

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R9670 JRJ-D

H.B. 2628
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Higher Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, Fields of Study (FOS) help students transfer courses seamlessly from two-year to four-year institutions by establishing a set of lower division courses within a discipline that must be applied to a bachelor's degree within that discipline. Several FOS currently exist and are generally 12 to 18 semester credit hours that match the 42-hour Core Curriculum. These existing FOS need to be updated and reviewed, and new ones need to be created.

Additionally, Programs of Study (POS) are currently being used in the Achieve Texas initiative through the Texas Education Agency (TEA). POS are career and technical education programs designed to help students transition seamlessly from high school to a public junior college, public state college, or a technical college.

H.B. 2628 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to periodically review each field of study curriculum to ensure alignment with student interest, academic, and industry needs. The bill also puts POS in statute and outlines the goals and functions of the programs.

H.B. 2628 amends current law relating to the development and alignment by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board of curricula for certain educational programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 2 (Section 61.8235, Education Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Education Agency in SECTION 2 (Section 61.8235, Education Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 2 (Section 61.8235, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.823, Education Code, by adding Subsection (e) to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), with the assistance of an appropriate advisory committee, to periodically review each field of study curriculum to ensure alignment with student interest and academic and industry needs.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.8235, as follows:

Sec. 61.8235. CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM OF STUDY CURRICULA. (a) Requires THECB, with the assistance of institutions of higher education, career and technical education experts, and college and career readiness experts, to establish alignment between the college and career readiness standards and the knowledge, skills, and abilities students are expected to demonstrate in career and technical education by establishing programs of study that:

(1) incorporate rigorous college and career readiness standards, including career and technical education standards that address both academic and technical content;

(2) support attainment of employability and career readiness skills;

(3) progress in content specificity by beginning with all aspects of an industry or career cluster and leading to more occupationally specific instruction or by preparing students for ongoing postsecondary career preparation;

(4) incorporate multiple entry and exit points with portable demonstrations of technical or career competency, which may include credit transfer agreements or industry-recognized certifications; and

(5) culminate in the attainment of an industry-recognized certification, credential, or license, a registered apprenticeship or credit-bearing postsecondary certificate, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

(b) Requires THECB, with the assistance of advisory committees composed of representatives of secondary education, postsecondary education, business and industry, other state agencies or licensing bodies, and other career and technical education experts, to develop career and technical education program of study curricula. Requires each advisory committee to have at least one representative from each identified group. Requires the advisory committees to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to prepare students for high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-demand occupations.

(c) Requires THECB, in developing program of study curricula under Subsection (b), to pursue a management strategy that maximizes efficiency, including a management strategy that provides for the decentralization of advisory committees to enable concurrent development of curricula for different programs of study.

(d) Authorizes THECB to partner with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and other state agencies to develop programs of study under this section.

(e) Requires that a program of study established under this section:

(1) focus on the current and future needs of employers in this state;

(2) clearly define career pathways with logical entry and exit points for students;

(3) indicate the types of careers and the names of certifications or licenses aligned to the program of study;

(4) provide for students who begin a program of study at a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute to transfer to another public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute without having to repeat classes or incur significant interruption of their ability to progress through the program of study;

(5) be designed to meet the needs of business and industry with a high degree of commonality across the state;

(6) align with the college and career readiness standards; and

(7) be revised on a reoccurring schedule, not to exceed once every five years, to ensure the programs of study remain current and relevant to the needs of business and industry.

(f) Requires a student enrolled in a THECB-established program of study who transfers from a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute to another public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute that offers a similar program, regardless of whether the institution has adopted the THECB-established program of study, to receive academic credit from the institution to which the student transferred for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed in the program of study curriculum. Authorizes the student, unless otherwise required by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, to complete the program of study at the institution to which the student transferred by completing only the remaining number of semester credit hours the student would need to complete the program of study at the institution from which the student transferred.

(g) Authorizes THECB, TEA, and TWC to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2015.