

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 1987
By: Sparks
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Until 2019, nearly all colleges in Texas were accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). However in 2019, the U.S. Department of Education amended the federal rule that previously required all colleges and universities to use the regional accreditor assigned to them. Now, colleges and universities can be accredited by any nationally recognized accreditor. State law specifically references SACS in provisions relating to accreditation of postsecondary educational institutions and should be updated to account for this. C.S.S.B. 1987 seeks to remedy this by providing for the accreditation of postsecondary educational institutions in Texas through a qualified, recognized accrediting entity.

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

C.S.S.B. 1987 amends the Education Code to remove the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools from the definition of "recognized accrediting agency" for purposes of statutory provisions relating to the accreditation of postsecondary educational institutions. Accordingly, the bill does the following:

- replaces specific references to the "Southern Association of Colleges and Schools" with "recognized accrediting agency" for purposes of statutory provisions relating to the accreditation of Texas Woman's University at Dallas and Texas Woman's University at Houston; and
- replaces specific references to the "Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools" with "recognized accrediting agency" for purposes of statutory provisions relating to the accreditation of a public junior college and the completion of remaining semester credit hours needed for a career and technical education program of study curricula by a student who transfers to a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute.

For purposes of the definition of a "private or independent institution of higher education" under statutory provisions relating to accreditation, the bill replaces the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools with a recognized accrediting agency designated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) for the purpose of accrediting general academic teaching institutions as an authorized accrediting entity. The bill clarifies that the private or independent institutions of higher education that the THECB is

required to approve are private or independent institutions of higher education, as defined on January 1, 2023.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.

COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.S.B. 1987 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the engrossed replaced the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools with any accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an authorized accrediting entity for purposes of the definition of "private or independent institution of higher education," the substitute replaces the commission with a recognized accrediting agency designated by the THECB for the purpose of accrediting general academic teaching institutions.

The substitute includes a clarification absent from the engrossed that the private or independent institutions of higher education that the THECB is required to approve are private or independent institutions of higher education, as defined on January 1, 2023.