By:  West C.S.S.B. No. 25

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.96852.  RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) In this section:

1. "institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003; and
2. “recommended course sequence” means a suggested arrangement of lower and upper division courses that would enable a full-time student to complete the required courses for a 60-hour degree or certificate program within two years, or a 120-hour degree program within four years and.

(a-1) A recommended course sequence shall include, where applicable, the Texas Common Course numbering system course number for each course included within the recommended course sequence.

(b)  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 identify the required courses for the applicable certificate or degree program in the general core curriculum or the academic discipline core curriculum as described by Section 61.822.

(c) An institution of higher education may develop multiple recommended course sequences for a specific certificate or degree program offered by the institution.

~~(c)~~  (d) Each institution of higher education shall include the recommended course sequences developed under this section in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's Internet website.

Sec. 51.96853.  TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM LOWER-DIVISION INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION; ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS. (a) In this section:

(1)  "Articulation agreement" means a formal written agreement between a lower-division institution of higher education and a general academic teaching institution identifying courses offered by the lower-division institution that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general academic teaching institution.

(2)  "General academic teaching institution" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(3)  "Lower-division institution of higher education" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003.

(b)  Each general academic teaching institution may enter into an articulation agreement with any lower-division institution of higher education for a certificate or degree program for which students transferring from the lower-division institution to the general academic teaching institution regulary receive transfer credit.

(c)  An articulation agreement established may enable a transfer student to receive up to 60 semester credit hours for courses completed at the lower-division institution of higher education.

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(e)  A general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement under this section does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

SECTION 2.  Section 61.822, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsections (a-2), (b-1), (b-2), (b-3), (b-4), (b-5), (d-1), (d-2), (f) and (g) and amending Subsection (b) to read as follows:

(a-2)  The recommended core curriculum developed under Subsection (a-1) must have the following components:

(1)  a general core curriculum of at least 24 semester credit hours that includes:

(A)  six semester credit hours in:

(i)  American or Texas history;

(ii)  government or political science; and

(iii)  communication; and

(B)  three semester credit hours in:

(i)  language, philosophy, or culture; and

(ii)  creative arts.

(2)  for each broad academic discipline, an academic disciplinary core curriculum not to exceed 18 semester credit hours specific to that discipline and that includes relevant courses in mathematics, physical sciences and behavioral and social sciences, based on courses commonly required by institutions of higher education for each identified broad discipline.

(b)  Each institution of higher education shall adopt a core curriculum of no less than 42 semester credit hours, including specific courses comprising the curriculum. The core curriculum shall:

(1)  include a general core curriculum and an academic disciplinary core curriculum as described by Subsection (a-2); and

(2)  be consistent with the common course numbering system approved by the board and with the statement, recommendations, and rules issued by the board.

(b-1)  An institution may have a core curriculum of other than 42 semester credit hours only if approved by the board.

(b-2) Each institution of higher education shall identify each course that the institution offers that will fulfill requirements of the general core curriculum at that institution of higher education, and the specific general core curriculum requirement that the course will fulfill. The institution of higher education shall include these courses in the institution of higher education's course catalog and on the institution of higher education's Internet website and provide a list of these courses and the associated general core requirements to the board. An institution of higher education’s designation under this section is not subject to review or approval by the board.

(b-3)  An institution of higher education shall identify each course that the institution offers that will fulfill requirements of the disciplinary core curriculum at that institution, and the specific disciplinary core requirement that each course will fulfill. The institution will identify each degree or certificate offered by the institution that corresponds to each disciplinary core area, include that information in the institution of higher education's course catalog and on the institution Internet website, and advise students about the importance of taking coherent sequences of core courses that align with students’ academic and career goals.

(b-4) An institution of higher education is not required to offer courses, certificates, or degree programs for every disciplinary core area identified under this section.

(b-5) Notwithstanding any other requirements in this section, core courses designated by an institution of higher education under this section shall meet the general education requirements of the institution of higher education’s applicable accrediting body.

(d-1) An institution shall apply academic credit received for a course under Subsection (d) to the general or disciplinary core curriculum requirement that the course fulfilled for the student at the sending institution.

