

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1714
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that students at institutions of higher education regularly transfer credit hours from two-year institutions to four-year institutions and that many of these students, after transferring, earn enough credits at the four-year institution to earn an associate degree at the two-year institutions from which they transferred. Although current law allows a student who transfers from a two-year institution to a four-year institution to attain an associate degree from the two-year institution previously attended if the cumulative total of credit hours earned by such a student at both institutions combined satisfies the lower-division institution's requirements for an associate degree, the parties assert that the administrative effort required to comply with the law is a burdensome one without any automation to facilitate the exchange of data necessary for the reverse transfer of credit. S.B. 1714 seeks to lessen the administrative effort required in this regard and to help students achieve this academic milestone.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 1714 amends the Education Code to authorize an institution of higher education to request the submission of a signed consent form authorizing the institution to release academic course, grade, and credit information with each request from a student for a release of the student's transcript by the institution or with each application for undergraduate transfer admission to the institution, if the institution is a general academic teaching institution, to be used for purposes of a transfer of credit for an associate degree. The bill authorizes an institution of higher education to release such student information, with a signed consent form, through the National Student Clearinghouse or a similar national electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

S.B. 1714 requires a general academic teaching institution, after a student who has submitted a signed consent form authorizing the institution to release the specified information completes a semester or term at the institution, to release the student's academic course, grade, and credit information to a lower-division institution of higher education that the student previously attended for the purpose of determining whether the student has earned the credits required for an associate degree awarded by the lower-division institution of higher education.

S.B. 1714 requires a general academic teaching institution, in the case of a transfer student

enrolled at that institution who earned at least 30 credit hours at a lower-division institution of higher education and who has not submitted a signed consent form as provided by the bill's provisions, to request authorization from such a student, as soon as practicable after the student has earned a cumulative 66 credit hours, to release the student's academic course, grade, and credit information to each lower-division institution of higher education that the student previously attended or, alternatively, to a reverse transfer data sharing platform, for the purpose of determining whether the student has earned the credits required for an associate degree awarded by the lower-division institution of higher education. The bill requires the general academic teaching institution to release the student's academic course, grade, and credit information either to the lower-division institution of higher education or to a reverse transfer data sharing platform on receipt of the student's authorization. The bill defines "reverse transfer data sharing platform" as the National Student Clearinghouse or a similar national electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

S.B. 1714 specifies that the bill's provisions regarding the release of a student's academic course, grade, and credit information for purposes of credit transfer for an associate degree do not affect the ability of a lower-division institution of higher education to determine the course work required to earn an associate degree awarded by that institution. The bill requires each lower-division institution of higher education to produce an annual report recording the number of degrees awarded by the institution under the bill's provisions in the previous academic year. The bill requires an institution to make the report publicly available and to submit the information to a reverse transfer data sharing platform.

S.B. 1714 applies beginning with the 2015 fall semester and requires an institution, in regard to a student who transferred to a general academic teaching institution before the institution could obtain a signed consent form from the student under the bill's provisions, to request authorization from the student for the institution's release of the student's academic information in the manner prescribed by the bill's provisions relating to a student who has not submitted a signed consent form as those provisions existed immediately before the bill's effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.