

SENATE BILL 2385

By Burks

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 15 and Title 49, Chapter 7, relative to articulation and transfer.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 11 of this act as a new, appropriately designated part:

SECTION 2. As used in this act, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Council" means the statewide articulation and transfer council established pursuant to Section 4 of this act;

(2) "Independent postsecondary educational institution", "independent college" or "independent university" means a postsecondary institution that is a member of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association;

(3) "TBR" means the Tennessee board of regents;

(4) "THEC" means the Tennessee higher education commission;

(5) "TICUA" means the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association; and

(6) "UT board of trustees" means the board of trustees of the University of Tennessee system;

SECTION 3. The Tennessee higher education commission, the Tennessee board of regents, the board of trustees of the University of Tennessee system, the state board of education, the department of education and local boards of education shall jointly develop and implement articulation and transfer programs and agreements that facilitate and maximize the seamless transfer of credits between and among public secondary and postsecondary

educational institutions and that make the most efficient use of faculty, equipment, and facilities. Regionally accredited independent colleges and universities that are members of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association are encouraged to participate with public educational institutions in developing programs and agreements to expedite the transfer of students and credits between secondary and postsecondary educational institutions.

#### SECTION 4.

(a) The executive director of THEC, in consultation with THEC, TBR, the UT board of trustees, the state board, and the department shall establish a statewide articulation and transfer council that shall report to the executive director of THEC. All council recommendations and decisions shall be submitted to the executive director for presentation to THEC for approval.

(b) The council shall consist of members representing the four-year universities of TBR and the University of Tennessee system, the community colleges and technology centers of TBR, public elementary and secondary education, the consortium for cooperative innovative education established pursuant to § 49-15-103 and independent postsecondary education; provided, that at least one (1) independent postsecondary educational institution that is a member of TICUA elects to participate. Council membership shall provide for equitable representation of all educational institutions and levels. The executive director of THEC shall appoint a chair from among the membership.

(c) The council shall, with appropriate faculty consultation:

(1) Coordinate, oversee, and monitor the seamless articulation and transfer of credit between and among secondary schools, technology centers, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities. Such coordination,

oversight and monitoring shall build upon the work of the consortium for cooperative innovative education where applicable;

(2) Monitor the development of interinstitutional agreements between and among public schools, technology centers, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities to facilitate interaction, articulation, acceleration, and the efficient use of faculty, equipment, and facilities;

(3) Develop a statewide articulation and transfer agreement to govern the transfer of credits between and among educational institutions at all levels;

(4) Oversee the development of a statewide core curriculum for lower division course work that will be fully accepted in its entirety and creditable to the baccalaureate degree by all public and independent four-year colleges and universities. Such curriculum shall be comprised of specified general education courses and common degree program prerequisites;

(5) Oversee the development, implementation, and maintenance of a statewide course numbering system;

(6) Establish committees or advisory groups composed of secondary and postsecondary faculty members to determine course comparability, to facilitate articulation in subject areas, and as otherwise deemed necessary to carry out the council's duties and responsibilities;

(7) Approve common degree program prerequisites across program areas and course and credit-by-exam equivalencies, and establish passing scores and course and credit equivalencies for exams administered pursuant to accelerated programs including, but not limited to, the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College-Level Examination Program;

(8) Develop policies to align articulation and transfer policies established by educational institutions including, but not limited to, admissions criteria, student guidance and counseling, and grade forgiveness;

(9) Provide for end-of-course testing, if necessary and appropriate, for any course the council has approved as eligible for transfer to a postsecondary educational institution;

(10) Establish monitoring, compliance, and reporting systems based upon uniform data collection and reporting methods to facilitate and ensure statewide and institutional compliance with statewide articulation and transfer policies. Data collected shall include:

(A) The number of students enrolled in associate degree transfer programs;

(B) Each student's rate of progress through transfer programs;

(C) The number and percentage of students who complete associate degree transfer programs;

(D) The number of students earning associate degrees who transfer to four-year colleges and universities; and

(E) The number of credits earned, degrees awarded, and time to completion of degree for students who have previously transferred associate degrees;

(11) Establish an appeals process to resolve disagreements between transferring students and receiving educational institutions regarding the transfer and acceptance of credits earned at another institution;

(12) Ensure that all articulation and transfer policies and practices approved by the council are compliant with the rules and regulations established by all appropriate institutional accrediting agencies;

(13) Periodically, but at least annually, review articulation and transfer policies and make recommendations to the executive director of THEC who shall then make recommendations to the legislature for needed revisions; and

(14) Perform such other duties as may be provided by law or the executive director of THEC.