(d-2) An institution shall apply academic credit received for a course under Subsection (d) to the equivalent course requirement in the receiving institution’s degree or certificate program requirements.

(f) To assist in advising students regarding the selection of coherent sequences of core courses aligned with students’ academic and career goals, the board shall make information about the structure and transferability of the recommended core curriculum, including the general core curriculum and the disciplinary core areas identified under Section (a-2), available to school counselors and other postsecondary advisors employed by school districts and to each institution of higher education.

(g) In adopting rules under this section, the board shall engage in negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

SECTION 3.  Section 130.0104(b), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  A multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established at a junior college under this section must require a student to successfully complete:

(1)  the junior college's core curriculum adopted under Section 61.822 [~~61.822(b)~~]; and

(2)  after completion of the core curriculum under Subdivision (1), the courses selected by the student in the student's degree plan completed under Subsection (c).

**[Taken from SB 1923 – changes in bold]** SECTION 4.  Sections 51.9685(b), (c), and (g), Education Code, are amended to read as follows:

(b)  Except as otherwise provided by Subsection (c), each student enrolled at an institution of higher education in an associate or bachelor's degree program or a course for joint high school and junior college credit under Section 130.008 [~~at an institution of higher education~~] shall file a degree plan with the institution **after the 12th class day and before the end of the [~~end of the second~~] regular semester** or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 30 [~~45~~] or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including transfer courses, international baccalaureate courses, dual credit courses, and any other course for which the institution the student attends has awarded the student college course credit, including course credit awarded by examination. **This subsection only applies to a student who has declared a major at the institution of higher education the student attends.**

(c)  A student to whom this section applies who begins the student's first semester or term at an institution of higher education with 30 [~~45~~] or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses described by Subsection (b) shall file a degree plan with the institution **after the 12th class day and before the end of the** semester or term [~~at the institution~~].

(g)  The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in consultation with institutions of higher education, shall [~~may~~] adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section, including rules to ensure compliance with this section.

**Section 5. Add New Section. Purpose:** Require all public institutions of higher education to comply with reverse transfer by using the automated system at the NSC.

**Suggested Language:**

Sec. 61.833. CREDIT TRANSFER FOR ASSOCIATE DEGREE. (a) In this section:

(1) "Lower-division institution of higher education" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute.

(2) "Reverse transfer data sharing platform" means:

(A) the National Student Clearinghouse~~; or~~

~~(B) a similar national electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices~~.

Sec. 51.9715. RELEASE OF STUDENT ACADEMIC INFORMATION. (a) An institution of higher education may request the submission of a signed consent form authorizing the institution to release academic course, grade, and credit information with each:

(1) application for undergraduate transfer admission to the institution, if the institution is a general academic teaching institution, to be used for the purposes of Section [61.833](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/GetStatute.aspx?Code=ED&Value=61.833" \t "new); or

(2) request from a student for a release of the student's transcript by the institution.

(b) An institution of higher education may release student information in accordance with Subsection (a) through~~:~~

~~(1)~~ the National Student Clearinghouse~~; or~~

~~(2) a similar national electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices~~.

**Effective Date:** Require institutions to begin using NSC for reverse transfer by September 1, 2020.

**SECTION 6. Add New Subseection to Section 51.762: Purpose:** Create the option for applicants to be considered for admissions into degree programs at other institutions in Texas, if they are not admitted to the degree program at the university of their choice.

**Drafting Instructions:**

* Require the Common Admission Application Form authorized by [TEC 51.762](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm" \l "51.762) to include the ability for applicants to indicate their interest in an option whereby institutions with available seats in certain degree programs can view and access the applications of students requesting this option, who were denied admission into the program at the university of their choice, for the purposes of offering admission to qualified candidates.

**Effective Date:** Require the program to be established no later than academic year 2020-2021.

SECTION 7.  Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853, Education Code, as added by this Act, and Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act, apply beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year.

SECTION 8.  Not later than December 31, 2020, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall develop a recommended core curriculum that conforms to the requirements of Section 61.822, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 8.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.