

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.S.B. 2131  
By: West  
Public Education  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

According to interested parties, students seeking to transfer between institutions of higher education are faced with a confusing array of choices and little in the way of guidance to help them understand which courses will transfer and apply to the major they intend to pursue, all of which results in lost time and money for students and taxpayers. C.S.S.B. 2131 seeks to address this problem by increasing information and transparency in the postsecondary education counseling provided to high school students and by providing for the establishment of the Texas guided pathways program to facilitate the completion by students of undergraduate certificate and degree programs.

### **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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 2 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.S.B. 2131 amends the Education Code to include in the information about postsecondary education required to be provided by a school counselor to a student and the student's parent or guardian during the first school year the student is enrolled in a public high school or at the high school level in an open-enrollment charter school, and again during each year of the student's enrollment in high school or at the high school level, information regarding the recommended course sequences at and transfer compacts between public institutions of higher education, including the web-based platforms developed under the Texas guided pathways program established by the bill. The bill specifies that, as it relates to information regarding the availability of programs in the public school district under which a student may earn college credit, such programs are advanced academic programs and that, as it relates to information regarding the availability of dual credit and joint high school and college credit programs, such information includes the types of courses offered under each program, such as whether the courses are in the core curriculum of a certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education or are career and technology education courses, and whether the courses offered under each program would transfer to an institution of higher education for course credit applied toward a certificate or degree program.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires each district and charter school to post on the district's or school's website, annually review, and update if necessary the applicable information relating to dual credit and joint high school and college credit programs. The bill requires each district and charter school, in consultation with school counselors employed by the district or school, to

develop a procedure for documenting on each student's transcript any postsecondary advising services provided to the student, including the name of the person or counseling provider who provided the services. The bill's provisions relating to postsecondary education counseling apply beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

C.S.S.B. 2131 establishes the Texas guided pathways program to inform, empower, and support current and prospective students at institutions of higher education by providing those students clear and efficient pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs. The bill sets out the goals of the program and requires each institution of higher education to develop a recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. The bill requires each recommended course sequence to be designed to enable a student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within four semesters or other academic terms for an associate degree or certificate program or within eight semesters or other academic terms for a baccalaureate degree program, to include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the specified time frame, and to be aligned with the applicable certificate or degree requirements published by the institution.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires each institution of higher education, not later than June 1 of each year, to adopt a version of each recommended course sequence, after review and any necessary update, to take effect beginning with entering freshmen and undergraduate transfer students for the following academic year; to submit each recommended course sequence to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in an electronic format specified by the coordinating board and, if the institution does not use the common course numbering system, information regarding the course equivalent under that system, if any, for each included course; and to post each recommended course sequence, including any applicable course equivalent information under the common course numbering system, on the institution's website in a location that is accessible from the home page by use of not more than three links. The bill requires each institution to adopt, submit to the coordinating board, and post on the institution's website the initial recommended course sequences not later than August 15, 2018.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires each institution of higher education to do the following:

- inform students about the recommended course sequences, including how to use those course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection, and incorporate those course sequences into student advising;
- post on the institution's website a link to the web-based platform on recommended course sequences developed by the coordinating board under the bill's provisions to enable students to compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education;
- honor each version of a recommended course sequence adopted by the institution, including any necessary modifications made for compliance purposes, for at least the four academic years occurring after the date on which that version of the course sequence is adopted.

The bill authorizes an institution of higher education, after notice to the coordinating board, to modify the institution's recommended course sequences as necessary to align the course sequence with the applicable certificate or degree requirements published by the institution, to incorporate recommended changes identified as a result of any program evaluation conducted by the institution, or to comply with applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state or federal law.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires the Texas OnCourse initiative, in consultation with its partnering institutions of higher education and the coordinating board, to develop, not later than March 15, 2019, a statewide web-based platform that enables a student to search for and compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education and to determine whether a specific lower-division course offered by an institution of higher education and identified using the common course numbering system would transfer to another institution of higher education

