

AN ACT

relating to measures to increase degree completion rates and support students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at institutions of higher education.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 61.0905 to read as follows:

Sec. 61.0905. AGREEMENTS AND GRANTS TO INCREASE DEGREE COMPLETION RATES. (a) The board may, in partnership with institutions of higher education, enter into an agreement with nonprofit organizations to assist the board in identifying and implementing effective methods for increasing degree completion rates at institutions of higher education, including by:

(1) identifying and promoting innovative models, emerging technology platforms, and best practices for increasing degree completion rates in areas including:

(A) developmental education;

(B) financial assistance;

(C) student support services; and

(D) transfer or articulation agreements;

(2) providing data, research, and evaluation support to assist the board in assessing the effectiveness of pilot programs in increasing degree completion rates;

(3) coordinating ongoing local, state, federal, and

1 philanthropic initiatives to increase degree completion rates; and
2 (4) determining the extent of implementation of degree
3 completion rate improvement models across a region or the state and
4 the effectiveness of the models as student population increases.

5 (b) The board by rule may establish a grant program to fund
6 projects, including the award of a grant to a nonprofit
7 organization that enters into an agreement with the board under
8 this section, related to the improvement of degree completion
9 rates. If the board establishes a grant program under this section,
10 the board by rule shall prescribe the application procedure and
11 criteria for awarding a grant.

12 (c) Grants awarded by the board under this section may be
13 funded by:

14 (1) appropriations; and

15 (2) gifts, grants, or other donations.

16 (d) Not later than January 1, 2012, the board shall report
17 to the Joint Oversight Committee on Higher Education Governance,
18 Excellence, and Transparency a description of:

19 (1) the types of nonprofit organizations eligible for
20 a grant under this section;

21 (2) grants awarded under this section; and

22 (3) a survey of partnerships between other states and
23 nonprofit organizations to increase degree completion rates,
24 including identification of best practices.

25 (e) This section expires September 1, 2013.

26 SECTION 2. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding
27 Subchapter GG to read as follows:

1 SUBCHAPTER GG. TEXAS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND

2 MATHEMATICS (T-STEM) CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

3 Sec. 61.9791. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "STEM
4 program" means a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
5 program.

6 Sec. 61.9792. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. The board shall
7 establish and administer, in accordance with this subchapter and
8 board rules, the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and
9 Mathematics (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship program under which the
10 board provides a scholarship to a student who meets the eligibility
11 criteria prescribed by Section 61.9793.

12 Sec. 61.9793. ELIGIBLE STUDENT. (a) To receive an initial
13 scholarship under this subchapter, a student must:

14 (1) graduate from high school with a grade point
15 average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale in mathematics and
16 science courses;

17 (2) enroll in a STEM program at an eligible
18 institution; and

19 (3) agree to work no more than 15 hours a week for a
20 business participating in the STEM program.

21 (b) To continue to qualify for a scholarship under this
22 subchapter, a student must:

23 (1) remain enrolled in a STEM program at an eligible
24 institution;

25 (2) maintain an overall grade point average of at
26 least 3.0 on a four-point scale;

27 (3) complete at least 80 percent of all semester

1 credit hours attempted for each semester;

2 (4) complete at least 30 semester credit hours per
3 academic year; and

4 (5) work no more than 15 hours a week for a business
5 participating in the STEM program.

6 Sec. 61.9794. ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION. (a) To qualify as an
7 eligible institution under this subchapter, an institution must:

8 (1) be a public junior college or public technical
9 institute;

10 (2) admit at least 50 students into a STEM program each
11 academic year; and

12 (3) develop partnerships with business and industry
13 to:

14 (A) identify local employment needs in Science,
15 Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields; and

16 (B) provide part-time employment for students
17 enrolled in a STEM program.

18 (b) To maintain eligibility, beginning with the second year
19 following implementation of a scholarship program under this
20 subchapter, an institution must demonstrate to the board that at
21 least 70 percent of the institution's T-STEM Challenge Scholarship
22 graduates, within three months after graduation, are:

23 (1) employed by a business in a Science, Technology,
24 Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field; or

25 (2) enrolled in upper-division courses leading to a
26 baccalaureate degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and
27 Mathematics (STEM) field.

1 Sec. 61.9795. AMOUNT; FUNDING. (a) Subject to available
2 funding, the board shall award scholarships, with at least 50
3 percent of the amount awarded from private funds.

4 (b) An eligible student may receive a scholarship awarded
5 under this subchapter for not more than two academic years.

6 (c) The board may use any available revenue, including
7 legislative appropriations, and may solicit and accept gifts and
8 grants for purposes of this subchapter.

9 SECTION 3. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
10 shall award scholarships under Subchapter GG, Chapter 61, Education
11 Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2011-2012 academic
12 year. The coordinating board shall adopt the rules required by that
13 subchapter as soon as practicable after this Act takes effect.

14 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
15 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
16 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
17 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
18 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2910 was passed by the House on April 21, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 147, Nays 1, 1 present, not voting; and that the House concurred in Senate amendments to H.B. No. 2910 on May 28, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 148, Nays 0, 1 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2910 was passed by the Senate, with amendments, on May 25, 2011, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor