

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 31
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, there are no incentive programs to encourage students to transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. The 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005, directed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to study the feasibility of allowing automatic admission to four-year institutions of community college students who complete the core curriculum with a B average.

S.B. 31 provides a financial incentive for students to complete the core curriculum and/or associate's degree at community colleges and transfer to four-year institutions. The bill encourages students to maintain good grades and complete their bachelor's degrees in a timely manner. Ensuring success in community college is vital to remedying inequities associated with race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

As proposed, S.B. 31 establishes a tuition rebate program for community college students who complete the core curriculum or associate's degree within two years and transfer immediately to a four-year institution; establishes eligibility requirements, including Texas residency and enrollment in community college immediately after graduating from high school; and requires high schools and community colleges to notify their students of this program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 54.0066, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 54, Education Code, by adding Section 54.0066, as follows:

Sec. 54.0066. TUITION REBATES FOR STUDENTS COMPLETING CERTAIN COURSEWORK AT TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. (a) Defines "coordinating board," "general academic teaching institution," "public junior college," "public state college," and "public technical institute" in this section.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a program under which an eligible student is entitled to receive a rebate of a portion of the tuition the student paid to a general academic teaching institution (institution) during the student's enrollment at that institution.

(c) Sets forth eligibility requirements to receive a tuition rebate under this section.

(d) Provides that, except as provided by Subsections (e) and (f), the amount of the tuition rebate for each semester or other academic term in which the student is enrolled at the institution is \$1,000 for a student who received an associate degree and \$500 for a student who completed the core curriculum without receiving an associate degree.

(e) Provides that if a student pays to an institution an amount of tuition for a semester or other academic term that is less than the amount of a rebate otherwise

required by this section, the amount of the rebate is equal to the amount of tuition paid by the student.

(f) Prohibits the amount of a rebate under this section for a semester or other academic term from exceeding the amount of tuition paid by the student for courses the student enrolls in and successfully completes in that semester or other term.

(g) Provides that a student is not eligible for a tuition rebate under this section for a semester or other academic term that begins after the second anniversary of the date the student first enrolled in the general academic teaching institution, except as provided by Subsection (m).

(h) Requires the institution to refund to the student the amount of the tuition rebate to which the student is entitled, as soon as practicable after the applicable semester or term. Authorizes the student to direct that the rebate be applied to any other charges owed to the institution by the student, including certain charges and loans.

(i) Provides that a student who after enrollment at an institution is eligible under this section to receive a tuition rebate based only on the student's completion of the core curriculum and who subsequently transfers credits to a certain college or institute to earn an associate degree is eligible, for each semester or other term beginning after the associate degree is received, to receive from the institution a tuition rebate in the amount provided by this section for a student who received an associate degree before enrolling at an institution.

(j) Entitles an institution to reimbursement for the cost of providing a tuition rebate to an eligible student under this section. Requires THECB to reimburse the institution in the appropriate amount from appropriations available for that purpose.

(k) Requires each public high school in the state, at the beginning of each school year, to provide information regarding the requirements of the program under this section to each senior student at the high school and to a parent, conservator, or guardian of the student. Requires certain colleges and institutes to notify entering undergraduate students of the program requirements no later than the sixth week of the student's first semester or term.

(l) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and THECB to jointly prepare a publication that includes information required under Subsection (k) and to post that publication on the website of each in a form that allows certain institutions to reproduce the information for distribution to certain persons.

(m) Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer this section, including rules requiring that certain students apply for a tuition rebate and provide certain information required to verify the student's eligibility. Requires that the rules provide procedures by which an otherwise eligible student may be granted additional time to receive tuition rebates under this section under certain circumstances. Sets forth circumstances and conditions to be included as hardship or other good cause for the purpose of this subsection.

(n) Prohibits a student from receiving a rebate under Section 54.0065 (Tuition Rebate for Certain Undergraduates) if that student receives one or more rebates under this section.

(o) Prohibits a student from receiving a tuition rebate under this section for a semester or term before the 2011 fall semester. Prohibits a student from establishing eligibility for a rebate based in any part on higher education coursework completed before the 2009 fall semester. Provides that this subsection expires January 1, 2013.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to adopt rules for the administration of Section 54.0066, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable. Authorizes THECB to adopt the initial rules in the manner provided for emergency rules.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.