

- SUBJECT:** Reducing the threshold for excess credit hours at community colleges
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, Frullo, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker, C. Turner, J. Turner
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — P. King, Raney
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 19 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dana Harris and Gilbert Zavala, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Molly Weiner, United Ways of Texas; Julie Gilberg)
- Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code sec. 54.014 allows an institution of higher education to charge a resident undergraduate student tuition at a higher rate, not to exceed the rate charged to nonresident undergraduate students, if the student exceeds by at least 30 hours the number of semester credit hours required for completion of the degree program in which the student is enrolled. Sec. 61.0595 establishes that in the higher education funding formulas, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board may not include funding for semester credit hours earned by a resident undergraduate student who previously attempted a number of semester credit hours that exceeds by at least 30 hours the number of semester credit hours required for completion of the student's degree program.
- Some have suggested that lowering the threshold for financial penalties associated with students who accumulate excess credit hours above what is needed for their associate degree programs would provide an incentive for community colleges to more closely monitor students' credit accumulation to ensure they stayed on a timely path to degree completion.

DIGEST:

SB 1531 would adjust the hours of excess credit for which an institution of higher education could charge a resident undergraduate student tuition at a higher rate. As specified in statute, if before the semester began the student had previously attempted a number of semester credit hours for courses taken at any institution of higher education that exceeded the number of semester credit hours required for completion of the student's degree program by at least:

- for an associate degree program, 15 hours; or
- for a baccalaureate degree program, 30 hours.

An institution that charged students who accumulated excess credit hours tuition at a higher rate could adopt a policy for hardship exemptions.

SB 1531 would revise provisions excluding any excessive credit hours earned by a resident undergraduate student from formula funding calculations to reflect the bill's threshold of 15 hours for students in an associate degree program and 30 hours for students in a baccalaureate degree program.

For purposes of the bill, an undergraduate student who was not enrolled in a degree program would be considered to be enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program.

The bill's provision regarding tuition rates would apply beginning with tuition charged for the 2023 fall semester and the provision regarding funding recommendations would apply beginning with the state fiscal biennium beginning September 1, 2023.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.