

Committee on Education

SB 7044 — Postsecondary Education

by Education Committee and Senators Diaz and Rodrigues

The bill establishes requirements related to postsecondary education post-tenure review and institution accreditation, provides additional transparency for student fees and textbooks and instructional materials, and modifies requirements relating to transfer of credit.

Post-Tenure Review

The bill authorizes the Board of Governors (BOG) to adopt a regulation requiring each tenured state university faculty member to undergo a comprehensive post-tenure review every five years and specifies considerations the regulation must address.

Accreditation

The bill requires, by September 1, 2022, the BOG and State Board of Education (SBE), as applicable, to identify and determine the accrediting agencies or associations recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) that are best suited to serve as an accreditor for public postsecondary institutions. The bill prohibits a public postsecondary institution from being accredited by the same accrediting agency or association for consecutive accreditation cycles. Programs with specific accreditation requirements are exempt from this requirement.

The bill requires, in the year following reaffirmation or fifth-year review, each public postsecondary institution seek and obtain accreditation from an accrediting agency or association identified by the BOG or SBE, respectively, before its next reaffirmation or fifth-year review date. A public postsecondary institution must initially seek regional accreditation and must provide to the BOG or SBE quarterly reports of its progress. If the institution is not granted candidacy status by any of the regional accrediting agencies or associations, the institution must seek accreditation by another agency or association recognized by the USDOE. The bill authorizes a public postsecondary institution to remain with its current accrediting agency or association if the institution is not granted candidacy by an accrediting agency or association before its next reaffirmation or fifth-year review date.

The bill also provides a cause of action for any public postsecondary institution, or nonpublic postsecondary education institution that receives state funds, that is negatively impacted by a retaliatory action by its accrediting agency or association.

The accreditation provisions in the bill expire on December 31, 2032.

Transparency of Instructional Materials and Student Fees

The bill requires additional information about textbooks and instructional materials that each Florida College System (FCS) institution and state university must post at least 45 days before

the first day of class for each term, to include syllabus information for general education core courses. The bill also establishes transparency requirements for an FCS institution and state university to prominently post all tuition and fees, and email to enrolled students any notice of a proposed change to tuition and fees. Any FCS institution or state university proposal or action to increase a fee is subject to an extraordinary vote by the applicable system governing board.

Course Information and Transfer of Credit

The bill revises the maintenance requirements and course information that must be included in the statewide course numbering system (SCNS). The bill requires the SBE to adopt rules governing the SCNS procedures, collection of course information, publication of course information, and faculty discipline committee reviews.

Additionally, the bill requires certain postsecondary education institutions receiving general education course credit in transfer to apply the credit to general education core course requirements and other general education requirements before applying as elective credit.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022, unless otherwise provided.

Vote: Senate 22-15; House 77-40