

**SUBJECT:** Coordination of higher education curricula and transfer guidelines

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Branch, Castro, Alonzo, Berman, Cohen, D. Howard, Rose  
0 nays  
2 absent — McCall, Patrick

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 61.830 requires each higher education institution to publish, in course catalogs and on institutional websites, guidelines that address the institution's transfer practices.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 708 would require each public higher education institution, in a format adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), to publish all institutional and statewide articulation agreements concerning course transfers in its course catalog and on its website. The format would have to provide students access to the requirements of each articulation agreement to allow students enrolled in public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to plan and coordinate course schedules to meet those requirements. THECB would have to provide links to each website in a prominent, easily accessible location on its college information website.

Each institution would have to include the expiration dates for each published articulation agreement on its website and remove expired agreements with 30 days.

The bill would require THECB to make recommendations, no later than September 30 of each even-numbered year, to improve dissemination of transfer information to students and institution participation in articulation agreements. Students would be entitled to transfer to another institution under an articulation agreement within four years of first enrollment.

Institutions would have until September 30, 2010, to update course catalogs and websites. THECB would have until December 31, 2009, to adopt the standard publication format.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 708 would increase the coordination of college curricula to facilitate the transfer of courses between two-year and four-year institutions. Students from across the state would benefit from improved alignment between college curricula and university pre-requisite and bachelor's degree curricula by having information on articulation agreements readily available. Students would be able access a website and use it to track their academic goals.

About 600,000 students are enrolled in two-year institutions of higher education in Texas. Many of them intend to complete courses so they can transfer to a four-year school. Unfortunately, many students discover that a course or courses do not transfer for credit purposes. If articulation agreements were accessible easily on an institution's website and on the THECB's college planning website, it would be much more convenient and efficient for students to obtain valuable information.

Many institutions already have articulation agreements with other institutions, and the bill would require this information to be posted. It would not require any institution to enter into an articulation agreement, but if one did, it would have to post the information for students to have for college planning purposes.

THECB currently is working on the first statewide articulation agreement for mechanical engineering. As THECB moves forward with developing additional statewide articulation agreements for other majors, CSHB 708 would put into place the framework to disseminate this important information at little cost to the state.

Community college students currently complete their core curriculum prior to obtaining an associate's degree and begin taking courses relevant to their bachelor's degree program once they transfer to a four-year university. For some majors, like those in "STEM" fields — science,

technology, engineering and math — it is extremely difficult to get all of the major coursework completed in the final two years.

Students at four-year universities are able to spread out their core curriculum and their major courses over the course of their degree program. The statewide transfer curriculum proposed in the bill would allow community college students who enroll under an articulation agreement to take classes pertinent to their major while at a community college and then transfer to a university and be on par with university students. Doing so would encourage students to graduate in a timely manner and reduce the number of additional courses they would have to take upon transfer and could increase the number of students majoring in critical fields, like mechanical engineering.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

This bill would require institutions to invest significant time and expense in initiating, updating, or deleting articulation agreements. Many colleges do not have the resources to maintain and update the many individual articulation agreements they have entered into with other colleges and universities.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

The bill as written essentially would guarantee automatic transfer within four years for students who enter into an articulation agreement. The bill should specify that a student would be entitled to transfer to the general academic institution that was a party to the agreement no later than four years after the student first enrolled, provided the student had completed successfully the requirements of the articulation agreement.

**NOTES:**

The substitute added the requirement that institutions publish in course catalogs and on institutional websites information on all institutional and statewide articulation agreements and set forth pertinent requirements. It would authorize a student who enrolls under an articulation agreement to transfer to a general academic institution no later than four years of their first enrollment date. The substitute removed a requirement that THECB to collaborate with two-year and four-year institutions to compare curricula and make certain determinations. The substitute also removed a requirement that two-year institutions designate each course in the course catalog that was not generally accepted for course credit by four-year institutions.