student in accordance with THECB rules;
- (3) resolve the dispute not later than the 45th day after the date on which the student enrolls in that institution; and
- (4) if the dispute is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student or the institution at which the credit was earned, notify the commissioner of higher education (commissioner) of its denial to apply the course credit to the student's degree requirements and the reasons for the denial.

Deletes existing text providing that if an institution of higher education does not accept course credit earned by a student at another institution of higher education that institution is required to give written notice to the student and the other institution that the application transfer of the course credit is denied. Deletes existing text requiring the two institutions and the student to attempt to resolve the transfer of the course credit in accordance with THECB rules. Deletes existing text providing that if the transfer dispute is not resolved to the satisfaction of the student or the institution at which the credit was earned, within 45 days after the date the student received written notice of the denial, the institution that denies the transfer of the course credit is required to notify the commissioner of higher education of its denial and the reasons for the denial.

(d) Requires the commissioner or the commissioner's designee not later than the 20th business day after the date the commissioner receives notice of a dispute concerning the application of course credit to a student's degree requirements under Subsection (c)(4), to make the final determination about the dispute, rather than concerning the transfer of course credit, and give written notice of the determination to the involved student and institutions. Requires the institution, if the commissioner or the commissioner's designee determines that the institution is prohibited from denying the application of course credit described by Subsection (c) to the student's degree requirements, to apply that course credit toward the student's degree requirements. Provides that a determination by the commissioner or the commissioner's designee under this subsection is final and is prohibited from being appealed. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(e) Requires THECB to:

- (1) creates this subdivision from existing text; and

(2) post on THECB's Internet website a list of each case that is considered by the commissioner or the commissioner's designee under Section 61.826 (Dispute Resolution), including the disposition of the case.

SECTION 6. Amends Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.834, as follows:

Sec. 61.834. TEXAS DIRECT ASSOCIATE DEGREE. Requires an institution of higher education to award a student a "Texas Direct" associate degree and include an appropriate notation on the student's transcript if the student completes a field of study curriculum developed by THECB under Section 61.823 and:

- (1) the institution's core curriculum; or
- (2) 42 semester credit hours of lower-division courses transferable to one or more general academic teaching institutions.

SECTION 7. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2023–2024 academic year.

SECTION 8. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.