

SUBJECT: Helping students understand college course sequencing, transferability

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Gooden, K. King,
Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver

0 nays

1 absent — Dutton

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 25 — 30-1 (Hall)

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mark Wiggins, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Priscilla Camacho, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; Miranda Goodsheller, Texas Association of Business; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Justin Yancy, Texas Business Leadership Council; David Hinojosa, Texas Latino Education Coalition; Colby Nichols, Texas Rural Education Association; Texas Association of Community Schools; Mike Meroney, Texas Workforce Coalition, BASF Corporation, Huntsman Corporation)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Monica Martinez and Kelly Ocasio, Texas Education Agency)

DIGEST: CSSB 2131 would establish requirements that high school counselors inform students about clear and efficient pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs.

Guided Pathways. The bill would establish the Texas Guided Pathways program. Its goals would include providing recommended course sequences for all undergraduate certificate and degree programs at institutions of higher education, increasing the efficiency of transferring course credit between two-year and four-year institutions, and helping

students avoid taking courses that do not count toward degree and certificate programs.

Recommended course sequences. Each public institution of higher education would develop a recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program that would enable a student to obtain an associate degree or certificate within four semesters or a baccalaureate degree program within eight semesters.

Before June 1 of each year, each institution would have to make necessary updates to recommended course sequences, submit each recommended course sequence to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and post each on the institution's website. Institutions that did not use the common course numbering system would need to include information regarding the course equivalent under the numbering system. The initial recommended course sequences would be submitted to the coordinating board and posted on the institution's website by August 15, 2018.

Higher education institutions would be required to inform students about the recommended course sequences and incorporate those sequences into student advising. An institution would be allowed to modify its recommended sequences, if necessary, by following certain procedures and notifying the board if necessary.

By November 1 of each even-numbered year, beginning in 2018, the coordinating board would submit a report to the Legislature on the recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education.

Web-based platforms. The coordinating board, in consultation with the Texas OnCourse Initiative and its partnering institutions of higher education, would be required to establish a statewide web-based platform that would enable a student to:

- search for and compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education; and
- determine whether a specific lower-division course would transfer

to another institution for course credit applied toward a certificate or degree program and toward that institution's recommended course sequence for that program.

A link to the web-based platform would be required on the website of any electronic common application system developed by the board.

Transfer compacts. Before March 15 of each year, each higher education institution would be required to submit to the coordinating board a list of the transfer compacts the institution was a part of and a copy of each transfer compact. The board, in consultation with the Texas OnCourse Initiative, would be required to create a web-based platform by March 15, 2019, to provide students information on transfer compacts.

Before November 1 of each even-numbered year, beginning in 2020, the coordinating board would submit to the Legislature a report on transfer compacts between institutions of higher education. The initial report would be due by November 1, 2020.

Counseling requirements. Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, high school counselors would provide information to students and their parents, including on the district or school website, about the availability of dual-credit and joint high school and college credit programs, including:

- the types of courses offered under each program, such as whether the courses are in the core curriculum of a certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education or are career and technology education courses; and
- whether the courses offered under each program would transfer to an institution of higher education for course credit applied toward a certificate or degree program.

Counselors would be required to provide information on recommended course sequences at and transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, including web-based platforms developed under the Texas

Guided Pathways program.

Each district and open-enrollment charter school, in consultation with school counselors, would be required to develop a procedure for documenting on each student's transcript any postsecondary advising services provided to the student under the bill's requirements, including the person or counseling provider who provided the services.

Other provisions. The coordinating board could solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source for any expenses related to the Texas Guided Pathways program. The board, in consultation with institutions of higher education, would adopt rules for the electronic submission of information and could adopt rules as necessary to implement the Texas Guided Pathways program.

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, 2017.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSSB 2131 would ensure that high school students were adequately advised before enrolling in dual-credit and other programs that allow them to earn college credit. In some cases, students may take lower division courses that do not apply to the degree program they are planning to pursue. This can result in wasted time and reduce the tuition savings students are seeking by taking college courses while still in high school.

The bill also would help students in community colleges who were planning to transfer to a four-year college or university by requiring higher education institutions to recommend proper course sequencing and transfer compacts. This information can help students graduate on time and avoid wasting tuition on courses that would not apply to their degree or certificate program.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSSB 2131 would add to the already significant state requirements on high school counselors by requiring them to provide detailed information about the transferability and degree requirements for dual-credit courses.

The Legislature should provide funding for additional counselors if it increases their job duties.

NOTES:

CSSB 2131 differs from the Senate-passed version in that the committee substitute would establish the Texas Guided Pathways program that includes requirements for institutions of higher education to post information about course sequencing and credit transfers.