

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 2431
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Learning a foreign language is a valuable skill that can give college students an advantage in seeking employment. According to a 2021 report by the Modern Language Association, the amount of college students in the United States learning a foreign language other than English fell to 1.2 million, which is a 30 percent drop since 2009. Additionally, The University of Texas at Austin reported that between 2014 and 2024, foreign language enrollment decreased by 11 percent.

This decrease in foreign language enrollment could significantly harm U.S. national security and the U.S. economy. For example, due to the lack of proficient Arabic speakers before 9/11, federal intelligence agencies such as the FBI had a lack of translators, which caused massive delays in translating surveillance information before the attacks on September 11th. Additionally, according to a recent report by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), one out of four U.S. employers lost business due to a lack of foreign language skills.

This statistic shows that the lack of professionals in the private sector with foreign language skills could significantly weaken the U.S. economy.

This legislation seeks to address the decrease in foreign language enrollment in institutions of higher education by providing an option for students to participate in study abroad programs, while simultaneously earning foreign language credit to achieve proficiency in a foreign language. Promoting the study of foreign languages abroad will equip college students with highly sought after skills that will benefit employers in both the public and private sectors, ultimately strengthening the Texas workforce, the Texas economy, and U.S. national security.

Legislative Intent

S.B. 2431 requires institutions of higher education in the state of Texas, both public and private, to build on existing study abroad programs and have an option where a student participating in a study abroad program can receive the allotted foreign language credit required by that institution to meet proficiency.

Key Provisions:

1. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 51, of the Texas Education Code by adding Section 51.313 which assigns "institution of higher education" and "private or independent institution of higher education" the meanings assigned by Section 61.003 of the Texas Education Code.
2. Delegates authority to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish procedures and adopt rules to implement this section.

As proposed, S.B. 2431 amends current law relating to requiring foreign language credit opportunities for students enrolled in study abroad programs offered by certain institutions of higher education in this state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 51.313, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Section 51.313, as follows:

Sec. 51.313. STUDY ABROAD: FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY. (a) Defines "institution of higher education" and "private or independent institution of higher education."

(b) Requires an institution of higher education or a private or independent institution of higher education that, through any baccalaureate degree program, offers a study abroad program in a location where a language other than English is primarily spoken, for the purpose of providing the opportunity for students to gain proficiency in a foreign language, to provide an option that allows a student enrolled in the study abroad program to earn foreign language credit as part of that program.

(c) Authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish procedures and adopt rules to implement this section.

SECTION 2. Provides that Section 51.313, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2025–2026 academic year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2025.