for course credit applied toward the student's undergraduate certificate or degree program and would count toward that institution's recommended course sequence for that program. The bill authorizes the Texas OnCourse initiative, in developing the web-based platform, to use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices. The bill requires the coordinating board to maintain the web-based platform and ensure that an electronic link to the platform is posted on the website of any electronic common application system developed by the coordinating board.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires each institution of higher education, not later than March 15 of each year, to submit to the coordinating board in an electronic format specified by the coordinating board a list of the transfer compacts in which the institution participates and a copy of, or an electronic link to a copy of, each transfer compact listed.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires the coordinating board to provide any necessary support for the development of transfer compacts between institutions of higher education. The bill requires the Texas OnCourse initiative, in consultation with the coordinating board and its partnering institutions of higher education, to develop, not later than March 15, 2019, a statewide web-based platform that provides to students information regarding transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, including an electronic link to each transfer compact submitted to the coordinating board. The bill authorizes the Texas OnCourse initiative, in establishing the web-based platform, to use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices. The bill requires the coordinating board to maintain the web-based platform.

C.S.S.B. 2131 requires the coordinating board, not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, to submit to the members of the legislature the following reports:

- beginning with an initial report required not later than November 1, 2018, a report on the recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education, which must include an analysis of the alignment of courses taken by students in each undergraduate certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education with the institution's recommended course sequence for that program; and
- beginning with an initial report required not later than November 1, 2020, a report on transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, which must include an analysis of the impact of those compacts on students' efficient progress toward completion of an undergraduate certificate or degree program.

C.S.S.B. 2131 authorizes the coordinating board to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source for any expenses related to the Texas guided pathways program and to adopt rules as necessary to implement the program in consultation with institutions of higher education. The bill requires the coordinating board in consultation with institutions of higher education to adopt rules for the electronic submission of information required to be submitted to the board under the bill's provisions. The bill's provisions relating to the Texas guided pathways program apply beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year.

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2017.

#### **COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.S.B. 2131 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

SENATE ENGROSSED

SECTION 1. Section 33.007, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 33.007. COUNSELING REGARDING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION. (a) Each school counselor at an elementary, middle, or junior high school, including an open-enrollment charter school offering those grades, shall advise students and their parents or guardians regarding the importance of postsecondary education, coursework designed to prepare students for postsecondary education, and financial aid availability and requirements.

(b) During the first school year a student is enrolled in a high school or at the high school level in an open-enrollment charter school, and again during each year of a student's enrollment in high school or at the high school level, a school counselor shall provide information about postsecondary education to the student and the student's parent or guardian. The information must include information accessible through the database of required lower division courses for specific majors, as well as information regarding:

- (1) the importance of postsecondary education;
- (2) the advantages of earning an endorsement and a performance acknowledgment and completing the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation high school program under Section 28.025;
- (3) the disadvantages of taking courses to prepare for a high school equivalency examination relative to the benefits of taking courses leading to a high school diploma;
- (4) financial aid eligibility;
- (5) instruction on how to apply for federal financial aid;
- (6) the center for financial aid information established under Section 61.0776;
- (7) the automatic admission of certain students to general academic teaching institutions as provided by Section 51.803;
- (8) the eligibility and academic performance requirements for the TEXAS Grant as provided by Subchapter M, Chapter 56; ~~and~~
- (9) the availability of advanced academic

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Section 33.007, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsections (b-1), (b-2), and (d) to read as follows:

(b) During the first school year a student is enrolled in a high school or at the high school level in an open-enrollment charter school, and again during each year of a student's enrollment in high school or at the high school level, a school counselor shall provide information about postsecondary education to the student and the student's parent or guardian. The information must include information regarding:

- (1) the importance of postsecondary education;
- (2) the advantages of earning an endorsement and a performance acknowledgment and completing the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation high school program under Section 28.025;
- (3) the disadvantages of taking courses to prepare for a high school equivalency examination relative to the benefits of taking courses leading to a high school diploma;
- (4) financial aid eligibility;
- (5) instruction on how to apply for federal financial aid;
- (6) the center for financial aid information established under Section 61.0776;
- (7) the automatic admission of certain students to general academic teaching institutions as provided by Section 51.803;
- (8) the eligibility and academic performance requirements for the TEXAS Grant as provided by Subchapter M, Chapter 56; ~~and~~
- (9) the availability of advanced academic

programs in the district under which a student may earn college credit, including advanced placement programs[, dual credit programs, joint high school and college credit programs,] and international baccalaureate programs; and  
(10) the availability of dual credit and joint high school and college credit programs, including the types of dual credit offered (core curriculum courses versus career and technical education courses)

and the transferability and application of dual credit offerings to regional junior or community colleges, public technical colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.

