

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1764
By: Watson
Higher Education
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The purpose of this bill is to require all Texas colleges and universities to provide comprehensive information about the costs for prospective students to attend their institutions.

S.B. 1764 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to prescribe uniform standards to ensure that information regarding the cost of attendance at institutions of higher education and at private or independent institutions of higher education approved to receive tuition equalization grant funds is available to the public in a manner that is consumer friendly and readily understandable to prospective students and their families. This bill requires that the uniform standards address all the elements that constitute the total cost of attendance including the annual cost of tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation costs, and other personal expenses. The information is required to be displayed on the institution's Internet website. This bill requires that institutions provide information on financial assistance and a link to the primary federal student aid website.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0777, as follows:

Sec. 61.0777. UNIFORM STANDARDS FOR PUBLICATION OF COST OF ATTENDANCE INFORMATION. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to prescribe uniform standards intended to ensure that information regarding the cost of attendance at institutions of higher education is available to the public in a manner that is consumer-friendly and readily understandable to prospective students and their families. Requires THECB, in developing the standards, to examine common and recommended practices regarding the publication of such information and to solicit recommendations and comments from institutions of higher education and interested private or independent institutions of higher education.

(b) Requires that the uniform standards address all of the elements that constitute the total cost of attendance, including tuition and fees, room and board costs, book and supply costs, transportation costs, and other personal expenses, and prescribe model language to be used to describe each element of the cost of attendance.

(c) Requires each institution of higher education that offers an undergraduate degree or certificate program to prominently display on the institution's Internet website in accordance with the uniform standards prescribed under this section information regarding the cost of attendance at the institution by a full-time entering first-year student, and conform to the uniform standards in any electronic or printed materials intended to provide to prospective undergraduate students information regarding the cost of attendance at the institution.

(d) Requires each institution of higher education to consider the uniform standards prescribed under this section when providing information to the public

or to prospective students regarding the cost of attendance at the institution by nonresident students, graduate students, or students enrolled in professional programs.

(e) Requires THECB to prescribe requirements for an institution of higher education to provide on the institution's Internet website consumer-friendly and readily understandable information regarding student financial aid opportunities. Requires that the required information be provided in connection with the information displayed under Subsection (c)(1) (relating to the requirement that certain institutions prominently display on the institution's Internet website certain financial information prescribed under this section) and include a link to the primary federal student financial aid Internet website intended to assist persons applying for student financial aid.

(f) Requires THECB to provide on THECB's Internet website a program or similar tool that will compute for a person accessing the website the estimated net cost of attendance for a full-time entering first-year student attending an institution of higher education. Requires THECB to require each institution to provide THECB with the information THECB requires to administer this subsection.

(g) Requires THECB to prescribe the initial standards and requirements under this section not later than January 1, 2010. Requires institutions of higher education to comply with the standards and requirements not later than April 1, 2010. Provides that this subsection expires January 1, 2011.

(h) Requires THECB to encourage private or independent institutions of higher education approved under Subchapter F (Tuition Equalization Grants) to participate in the tuition equalization grant program, to the greatest extent practicable, to prominently display the information described by Subsections (a) and (b) on their Internet websites in accordance with the standards established under those subsections, and to conform to those standards in electronic and printed materials intended to provide to prospective undergraduate students information regarding the cost of attendance at the institutions. Requires THECB to also encourage those institutions to include on their Internet websites a link to the primary federal student financial aid Internet website intended to assist persons applying for student financial aid.

(i) Requires THECB to make the program or tool described by Subsection (f) available to private or independent institutions of higher education described by Subsection (h), and requires those institutions to make that program or tool, or another program or tool that complies with the requirements for the net price calculator required under Section 132(h)(3), Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. Section 1015a), available on their Internet websites not later than the date by which the institutions are required by Section 132(h)(3) to make the net price calculator publicly available on their Internet websites.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.