(d) The council shall synchronize its work with that of the consortium for cooperative innovative education to avoid duplication of effort and labor in coordinating secondary and postsecondary education. The council may delegate all or some of its responsibilities and work with respect to creating, developing and monitoring transfer and articulation pathways from secondary to postsecondary education to the consortium.

#### SECTION 5.

(a) THEC and the state board shall enter into a statewide articulation agreement that shall govern the articulation and transfer of credit between and among the state's public secondary and postsecondary educational institutions.

(b) The statewide articulation agreement shall, at a minimum:

(1) Guarantee the transfer of general education courses and common degree program prerequisites;

(2) Guarantee that every graduate of a community college awarded an associate of arts or an associate of science degree approved by the council for transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution shall be deemed to have met all general education and other core curriculum requirements and shall be granted admission to the upper division of any state public four-year college

or university, in accordance with each institution's general transfer admission requirements, except to a limited access program or a program that has audition or other specialized admission requirements, as approved by THEC;

(3) Provide that graduates awarded an associate of arts or an associate of science degree approved by the council for transfer and who transfer to a four-year college or university shall not be required to take any additional general education courses to fulfill baccalaureate degree requirements;

(4) Provide that graduates awarded an associate of arts or an associate of science degree approved by the council for transfer shall receive priority for admission to a state four-year university over out-of-state students;

(5) Guarantee the statewide articulation of appropriate career and technical education programs and workforce development programs and transfer of course credits between secondary schools and technology centers and community colleges;

(6) Provide for acceptance by postsecondary educational institutions of credits earned in accelerated programs such as dual enrollment and the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College-Level Examination programs;

(7) Guarantee the transfer of equivalent courses under the statewide course numbering system; and

(8) Establish a common college transcript.

## SECTION 6.

(a)

(1) In accordance with council policy, THEC shall develop, coordinate, and maintain a statewide course numbering system for postsecondary and dual

enrollment education in all public secondary and postsecondary educational institutions as a means to facilitate program planning and the transfer of students and course credits between and among secondary and postsecondary educational institutions.

(2)

(A) The development and ongoing maintenance of the statewide course numbering system, including determining course equivalencies, shall be accomplished with the assistance of appropriate committees that shall include faculty members representing public and participating independent postsecondary educational institutions.

(B) The development and implementation of the statewide course numbering system shall be prioritized as follows:

(i) All courses required for completion of associate of arts and associate of science degree programs approved by the council for transfer to four-year educational institutions. Common course numbers shall first be developed and assigned to the required general education courses, and then for the specified common course prerequisites;

(ii) All lower division courses; and

(iii) All undergraduate courses.

(b)

(1)

(A) The executive director of THEC, in collaboration with TBR and the UT board of trustees, shall appoint faculty committees representing all participating institutions to recommend the appropriate level for each

course, including postsecondary career and technical education courses, included in the statewide course numbering system.

(B) A course designated as an upper-division level course shall be characterized by a need for advanced academic preparation and skills that a student is unlikely to achieve without significant prior coursework.

(C) A course that is designated as a lower-division level course may be offered by any duly accredited community college.

(2) THEC shall approve the course level designations for all courses included in the statewide numbering system.

(3) The statewide course numbering system shall include the courses at the approved levels.

(c)

(1) Courses that have the same academic content and are taught by faculty with comparable credentials shall be considered equivalent courses and shall be given the same course designation.

(2) Equivalent courses shall be guaranteed to transfer to any educational institution participating in the statewide course numbering system.

(d)

(1) THEC shall provide that credits to be accepted by a receiving institution are appropriately evaluated to ensure that the faculty possess credentials that are comparable to those required by the accrediting body of the receiving institution.

(2) The award of credit by receiving institutions may be limited to courses that are entered in the statewide course numbering system.

(e) The course catalog and registration process for each postsecondary education institution shall include the courses at their designated levels and statewide course number.

(f)

(1) Every public and independent postsecondary educational institution that participates in the statewide course numbering system shall be fully accredited by the appropriate education accrediting body.

(2) Each educational institution that awards associate of arts or associate of science degrees approved by the council for transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution and each four-year postsecondary educational institution that admits graduates of such associate degree programs shall be appropriately accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools—Commission on Colleges.