(c) Schools and districts shall post on their website and update annually the information articulated in Subsection (b)(10) related to dual credit and joint high school and college credit programs.

(d) Each school district and open-enrollment charter school, in consultation with school counselors employed by the district or school, shall develop a procedure for documenting on each student's transcript any postsecondary advising services provided to the student under this section, including the name of the person or counseling provider who provided the services.

(e) [(e)] At the beginning of grades 10 and 11, a school counselor certified under the rules of the State Board for Educator Certification shall explain the requirements of automatic admission to a general academic teaching institution under Section 51.803 to each student enrolled in a high school or at the high school level in an open-enrollment charter school who has a grade point average in the top 25 percent of the student's high school class.

programs in the district under which a student may earn college credit, including advanced placement programs[, dual credit programs, joint high school and college credit programs,] and international baccalaureate programs;  
(10) the availability of dual credit and joint high school and college credit programs, including:

(A) the types of courses offered under each program, such as whether the courses are in the core curriculum of a certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education or are career and technology education courses; and

(B) whether the courses offered under each program would transfer to an institution of higher education for course credit applied toward a certificate or degree program; and

(11) recommended course sequences at and transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, including the web-based platforms developed under Sections 61.843(g) and 61.844(c).

(b-1) Each school district and open-enrollment charter school shall post the information described by Subsection (b)(10) on the district's or school's Internet website. The district or school shall annually review and, if necessary, update that information.

(b-2) Each school district and open-enrollment charter school, in consultation with school counselors employed by the district or school, shall develop a procedure for documenting on each student's transcript any postsecondary advising services provided to the student under this section, including the name of the person or counseling provider who provided the services.

(d) In this section, "institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 2. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter S-1 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER S-1. TEXAS GUIDED PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Sec. 61.841. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Program" means the Texas Guided Pathways program established under this subchapter.

(2) "Texas OnCourse initiative" means the postsecondary education and career counseling academy developed by The University of Texas at Austin under Section 33.009.

Sec. 61.842. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM. (a) The Texas Guided Pathways program is established to inform, empower, and support current and prospective students at institutions of higher education by providing those students clear and efficient pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs.

(b) The goals of the program are to:

(1) provide recommended course sequences for all undergraduate certificate and degree programs offered at institutions of higher education;

(2) increase the efficiency of transferring course credit between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education;

(3) empower students to make well-informed choices by making useful course planning information available to students electronically;

(4) decrease the cost of completing undergraduate certificate and degree programs by helping students avoid taking courses that do not count toward the programs; and

(5) streamline student pathways to completion of undergraduate certificate and degree programs in a manner aligned with state goals to increase educational attainment.

Sec. 61.843. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) Each institution of higher education shall develop a recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. Each recommended course sequence must:

(1) be designed to enable a student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within:

(A) for an associate degree or certificate program, four semesters or other academic terms; or

(B) for a baccalaureate degree program, eight semesters or other academic terms;

(2) include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the time frame described by Subdivision (1); and

(3) be aligned with the applicable certificate or degree requirements published by the institution.

(b) Not later than June 1 of each year, each institution of higher education shall:

(1) after reviewing and, if necessary, updating each recommended course sequence, adopt a version of each recommended course sequence to take effect beginning with entering freshmen and undergraduate transfer students for the following academic year;

(2) submit to the board, in an electronic format specified by the board, each recommended course sequence and, if the institution does not use the common course numbering system, information regarding the course equivalent under the common course numbering system, if any, for each course included in that course sequence; and  
(3) post each recommended course sequence, including any information required to be provided under Subdivision (2) for that course sequence, on the institution's Internet website in a location that is accessible from the institution's website home page by use of not more than three links.

