

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

For millions of Texas students, higher education begins at community college. Many begin in high school by taking popular dual credit courses in order to lower future college costs and begin completing required credits. Others begin community college as a low-cost option toward obtaining a degree, with the intention of transferring to a four-year academic university to complete a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, less than a quarter of those students ever transfer to a university, and approximately 10 percent ever complete a bachelor's degree. Often, students find that their credits do not transfer to a university, and they have to take another course to satisfy the credit. This has led to increased expense and student debt, increased time to degree, and increased chances of dropping out.

Members of a senate workgroup on credit transfer issues met over several weeks to consider possible solutions. S.B. 2086 was developed out of recommendations by that workgroup to improve credit mobility. S.B. 2086 directs every university to report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) on the top 25 degree programs at their institution. THECB is also directed to divide the state into regions to establish regional consortia among higher education institutions for the purpose of creating regional agreements for the transfers of course credits. THECB will select a lead institution and every community college, state and technical college, and university will participate in a regional consortium. Through these consortia, institutions will create transfer compacts to identify which courses will be accepted for transfer among all the institutions, and include those in student transfer guides. Transfer compacts must include agreements on course transfer, student advising, career planning, and student support services.

As proposed, S.B. 2086 amends current law relating to measures to facilitate the transfer of students and course credit within the public higher education system.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.834, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.834, as follows:

Sec. 61.834. REGIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR TRANSFER COMPACTS. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to divide the state into regions for the purpose of establishing a regional consortium among the institutions of higher education (IHEs) located within each region to facilitate the transfer of students and the transfer of course credit between IHEs within the region.

(b) Requires THECB to designate a general academic teaching institution (GATI) within each region as the lead institution. Requires each public junior college, public state college, public technical institute, and GATI to participate in its assigned regional consortium.

(c) Requires each GATI, for the purposes of this section, to annually identify and report to THECB the 25 degree programs with the greatest student enrollment at the GATI. Requires THECB to compile the information THECB receives from the GATIs in each regional consortium and report to each consortium the 25 degree programs at GATIs in that consortium with the greatest student enrollment overall.

(d) Requires each regional consortium to develop transfer compacts that identify specific courses included in the common course numbering system acceptable as credit toward the 25 degree programs at GATIs with the greatest student enrollment in each region, as identified by THECB under Subsection (c). Requires that the transfer compacts include agreements on the transfer of course credit for those degree programs and related student advising, career planning, and student support services at each institution in the regional consortium.

(e) Requires THECB to adopt rules for the operation of an established regional consortium.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.830, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.830. PUBLICATION OF GUIDELINES ADDRESSING TRANSFER PRACTICES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text and makes no further changes to this subsection.

(b) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires each IHE, rather than the institution, in the guidelines, to identify a course by using the common course numbering system approved by THECB.

(c) Requires each GATI to include certain information in its guidelines.

(d) Requires each public junior college, public state college, and public technical institute to prominently indicate in its guidelines any GATI with which it has entered into an agreement concerning the transfer of course credit.

SECTION 3. (a) Requires THECB, not later than January 1, 2018, to establish the regional consortiums required by Section 61.834, Education Code, as added by this Act to apply beginning with enrollment for the 2019 fall semester.

(b) Requires that each regional consortium develop the transfer compacts required under Section 61.834, Education Code, as added by this Act, to apply beginning with enrollment for the 2019 fall semester.

SECTION 4. Provides that the changes in law made by this Act to Section 61.830, Education Code, apply beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.