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H.B. 9
133rd General Assembly

Bill Analysis

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Version: As Reported by House Higher Education *

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Jones and Sweeney

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SUMMARY

- Requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to develop an electronic equivalency management tool to assist in the transfer of coursework and degrees between state institutions of higher education.
- Requires each state university to notify the Chancellor, and provide a student with the Department of Higher Education's contact information, when the university refuses to accept and grant credit for certain general education coursework completed by the student at another state institution of higher education.
- Requires the Chancellor's Transfer Practices Advisory Committee to conduct a study of, and prepare a report about, rules regarding the transfer of college credit, and submit the report to the General Assembly.
- Requires each state university to review its student records every two years to determine if certain disenrolled students who did not complete a bachelor's degree are eligible for an associate degree.
- Specifies that a state university must inform any eligible students of their eligibility for an associate degree and that each university must report the findings of each review to the Chancellor.
- Requires a state institution of higher education, under certain circumstances, to waive an eligible student's tuition and general fees for a course that is necessary to complete a bachelor's degree.

* This analysis was prepared before the report of the House Higher Education Committee appeared in the House Journal. Note that the legislative history may be incomplete.

- Requires each state institution of higher education to include in its strategic completion plan required under continuing law a report about its collaboration through an initiative of the Chancellor to assist students who have some college experience, but no degree, in earning an associate degree, certificate, or credential.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Transfer of credits between state institutions

The bill requires that the Chancellor of Higher Education develop an electronic equivalency management tool to assist in the transfer of coursework and degrees between state institutions of higher education. The tool also must help minimize inconsistent judgement about the application of transfer credits and assist in allowing transfer credits to be applied in the same manner at each institution. Similarly, the tool must include the universal documentation of course and program equivalencies statewide and the tool must be incorporated into a website.¹

The bill also specifies that a state university must inform the Chancellor, and provide the Department of Higher Education's contact information to a student, if the university refuses to accept or grant credit for any general education coursework completed by the student at another state institution of higher education. However, that applies only if the coursework is subject to policies, procedures, and systems regarding the transfer of credit under continuing law.²

Additionally, the bill requires the Chancellor's Transfer Practices Advisory Committee to conduct a study of current rules regarding the transfer of college credit between state institutions of higher education and, within a year after the bill's effective date, submit to the General Assembly a report that includes the study's findings and any recommended changes to the rules.³

Review of student records for associate degree eligibility

The bill requires that, beginning two years after the bill's effective date, each state university must review its student records every two years to identify students who meet all of the following criteria:

1. The student disenrolled within the five years prior to the first review and within the prior two years for each subsequent review;

¹ R.C. 3333.16(B)(3).

² R.C. 3333.16(E).

³ R.C. 3333.16(F).

2. The student has been disenrolled for four or more semesters, including summer sessions;
3. The student did not complete a bachelor's degree;
4. The student has a 2.0 or higher grade point average on a 4.0 scale; and
5. The student completed at least 45 credit hours.

Each state university then must determine whether an identified student is eligible for an associate degree from that university and, if so, notify the student of that fact. Additionally, each state university must report to the Chancellor the findings of each review.

The Chancellor must adopt rules as necessary to implement this provision.⁴

Waiver of tuition and general fees for final course

The bill requires a state institution of higher education to waive an undergraduate student's tuition and general fees for a final course that is necessary to complete a bachelor's degree if the student meets certain eligibility criteria.

A student's eligibility for a waiver of tuition and general fees for a final course is connected to the student's actions in the student's "final year" at the state institution and the academic year immediately thereafter. Under the bill, a "final year" is the last academic year of full-time study that a bachelor's degree program is typically designed to require, as determined by the Chancellor. A student must receive a waiver of tuition and general fees if all of the following apply to the student:

1. The student was enrolled full-time, as defined by the Chancellor, in the student's final year;
2. The student was unable to enroll in the final course in the student's final year due to a lack of course availability or other circumstances beyond the student's control, as determined by the Chancellor;
3. The student paid all tuition and general fees and did not receive a refund for the courses in which the student enrolled in the student's final year at the beginning of that year;
4. The student registers for the final course in the next academic year in which the course is offered;
5. The student did not enroll in the maximum amount of credit hours in the student's final year, as determined by the state institution of higher education.

However, the bill specifies that the final course cannot be a general elective, and the student may not receive guaranteed or priority registration for the final course.

Additionally, the bill requires the Chancellor to adopt rules to implement this provision.⁵

⁴ R.C. 3345.351.

Approved bachelor's degree programs

Under continuing law, the Chancellor must approve or disapprove all new degrees and degree programs at state institutions of higher education, and state institutions are expressly prohibited from offering new degrees or programs without the Chancellor's approval.⁶

Generally, university branches, community colleges, state community colleges, and technical colleges offer two-year degrees or shorter programs. But, recently, the Chancellor was authorized to establish a program under which community colleges, technical colleges, and state community colleges may offer "applied bachelor's degree" programs.⁷

An "applied bachelor's degree" under continuing law is a bachelor's degree that is (1) based on a curriculum that incorporates theoretical and applied knowledge and skills in a specific technical field and (2) designed for an individual with an applied science associate degree to maximize the application of technical course credits toward the bachelor's degree.⁸ Since an "applied bachelor's degree" is a type of bachelor's degree, presumably the requirement to waive tuition and general fees for a final course also applies to "applied bachelor's degree" programs in the same manner as other bachelor's degree programs.

Report on institutional collaboration

The bill requires each state institution of higher education to include in its strategic completion plan required under continuing law a report about its collaboration with other institutions through an initiative of the Chancellor to assist students who have some college experience, but no degree, in earning an associate degree, certificate, or credential. The report must include information about the institution's efforts to assist students in attaining an associate degree, certificate, or credential while earning a bachelor's degree or using college credit transferred between institutions.⁹

Under continuing law, each of the institutions mentioned above must adopt an institution-specific strategic completion plan designed to increase the number of degrees and certificates awarded to students. The institution must update its plan at least once every two years and provide a copy of the updated plan to the Chancellor.¹⁰

According to the Chancellor's website, the Chancellor created a "Credit When It's Due" initiative in 2013 to assist eligible students who have some college experience, but no degree, with obtaining an associate degree through collaboration among state institutions of higher

⁵ R.C. 3345.481.

⁶ R.C. 3333.04(N) and 3333.07(C), neither in the bill.

⁷ R.C. 3333.051(A), not in the bill.

⁸ R.C. 3333.051(C)(1), not in the bill.

⁹ R.C. 3345.81(D).

¹⁰ R.C. 3345.81(B) and (C).

education. All of Ohio’s community colleges, state community colleges, technical colleges, and state universities participate in the initiative.¹¹

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	05-21-19
Reported, H. Higher Education	---

H0009-RH-133/ec

¹¹ <https://www.ohiohighered.org/CWID>.