

SB 233 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

Action Date: 04/12/21

Action: Do pass with amendments and requesting referral to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Engrossed.)

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yeas: 5 - Dembrow, Gelser, Gorsek, Robinson, Thomsen

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Matt Perreault, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/1, 4/5, 4/7, 4/12

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires each public institution of higher education to adopt a common course numbering system for introductory and other lower division courses by the 2025-2026 academic year. Requires institutions to accept transfer of academic credit for each course in system. Directs Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to establish by rule common course numbering system by September 1, 2024. Establishes Transfer Council to develop recommendations on common course numbering system and advise HECC on implementation, compliance, and best practices. Requires Transfer Council to make initial recommendations on common course numbering system by March 15, 2022 and final recommendations by July 1, 2024. Specifies membership and responsibilities of Transfer Council and requires council to request nominations for membership from stakeholder organizations. Provides for initial terms of office for council members to be staggered. Allows Transfer Council to create subcommittees to advise council and specifies equal representation of faculty from universities and community colleges. Provides that recommendations of council or its subcommittees regarding common course numbering system require three-fifths majority for adoption. Allows two or more members of council or its subcommittees to submit minority report for alternative recommendations to HECC. Requires HECC to adopt rules based on the work and recommendations of Transfer Council, annually report to legislative committees, and provide staff and logistical support for Transfer Council. Requires council to annually report to HECC by September 1 on development of common course numbering system. Requires HECC to annually report by December 15 to interim legislative committees on common course numbering system and issues related to academic credit transfer. Requires HECC to report to interim legislative committees by December 15, 2021 on necessary action for electronic information system for foundational curricula and unified statewide transfer agreements. Sunsets December 31, 2022. Moves oversight of unified statewide transfer agreements and foundational curricula to Transfer Council and modifies requirements. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Inconsistency of course numbering for similar courses
- Requirement for transferring students to repeat similar courses
- Previous legislative action
- Purpose of common course numbering system
- Emphasis on common learning outcomes rather than content
- Cost to Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) of staffing Transfer Council
- Preservation of academic freedom
- Relationship with Oregon Transfer and Articulation Committee (OTAC)
- Authority of HECC to resolve disagreements and act without recommendations
- Need for further amendments in the next committee
- Clarification of timeline and participation from stakeholders

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EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND:

Students who transfer from one public college or university to another may be required to repeat certain courses, causing a buildup of excess academic credits, increasing student debt, and delaying graduation. In response, the Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 3521 (2011) which created the Transfer Student Bill of Rights and then House Bill 2525 (2015), which directed the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to convene a work group to study further policy options. In response to the HECC's findings and recommendations, House Bill 2998 (2017) required the public universities to meet regularly and work to standardize credit transfer requirements such as the foundational curricula (now called Core Transfer Maps) and unified statewide transfer agreements (now called Major Transfer Maps).

According to the HECC, 17 states currently require common course numbering among institutions of higher learning. This is intended to streamline the transfer of credits earned in lower-division, general education courses between institutions by minimizing or eliminating the need to repeat similar courses.

Senate Bill 233 A establishes the Transfer Council to develop recommendations for a common course numbering system among the state's public universities and community colleges, requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to establish a common course numbering system based on the work and recommendations of the council, incorporates management of foundational curricula and unified statewide transfer agreements, and mandates all public post-secondary educational institutions in Oregon to adopt the system by the 2025-2026 academic year.