

SUBJECT: Establishing certain college course credit transfer provisions

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Kuempel, Paul, Bucy, Burns, Burrows, Clardy, Howard, Lalani
0 nays
3 absent — Cole, M. González, Raney

WITNESSES: For — Danielle Zaragoza, Educate Texas (*Registered, but did not testify*: Travis Krogman, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Matthew Garcia, Dallas Regional Chamber; Jaime Puente, Every Texan; Stacy Schmitt, Gilbert Zavala, Opportunity Austin; Rebekah Calahan, Philanthropy Advocates; Renzo Soto, Texas 2036; Stephanie Matthews, Texas Association of Business; Ray Martinez, Texas Association of Community Colleges; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Justin Yancy, Texas Business Leadership Council; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Priscilla Camacho, Alamo Colleges District; Elizabeth Mayer, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that it would be helpful to expand the processes and protections available to students for understanding how their credits apply when they transfer from a community college to a general academic teaching institution.

DIGEST: CSHB 3486 would revise and establish provisions regarding the transfer of certain college course credits between institutions.

Core curriculum adoption. The bill would authorize the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) by rule to approve a core curriculum of fewer than 42 semester credit hours for an associate degree program if THECB determined that the approval would facilitate the

award of a degree or transfer of credit.

If a student successfully completed the core curriculum, rather than the 42-hour core curriculum, at a higher education institution, that block of courses could be transferred to any other institution and would be substituted for the receiving institution's core curriculum.

In adopting rules on the recommended core curriculum, the bill would require THECB to appoint a committee to advise THECB, rather than require THECB to use the negotiated rulemaking procedures in adopting such rules.

Field of study curriculum. The bill would allow THECB to authorize a general academic teaching institution to adopt, for each field of study curriculum developed by THECB for which the institution offered a degree program, a set of courses specific to that field of study, not to exceed a total of six semester credit hours or the equivalent, that would be required to be completed as part of the field of study curriculum for that institution. Each general academic institution that adopted a set of courses for a field of study curriculum would post on the institution's website in a manner easily accessible to students the set of courses with the associated courses numbers under the common course numbering system.

Dispute resolution. The bill would revise certain provisions on the dispute resolution procedures adopted by THECB. The commissioner of higher education would have until the 20th business day after the date the commissioner received notice of a dispute concerning the application of course credit to a student's degree requirements to make the final determination about the dispute and give written notice of the determination to the involved student and institutions.

If the commissioner or designee determined that the institution could not deny the application of course credit to the student's degree requirements, the institution would apply that course credit toward the student's degree requirements. Such a determination would be final and could not be appealed.

THECB would have to post on its website a list of each case that was considered by the commissioner of higher education or the commissioner's designee, including the disposition of the case.

Early college education program. The bill would revise Education Code provisions on the early college education program. The program would be required to allow a participating student to enroll in a program at a higher education institution that enabled the student, on or before the fifth anniversary of the student's first day of high school, to receive a high school diploma and either an applied or academic associate degree, each as defined by THECB rule, rather than to receive at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree. The academic associate degree would be with a completed field of study curriculum as developed under the bill that was transferable toward a baccalaureate degree at one or more general academic teaching institutions.

Report deadlines and requirements. CSHB 3486 would revise requirements for certain reports made to THECB. The bill would extend from March 1 to May 1 of each year the deadline for a required report to THECB and the Legislature on nontransferable credit from each general academic teaching institution. In describing why the receiving institution did not grant certain credit, the report would have to include whether the institution complied with the dispute resolution process.

The bill also would extend from March 1 to May 1 of each year the deadline for required report from each public junior college on courses taken by students who transferred to a general academic teaching institution or earned an associate degree.

Texas Direct associate degree. A higher education institution would be required to award a "Texas Direct" associate degree to a student and include an appropriate notation on the student's transcript if the student completed a field of study curriculum developed by THECB and:

- the institution's core curriculum; or

- an abbreviated core curriculum related to a specific approved field of study curriculum transferable to one or more general academic teaching institutions.

Definitions. The bill would revise certain definitions within Education Code ch. 61.

The definition of a “degree program” would be revised to mean any grouping of subject matter courses that entitled a student to certain academic credentials, including an academic associate degree or a baccalaureate degree from a public junior college.

The definition of a “certificate program” would be revised to specify that it included an associate degree other than an academic associate degree, as defined by board rule, from a technical institute or junior college.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year.

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, 2023.