

SUBJECT: Allowing for junior colleges to offer baccalaureate degree programs

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Lozano, Raney, Alonzo, Alvarado, Button, Clardy, Howard,  
Turner

0 nays

1 absent — Morrison

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 3 — 26-5 (Buckingham, Burton, Huffines,  
Kolkhorst, Schwertner)

WITNESSES: *On House companion bill, HB 4092:*

For — Dana Harris, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Neil Matkin, Collin College; Richard Rhodes, Community College Coalition; Leah May, Seton Healthcare Family; Stephanie Berman; Karen Hamlett; Travis Ransom; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Bradley, Kendra Dubec, Fucciani, Bo Gillespie, Michelle Gillespie, Cedricka Jackson, Molly Beth Malcolm, Jeanna Reed, Amber Schulze, and Lorie Tibbits, Austin Community College; Kelly Wells, ACC Nursing; Katey Crackel, Bayshore Medical Center; Jared Johnson, City of Denison; Wendy Uptain, The Commit Partnership; Joe May, Dallas County Community College; Howard Hext, East Harris County Association; Raymond Lewis, Galveston College; Jeremy McMillen, Grayson College; Amos McDonald, Lone Star College; Jack Gullahorn, McGraw Hill Education; John Hubbard and Ian Randolph, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD; Jay Barksdale, Plano Chamber of Commerce; Brenda Hellyer, San Jacinto College; and 20 individuals)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Blaine Teague and Brooks, Austin Community College; Wanda Garza, South Texas College; Rex Peebles, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

**DIGEST:** SB 2118 would allow the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to authorize baccalaureate degree programs at one or more public junior colleges that offered certain degree programs and had demonstrated a workforce need. Eligible junior colleges would offer a program in nursing, applied technology, or applied science, including an applied science program with an emphasis on early childhood education. The coordinating board would continue to be required to authorize baccalaureate degree programs in the fields of applied science and applied technology at junior colleges that previously participated in a pilot program.

Junior colleges would be limited to offering three baccalaureate degree programs at any time, except that those that had previously participated in a pilot program still could offer up to five. The board would be required to use the same standards and criteria for approving baccalaureate degree programs at general academic teaching institutions and medical and dental units to determine whether a junior college would be allowed to offer a baccalaureate degree program and what degree programs could be offered.

The coordinating board also would be required to consider the workforce need, whether the associate degree program offered by the junior college in the same field had been successful, and the college's ability to support the program with student enrollment, in addition to other factors currently in statute.

A junior college could offer a baccalaureate degree program only if its junior college district had a taxable property valuation amount of not less than \$6 billion in the preceding year and received a positive assessment of the overall financial health of the district. Before it could be authorized to offer a baccalaureate program, the junior college also would be required to submit a report to the coordinating board that included:

- a long-term financial plan for accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;
- a long-term plan for faculty recruitment that indicated the ability to pay the increased salaries of doctoral faculty, identified recruitment

- strategies for new faculty, and ensured the program would not draw faculty from a neighboring institution offering a similar program;
- details on the manner of program and course delivery; and
  - details on existing articulation agreements and dual enrollment agreements.

The information on existing articulation agreements would need to indicate that at least three articulation agreements had been established with general academic teaching institutions or medical and dental units or the reasons why no articulation agreements had been established. It also would indicate that, with the agreement of the applicable general academic teaching institution or medical and dental unit, established articulation agreements were at capacity.

The coordinating board could not authorize a junior college to offer a baccalaureate degree if articulation agreements with general academic teaching institutions or medical and dental units were sufficient to meet the needs in the degree field.

To determine the authorization of a junior college to offer a degree program in nursing, the coordinating board would have to:

- require a public junior college to provide evidence to the coordinating board and the Texas Board of Nursing that the junior college had secured adequate long-term clinical space;
- obtain a letter from each clinical site provided indicating that the clinical site had not refused a similar request from a general academic teaching institution or medical and dental unit; and
- establish that the corresponding associate degree program offered by the public junior college had been successful as indicated by job placement rates and licensing exam scores.

A baccalaureate degree program in the field of nursing would be a bachelor of science degree program and meet the standards and criteria the Texas Board of Nursing used to approve pre-licensure degree programs at general academic teaching institutions and medical and dental units,

regardless of whether the program was a pre-licensure or post-licensure program. The program would have to be accredited by a national nursing accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

A public junior college offering a baccalaureate degree program in nursing also would be required to demonstrate to the coordinating board that it would maintain or exceed the enrollment available to nursing students enrolled in an associate degree program at the junior college in the 2016-17 academic year and continue to maintain or exceed that level of enrollment in the corresponding associate degree program until the 2021-22 academic year. This requirement would expire on January 1, 2023.

A baccalaureate degree program at a junior college could be funded solely by a proportionate share of state appropriations, local funds, and private sources. The bill would not require the Legislature to appropriate state funds to support a baccalaureate degree program at a junior college. The coordinating board would have to weigh contact hours attributable to students enrolled in a junior-level or senior-level course offered by a program to determine a college's proportionate share of state appropriations in the same manner as a lower division course in a corresponding field.

A public junior college would be prohibited from charging students more for tuition and fees than it charged to a similarly situated student enrolled in an associate degree program in a corresponding field.

The bill would require each public junior college offering a baccalaureate degree program to conduct a review and deliver a report to the coordinating board every biennium on the quality, operation, and effectiveness of the baccalaureate degree programs offered.

The coordinating board would adopt rules as necessary for the administration of the bill's provisions.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds vote

of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 2118 would help address the workforce needs of the state by allowing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to approve degree programs in applied science, applied technology, and nursing at public junior colleges, which could offer affordable programs that would be subject to high academic standards. While certain community colleges already have been granted approval to offer baccalaureate degrees, the bill would expand this opportunity to other qualified schools in Texas.

The bill would help address the growing need for early childhood educators in the state's school districts by creating more baccalaureate degree programs in early childhood education. Receiving quality education in early grades is critical for a student's long-term success. For example, a young student's reading proficiency is a strong indicator of success in high school. Allowing for more teachers to be specially prepared in early childhood education could improve the quality of education provided to younger students and could subsequently improve student results across the state.

SB 2118 also could help address the state's nursing shortage by allowing the coordinating board to approve community college baccalaureate degrees in nursing. In addition, nurses who completed a four-year degree might go on to pursue careers in teaching, which could help alleviate nursing faculty shortages.

The bill would ensure that baccalaureate degrees offered by community colleges did not overlap with the offerings of four-year institutions. The coordinating board would be required to consider whether a baccalaureate degree program at a public junior college would duplicate the degree programs offered by other institutions of higher education when determining whether to authorize a program. The bill also would include specific provisions to guard against faculty members being drawn away from a neighboring institution. The coordinating board would have to use the same criteria it uses to approve baccalaureate degree programs at

general academic teaching institutions, so the quality of education would not be compromised.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

SB 2118 could compromise the quality of education being provided to students and might duplicate programs already being offered by four-year institutions. The bill would not alleviate the nursing shortage because there currently is a shortage of nursing faculty. Creating more nursing programs at junior colleges could create competition for nursing faculty among institutions in the state.

NOTES:

A companion bill, HB 4092 by S. Davis, was reported favorably by the House Committee on Higher Education on May 1.