

HCS SB 997 -- HIGHER EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Pearce

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 7 to 1.

DUAL CREDIT (Section 173.2500, RSMo)

This bill establishes a process for certifying an institution of higher education as an approved dual credit provider. To become an approved dual credit provider, an institution of higher education shall annually submit a written application to the Coordinating Board of Higher Education, as described in the bill.

A dual credit course may not be advertised or represented as being delivered by an approved dual credit provider unless an application is approved by the Coordinating Board.

DUAL SCHOLARSHIP ACT (Section 173.2505)

This bill establishes the "Dual Credit Scholarship Act," which provides funds, subject to appropriation, for eligible students enrolled in dual credit courses. The scholarship shall reimburse students for up to 50% of the tuition cost paid by the student, with a total amount not to exceed \$500 annually. To be eligible, a student shall: Be a United States citizen or permanent resident, be a Missouri resident, be enrolled in an approved dual credit program, have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4 point scale, and meet one or more requirements based on economic need, as described in the bill.

The bill creates the "Dual Credit Scholarship Fund," which consists of moneys appropriated by the General Assembly and private donations made to the fund.

15 TO FINISH ACT (Section 173.2510)

This bill establishes the "15 to Finish Act." The Coordinating Board, in cooperation with public institutions of higher education, shall develop policies that promote the on-time completion of degree programs by students. The policies shall include defining on-time completion, providing financial incentives for students on pace to graduate in no more than eight semesters, and reducing the number of credit hours required to earn a degree.

GUIDED PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS ACT (Section 173.2515)

This bill establishes the "Guided Pathways to Success Act." The Coordinating Board, in cooperation with public institutions of higher education, shall create a pilot program that will include at least two of the following: Majors organized into semester-by-semester sets of courses that lead to on-time completion; degree-based transfer pathways between participating institutions; available meta-majors, as defined in the bill; student commitment to a structured schedule of courses; and clear degree maps, proactive advising, as defined in the bill; and guarantees that required courses are available when needed by students.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT PILOT PROGRAM (Section 173.2520)

The Coordinating Board shall establish a concurrent enrollment pilot program, in which students are enrolled in courses at both a four-year and two-year participating institution at the same time and for which the coursework is officially recorded by both institutions. The purpose of the pilot program is to provide a broader range of academic and student support services while streamlining the path to degree completion.

WARTIME VETERAN'S SURVIVOR GRANT (Section 173.234)

This bill also reauthorizes the Wartime Veteran's Survivor Grant program, which provides higher education financial aid to the spouses and children of wartime veterans. Children and spouses of injured veterans shall be covered by this program if they were children or spouses within five years subsequent to the injury. This provision shall sunset on August 28, 2020, unless reauthorized by the General Assembly.

These provisions contain an emergency clause.

This provision is identical to SB 855 (2016).

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION WEBSITE (Section 173.005)

This bill will require the Coordinating Board for Higher Education to maintain and publish on its website a list of post-secondary educational institutions meeting requirements described within the bill.

This provision is similar to HB 2742 (2016).

POSTSECONDARY COURSE OPTIONS (Section 167.223)

Currently, public high schools may, in cooperation with public community colleges and public or private four-year colleges and universities, offer postsecondary course options to high school

students. This bill broadens community colleges to two-year colleges.

This provision is similar to HB 1610 (2016).

PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS (Section 105.1445)

On or before April 1, 2017, the governing body of each public employer shall adopt a policy that provides up-to-date, accurate, and complete information to each new employee regarding eligibility within 10 days of the start of employment. Public employers shall provide current employees with the same information on or before June 20, 2017.

This provision is substantially similar to HB 2576 (2016) and SB 1119 (2016).

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER ED WEBSITE (Section 170.035)

This bill requires the Department of Higher Education to develop, maintain, and operate a website containing information for public and private institutions of higher education in Missouri directing students to resources including, but not limited to, academic programs, financial aid, and how courses may be transferred from one institution of higher education to another. The information on the website must be made available to the public and must be accessible from various devices including, but not limited to, computers, tablets, and other electronic communication devices. Inclusion of institution information on the website is voluntary, and institutions of higher education may elect to have institutional information included on the website by notifying the department.

This provision is similar to HB Nos. 2234 & 1985 (2016).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say this bill passed 30 to 0 out of the Senate. It takes the highlights of blueprint for success and tries to implement them into statute. It builds on the work done for blueprint for success. The 15 to Finish program is not meant to be a set of requirements but rather best practices and not something that every institution would be expected to do.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Pearce; Leroy Wade, Missouri Department of Higher Education; and Paul Wagner, Council on Public Higher Education.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.