

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1451 (Delegate Heller)
Appropriations and Ways and Means

Task Force to Study Standardizing Introductory Courses in Higher Education in Maryland

This bill establishes a task force to study teaching standards, testing, and accountability in freshman and sophomore level higher education courses and make recommendations about the feasibility of standardizing the curriculum for the first two years of college in order to • facilitate the transfer of students from community colleges to four-year institutions; • improve the transferability of credits between institutions; and • lower the cost of textbooks. The task force has to consult with academic advisors, textbook publishers, psychometric professionals, and any other professionals with relevant information. Staff support will be provided by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. A final report is due by September 30, 2009.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2008 and sunsets November 1, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. MHEC could staff the task force with existing personnel and resources.

Local Effect: Community college personnel appointed to the task force could participate without materially affecting community college budgets.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: The MHEC web site offers a “Student Guide to Transfer” that provides information about transfers among Maryland institutions and recommendations to ensure that earned credits are not lost as a result of transfers. The guide notes that Maryland’s public colleges and universities follow statewide policies that make transfers among the institutions easier. For example, courses designated as meeting general education requirements at any public institution of higher education in Maryland are likewise applicable to the general education requirements at any other public institution in Maryland. In addition, ARTSYS, an information system developed and maintained by the University System of Maryland, informs students and advisors at community colleges about the transferability of each community college course. ARTSYS is available at community college campuses and on the Internet. The MHEC transfer guide also suggests that students seek advice from academic advisors and campus transfer coordinators at their schools in order to make transfers as smooth as possible.

During the 2007 session, the General Assembly considered several bills that would have addressed college textbooks costs. One of these bills, House Bill 204, was amended to require a legislative study of textbook prices, and the bill was signed into law as Chapter 295. In response to the legislation, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) conducted a survey of college bookstore and textbook adoption policies and practices at higher education institutions. DLS also organized a briefing that took place on January 10, 2008 and included testimony from DLS, college students, faculty, on-campus and off-campus bookstores, textbook publishers, and Maryland Public Interest Research Group. Legislators from the education committees and subcommittees in the Senate and House were invited to attend the briefing and had the opportunity to ask questions to presenters.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Higher Education Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2008
mll/rhh

Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

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