(g) Regionally accredited independent colleges and universities that are members of TICUA are encouraged to participate in the statewide course numbering system.

## SECTION 7.

(a) THEC, in collaboration with TBR and the UT board of trustees and institutions, shall:

(1) Identify the degree programs offered by public colleges and universities and the postsecondary career and technical education programs offered by community colleges, technology centers, and local school boards;

(2) Identify those courses that meet general education requirements within each major area of study, which shall be identified by their statewide

course number. All public postsecondary educational institutions shall accept such general education courses;

(3) Identify all courses offered by colleges and universities and accepted for credit toward a degree and appropriately identify them in the statewide numbering system as either general education or required as a prerequisite for a degree; and

(4)

(A) Identify common degree program prerequisite courses and course substitutions for degree programs across all postsecondary education institutions. Common degree program prerequisites shall be offered and accepted by all postsecondary institutions, except in cases approved by THEC; and

(B) Develop a centralized database containing the list of courses and course substitutions that meet the prerequisite requirements for each postsecondary certificate, industry-based certification, and associate and baccalaureate degree program.

(b) TBR and the UT board of trustees shall identify their core curricula. The public technology centers, community colleges, and four-year universities shall work with the state board, the department and public schools and school districts to assure that high school curricula coordinate with the core curricula and to prepare students for postsecondary study.

(c) The core curricula for associate of arts and associate of science degree programs approved by the council for transfer to four-year postsecondary educational institutions shall be approved and adopted by THEC.

(d)

(1) THEC shall monitor and regulate the number of credits required to complete each baccalaureate degree program and shall establish a standard number of credits required to complete associate degree programs approved by the council for transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution.

(2) A baccalaureate degree program shall not require more than the number of credits established by THEC for degree completion without approval from THEC.

(3) An associate of arts and an associate of science degree shall require no more than sixty (60) semester hours of college credit, including thirty-nine (39) hours of general education coursework and twenty-one (21) hours of coursework that constitute prerequisites for a baccalaureate degree.

(e) The executive director of THEC shall appoint faculty committees representing community colleges and technology centers and public high school faculties to recommend criteria, including a standard program length, for each postsecondary career certificate program, diploma, and degree offered by a technology center or a community college.

#### SECTION 8.

(a) THEC shall develop and maintain a comprehensive, web-based system to provide information to students, advisers, and faculty regarding statewide articulation and transfer policies and requirements. This system shall include information relative to:

- (1) The statewide articulation and transfer council;
- (2) The statewide articulation agreement;
- (3) The statewide course numbering system;
- (4) Articulation policies and rules;

(5) General education courses and common degree program prerequisites;

(6) Course and degree requirements for all fields of study; and

(7) Planning and advising resources.

(b) Each educational institution shall designate an existing staff or faculty member to serve as a transfer counselor to advise students and administer articulation and transfer functions and operations.

#### SECTION 9.

(a) THEC shall appoint the members of the statewide articulation and transfer council by August 1, 2010.

(b) The statewide articulation and transfer council shall hold an organizational meeting by September 1, 2010.

(c) The statewide articulation agreement shall be developed and adopted by March 1, 2011.

(d) All public postsecondary educational institutions shall be prepared to and shall implement the full articulation and transfer of associate of arts and associate of science degrees approved by the council for transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution by the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year.

(e)

(1) The highest priority implementation category for the statewide course numbering system, relative to the transfer of approved associate degrees, shall be completed by the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year.

(2) All remaining lower division and undergraduate courses shall then be evaluated and incorporated into the system as provided in this part and the

statewide course numbering system shall be completed and fully implemented by the end of the 2012-2013 academic year.

SECTION 10. Members of the council and any committees created by the council shall not receive compensation for serving on the council or its committees, but shall be reimbursed for attendance at meetings in accordance with the comprehensive travel regulations promulgated by the commissioner of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter. All appropriate state agencies, including, but not limited to, THEC, TBR, the University of Tennessee system, the state board and the department, shall provide assistance to the council and its committees.

SECTION 11. Beginning in 2011, THEC shall submit a written report to the education committee of the senate and the education committee of the house of representatives on or before January 31, and July 31 of each year, on the status of statewide articulation and transfer of credit across educational institutions in Tennessee as provided in this part.

SECTION 12. THEC is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this part. All such rules and regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 5.

SECTION 13. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-7-202, is amended by deleting subsections (d), (e) and (f) in their entireties.

SECTION 14. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.