

## SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Date: April 7, 1998 Revised: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: Nonpublic Postsecondary Education - Common Course Numbering

	<u>Analyst</u>	<u>Staff Director</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>WM</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

### I. Summary:

The committee substitute:

- Requires nonpublic colleges to be represented in the membership of the articulation coordinating committee.
- Clarifies that accredited nonpublic colleges may be included in the common course numbering system.
- Allows the Department of Education to review equivalency of courses offered by nonpublic colleges in 1-year cycles, with the beginning of each cycle set by the department.
- Requires course-equivalency decisions to include faculty credentials and accreditation standards. Receiving institutions may not be required to accept credits unless courses are equivalent in content and faculty credentials as required by the accrediting association.
- Requires for-profit colleges to pay for the expense of review of courses for inclusion in the common course numbering system, while not-for-profit colleges receive the service for free.

This bill amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 229.551, 240.115, and 246.013.

### II. Present Situation:

#### Common Course Numbering System

The 1974 Legislature became concerned that the state's public colleges and universities were requiring transfer students to repeat courses unnecessarily. This concern led to the course numbering system in s. 229.551, F.S. Once a course is in the system, a student who transfers to another institution must receive credit for the course if the receiving institution has a course with the same number.

### **Articulation Coordinating Committee**

The articulation coordinating committee is also given responsibilities by s. 229.551, F.S. Among its duties is to oversee data collection and definitions, program lengths, communication and computation skills testing, and issues related to student transfer among all types of postsecondary education institutions, including transfer of courses from certificate-level vocational technical centers to associate-in-science degree-level programs at community colleges.

### **Nonpublic Postsecondary Schools and Colleges**

Nonpublic postsecondary education institutions may be schools or colleges depending upon whether they grant diplomas (or certificates) or degrees. Only two nonpublic postsecondary education institutions currently participate in the common course numbering system. Both are two-year colleges. No nonpublic schools participate, although 38 nondegree-granting *public* technical centers do.

Opinions differ about whether the law allows nonpublic, nondegree-granting vocational schools to participate in the common course numbering system. In s. 246.013, F.S., the 1986 Legislature authorized nonpublic colleges and schools to participate if they were licensed *and* accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This provision no longer has any practical meaning because SACS-accredited colleges are not licensed, and licensed schools cannot be SACS-accredited. The division of SACS that used to accredit vocational schools has broken away and is now a national accrediting body called the Council on Occupational Education (COE).

The 1994 Legislature changed the accreditation requirement so that any institution accredited by a member of the Council on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation could participate. That organization is now defunct.

Another provision in s. 246.013, F.S., allows *colleges* (but not schools) to participate if they are exempt from licensure because of their accreditation. Most nonpublic colleges must pay the Department of Education for the expense of the review, but the 23 nonpublic colleges that are eligible to participate in the Florida resident access grant program (FRAG, s. 240.605, F.S.) are exempt from payment. Colleges eligible to participate in FRAG must be SACS-accredited, nonprofit, baccalaureate degree-level colleges that are chartered in Florida. Colleges may also be SACS-accredited -- but may not participate in FRAG -- if they are for-profit colleges, if they are 2-year colleges, or if they are chartered in another state.

From 1974 until 1986, six colleges that are now eligible for FRAG were included in the common course numbering system. None is now included.

### **Participation in the Common Course Numbering System**

All 10 public universities, the 28 public community colleges, 38 public technical centers, and two nonpublic 2-year colleges participate in the common course numbering system. In 1996, the system maintained course information and identifying numbers and prefixes for more than 120,000

courses. It was maintained by 164 faculty discipline committees, 78 institutional coordinators, four full-time Department of Education employees and an administrative assistant.

### **Articulation Agreement**

In s. 240.115, F.S., Florida's statewide articulation agreement guarantees that a student who earns an associate in arts degree from a community college may enroll in the upper division of a baccalaureate degree program at a state university. It also requires full credit-transfer among "regionally accredited" institutions that participate in the common course numbering system, for courses that are equivalent.

### **Regional and National Accreditation**

Many nonpublic postsecondary education institutions in Florida and all public technical centers are nationally accredited, not regionally accredited. The following accredit undergraduate Florida schools or colleges and are national accreditation agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education: the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, the Council on Occupational Education, the Accrediting Commission for Career Schools and Colleges of Technology, the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education and Schools, the Distance Education and Training Council, the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges, and the Transnational Accrediting Council of Colleges and Schools.

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The committee substitute requires membership on the articulation coordinating committee to include representatives of nonpublic postsecondary education institutions. Faculty committees established to review courses for equivalency to others in the common course designation and numbering system are required to include faculty from nonpublic postsecondary education institutions.

The bill will require the articulation agreement to guarantee transfer of credit among public and nonpublic postsecondary education institutions that participate in the common course numbering system. It adds a requirement that faculty credentials as well as course content will be reviewed before a course is added to the system. A receiving institution will not be required to accept student credit unless the credit was generated in courses for which the faculty possess credentials that are comparable to those required by the accrediting association of the receiving institution.

The committee substitute will remove the requirement that authorizes only regionally accredited colleges and schools to participate and will authorize participation by any college accredited by any of the associations recognized by the United States Department of Education. It removes any question about whether schools, as opposed to colleges, may participate. Only nonpublic colleges may participate.

Public institutions are encouraged to develop "transfer agreements that facilitate the transfer of credits between public and nonpublic postsecondary institutions."

If a nonpublic college requests to be included in the common course numbering system, submits the required information and pays its fees, the bill sets a 360-day deadline by which the Department of Education must decide whether its courses are equivalent to other courses with the same number. It does not say what will happen if the deadline is not met, and it authorizes the department to establish a due date for all new requests. Any requests submitted after that date may be reviewed in the next year's cycle.

The provision is deleted that exempts nonpublic colleges from paying for the expense of including their courses in the common course numbering system if they are eligible to participate in the Florida resident access grant program. Instead, all not-for-profit colleges are exempt from fees, while for-profit colleges must incur the expense.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Nonpublic, not-for-profit colleges will be eligible to have their courses included in the common course numbering system for free.

C. Government Sector Impact:

If many nonpublic schools and colleges requested to be included in the common course numbering system, the department would have a significant workload increase and could charge for the expense only if the college was a for-profit institution. The department estimates that it costs several thousand dollars for a new institutional review. However, the

State Board of Independent Colleges and the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission estimate that the number of nonpublic colleges requesting inclusion would be few.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission recommended the expansion of the common course numbering system to college-credit granting nonpublic institutions.

**VIII. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.

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