(c) Each institution of higher education shall inform students about the recommended course sequences, including how to use those course sequences as a tool to aid in course selection, and incorporate those course sequences into student advising.

(d) To enable students to compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education, each institution of higher education shall post on the institution's Internet website a link to the web-based platform on recommended course sequences developed under Subsection (g).

(e) After notice to the board, an institution of higher education may modify the institution's recommended course sequences

as necessary to:

(1) align the course sequence with the applicable certificate or degree requirements published by the institution;

(2) incorporate recommended changes identified as a result of any program evaluation conducted by the institution; or

(3) comply with applicable institutional policies, accreditation requirements, and state or federal law.

(f) An institution of higher education shall honor each version of a recommended course sequence adopted by the institution under Subsection (b)(1), including any necessary modifications made to the course sequence under Subsection (e), for at least the four academic years occurring after the date on which that version of the course sequence is adopted.

(g) The Texas OnCourse initiative, in consultation with its partnering institutions of higher education and the board, shall develop a statewide web-based platform that enables a student to:

(1) search for and compare recommended course sequences at institutions of higher education; and

(2) determine whether a specific lower-division course offered by an institution of higher education and identified using the common course numbering system would transfer to another institution of higher education for course credit applied toward the student's undergraduate certificate or degree program and count toward that institution's recommended course sequence for that program.

(h) In developing the web-based platform under Subsection (g), the Texas OnCourse initiative may use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

(i) The board shall maintain the web-based platform developed under Subsection (g) and ensure that an electronic link to the platform is posted on the Internet website of any electronic common application system developed by the board.

(j) Not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, the board shall submit to the members of the legislature a report on the recommended course sequences at

institutions of higher education. The report must include an analysis of the alignment of courses taken by students in each undergraduate certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education with the institution's recommended course sequence for that program.

Sec. 61.844. TRANSFER COMPACTS. (a) Not later than March 15 of each year, each institution of higher education shall submit to the board in an electronic format specified by the board:

(1) a list of the transfer compacts in which the institution participates; and

(2) a copy of, or an electronic link to a copy of, each transfer compact listed under Subdivision (1).

(b) The board shall provide any necessary support for the development of transfer compacts between institutions of higher education.

(c) The Texas OnCourse initiative, in consultation with its partnering institutions of higher education and the board, shall develop a statewide web-based platform that provides to students information regarding transfer compacts between institutions of higher education, including an electronic link to each transfer compact submitted to the board under Subsection (a).

(d) In developing the web-based platform under Subsection (c), the Texas OnCourse initiative may use technology platforms provided by the National Student Clearinghouse or any other electronic data sharing and exchange platforms that meet nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

(e) The board shall maintain the web-based platform developed under Subsection (c).

(f) Not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, the board shall submit to the members of the legislature a report on transfer compacts between institutions of higher education. The report must include an analysis of the impact of those compacts on students' efficient progress toward completion of an undergraduate certificate or degree program.

Sec. 61.845. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. The board may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source for any expenses related to the program.

Sec. 61.846. RULES. The board, in

consultation with institutions of higher education:

(1) shall adopt rules for the electronic submission of information required to be submitted to the board under this subchapter; and

(2) may adopt rules as necessary to implement the program.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 3. Section 33.007, Education Code, as amended by this Act, applies beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 4. Subchapter S-1, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 5. Notwithstanding Section 61.843(b), Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than August 15, 2018, each public institution of higher education shall adopt, submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and post on the institution's Internet website the initial recommended course sequences as required under that section.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 6. Not later than November 1, 2018, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall submit its initial report required under Section 61.843(j), Education Code, as added by this Act.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 7. Not later than March 15, 2019, the Texas OnCourse initiative shall develop the statewide web-based platforms required under Sections 61.843(g) and 61.844(c), Education Code, as added by this Act.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 8. Not later than November 1, 2020, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall submit its initial report required under Section 61.844(f), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

SECTION 9. Same as engrossed version.