

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 205
Appropriations

(Delegate Healey, *et al.*)

Higher Education - Academic Forgiveness Policy - Established

This bill requires each institution of higher education that receives State funds to develop and implement an academic forgiveness policy by August 1, 2019. The academic forgiveness policy must disregard an applicant's unsatisfactory or failing grades earned at a prior institution seven or more years before the applicant submits an application, if the applicant chooses to participate in the policy. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Public institutions of higher education can implement an academic forgiveness policy using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local community colleges can implement an academic forgiveness policy using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Other higher education institutions that receive State funds are also subject to the bill, including independent institutions receiving Joseph A. Sellinger Program funds, institutions receiving State student financial aid (*e.g.*, private career schools), and any institution that receives a capital grant.

Maryland Policies

According to University System of Maryland [policy](#), in general, a student who has earned 12 or more semester hours of credit that are applicable for credit at the receiving institution must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, for all attempted college work. Students who have 29 or fewer credits must also meet the minimum qualifications for entering freshmen, which includes requirements for high school GPA and courses completed. At the discretion of the receiving institution, transfer students with special circumstances may be admitted on the basis of criteria other than prior academic performance. Up to 15% of the institution's entering transfer cohort may comprise such exceptions.

Morgan State University's transfer [policy](#) states that a student must be "in good standing" at the last institution attended. St. Mary's College of Maryland's website does not [list](#) a specific GPA requirement for transfer students.

Community colleges are open enrollment institutions and will generally accept most students with a high school degree or its equivalent for enrollment.

Transfers between institutions of higher education in Maryland are covered by the [Maryland Student Transfer Policy](#), which governs the transfer of credits and other requirements.

Texas – Academic Fresh Start

Texas has a law called "[academic fresh start](#)" for Texas residents for courses taken 10 or more years prior to the planned enrollment date. Under the Texas program, if an applicant to a public institution of higher education chooses to invoke the "academic fresh start" at the time of application, the courses taken 10 or more years ago (1) cannot be used to fulfill new prerequisite requirements; (2) cannot be counted toward a degree; and (3) will not be counted in any future GPA calculations. Although the old course work is not counted toward a student's GPA, the old grades remain on a student's records. It is an all or nothing option; a student cannot choose to keep some courses and have others ignored. Under the program, a student's eligibility for financial aid does not reset. Students admitted under this policy may be under academic probation.

Additional Comments: Nonprofit higher education institutions that receive State funds can likewise implement an academic forgiveness policy with existing resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 663 of 2018 received a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee, but was subsequently withdrawn.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Maryland Higher Education Commission; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510