

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 2122
By: West
Higher Education
5/4/2017
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Virtually all courses for which a student receives a "C" or better will transfer from one institution to another. However, these courses may not apply to a student's declared major. Therefore, students accumulate course credits that do not apply, also known as "stray credits," increasing their time to degree, costing the student unnecessary tuition and fees, and costing the state excess formula funding and financial aid. While students bear responsibility for the choices they make, higher education bears responsibility for making the choices transparent, easily comprehensible, and to align courses with common curriculum and outcomes as much as possible.

The initiatives of S.B. 2122 will reduce the number of stray course hours through course alignment, increase the transparency of those choices, and help students identify courses that will help them earn their preferred degree.

S.B. 2122 authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to create a database of required lower division courses for specific majors, strengthen advising and require earlier advising, continue the development of fields of study, promote meta majors and guided pathways, reduce the courses in the core curriculum, and give THECB explicit authority to develop and implement transfer policies. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 2122 amends current law relating to the coordination of the transfer of course credit between public institutions of higher education.

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 Sections 51.9685(b), (c), and (d), Education Code, as follows:

(b) Requires each student enrolled at an institution of higher education (IHE), rather than each student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at an IHE, except as otherwise provided by Subsection (c) and not later than the end of the first regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a certain number of semester credit hours for certain coursework completed by the student, to:

- (1) following a semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 15 or more semester credit hours, receive formal advising regarding the student's degree plan; and
- (2) following a semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 30 or more semester credit hours, file a degree plan with the IHE, rather than file a degree plan with the IHE not later than the end of the second regular semester or a certain term.

(c) Requires a student to whom this section (Required Filing of Degree Plan) applies who begins the student's first semester or term at an IHE with 30 or more, rather than with 45 or more, semester credit hours of course credit described by Subsection (b) to file a degree plan with the IHE not later than a certain period.

(d) Requires an IHE to provide to students to whom this section applies information regarding the requirement for formal advising and the degree plan filing requirement under this section and options for consulting with an academic advisor for those purposes, which may include consultation through electronic communication, rather than requires an IHE to provide to students to whom this section applies information regarding the degree plan filing requirement under this section and options for consulting with an academic advisor for that purpose, which may include consultation through electronic communication.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.059(p), Education Code, as follows:

(p) Prohibits the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in its instruction and operations formula applicable to an IHE, from including certain credit hours earned by a high school student unless those credit hours are earned through, among certain other courses, a course in a field of study curriculum approved by THECB under Section 61.823 (Field of Study Curriculum) offered by the IHE providing course credit. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 61.822, Education Code, by amending Subsections (a), (a-1), and (b) and adding Subsections (a-2), (f), and (g), as follows:

(a) Requires THECB to develop and implement a policy regarding the transferability of lower division course credit among IHEs, rather than requires THECB to encourage the transferability of lower division course credit among IHEs.

(a-1) Requires that the recommended core curriculum developed by THECB with the assistance of certain advisory committees provide the knowledge and academic competencies foundational for all future learning. Requires that the courses in the core curriculum be general education courses, broad in scope, and prohibits the courses from narrowly focusing on knowledge and competencies specific to a particular occupation or profession.

(a-2) Creates this subsection from existing text and makes no further changes.

(b) Requires that the core curriculum adopted by each IHE be approved by THECB and be consistent with the common course numbering system approved by THECB under Section 61.832 (Common Course Numbering System) and with the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by THECB. Deletes existing text authorizing an IHE to have a core curriculum of other than 42 semester credit hours only if approved by THECB.

(f) Requires THECB to establish a database and collect information as determined by THECB to annually identify the 25 degree programs that have the greatest transfer student enrollment. Requires each general academic teaching institution (GATI) to identify certain information for each of those degree programs.

(g) Provides that courses identified by a GATI under Subsection (f) are only required to be applied to the appropriate degree program for a student in the period of the GATI's course catalog beginning with the student's first enrollment in an IHE.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 61.823, Education Code, by adding Subsection (f), to require each public junior college, state college, and technical institute that offers a degree program for which a field of study curriculum is developed to adopt the field of study curriculum.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 61.832, Education Code, by adding Subsection (e), to authorize THECB to monitor the use of the common course numbering system by GATIs to ascertain benefits and problems with the implementation of the system and issue an annual report, including a timeline for statutory compliance, to certain government officials.

SECTION 6. Provides that the changes in law made by this Act apply beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year.

SECTION 7. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.