

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2504
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Many students attending public higher education institutions today use the Internet to access course information. While some instructors choose to post their course syllabus on the Internet for student viewing, it is not a requirement. A syllabus posted on the Internet gives students convenient access to the course requirements and ensures constant availability of course information. An online course syllabus can also give students information about courses they are considering, prior to enrollment. Displaying course information in an online syllabus helps students make a more informed choice about future course registration.

C.S.H.B. 2504 requires each institution of higher education to post a syllabus, instructor's curriculum vitae, and available departmental budget report for each undergraduate classroom course on the institution's Internet website.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2504 amends the Education Code to require each institution of higher education to make available to the public on the institution's Internet website the following information for each undergraduate classroom course offered for credit by the institution:

- a syllabus that satisfies any standards adopted by the institution; provides a brief description of each major course requirement, including each major assignment and examination; lists any required or recommended reading; and provides a general description of the subject matter of each lecture or discussion;
- a curriculum vitae of each regular instructor that lists the instructor's postsecondary education, teaching experience, and significant professional publications; and
- if available, a departmental budget report of the department under which the course is offered, from the most recent semester or other academic term during which the institution offered the course.

C.S.H.B. 2504 requires the information above to be accessible from the institution's Internet website home page by use of not more than three links, searchable by keywords and phrases, and accessible to the public without requiring registration or use of a user name, a password, or another user identification. The bill requires the institution to make the required information available not later than the seventh day after the first day of classes for the semester or other academic term during which the course is offered. The bill requires the institution to continue to make the information available on the institution's Internet website until at least the fourth anniversary of the date on which the institution initially posted the information. The bill requires the institution to update the information as soon as practicable after the information changes.

C.S.H.B. 2504 requires the governing body of the institution to designate an administrator to be responsible for ensuring implementation of these provisions and authorizes the administrator to assign duties under these provisions to one or more administrative employees. The bill requires each institution of higher education, not later than January 1 of each odd-numbered year, to submit a written report regarding the institution's compliance with these provisions to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education. The bill authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules necessary to administer these provisions.

C.S.H.B. 2504 makes its provisions applicable beginning with the 2010 fall semester.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 2504 specifies that information an institution of higher education is required to make available on the institution's Internet website be for each undergraduate classroom course, rather than for each classroom course as in the original, offered for credit by the institution. The substitute specifies that the budget report required to be posted on the website be a departmental budget report of the department under which a course is offered, rather than a course budget report as in the original. The substitute requires the institution to continue to make the required information available on the website until at least the fourth, rather than fifth as in the original, anniversary of the date on which the information was posted.

C.S.H.B. 2504 adds a provision not in the original requiring each institution of higher education to submit a written report to certain elected officials regarding the institution's compliance with the substitute's provisions not later than January 1 of each odd-numbered year.

C.S.H.B. 2504 removes a provision in the original requiring the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules under which the coordinating board may impose a reasonable administrative penalty against the administrator of an institution that violates the provisions of the original and removes the requirement that the coordinating board adopt such rules not later than April 1, 2010. The substitute adds a provision not in the original authorizing the coordinating board to adopt rules necessary to administer the substitute's provisions.