OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

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Office of Research and Drafting

Legislative Budget Office

S.B. 461
(l_136_3258-9)
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Pending in Senate Higher Education

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Cirino

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SUMMARY

Civics centers

- Makes various changes to the law regarding the "civics centers" ("centers") established at the Ohio State University, Miami University, Cleveland State University, Wright State University, and the University of Toledo.

Governance

- Entitles each center to all the rights and privileges of a college of the center's university.
- Requires each center's director to report directly to the president of the center's university and consult with the university provost.
- Permits removal of a center director only through a recommendation from the university president and the consent of the university's board of trustees.

Hiring

- Prohibits faculty outside of a center from having a role in center faculty promotion and tenure, except with the center director's consent.
- Requires a center director to submit any recommendations on center faculty promotion and tenure to the university board of trustees for approval.
- Clarifies that a center director's authority to manage recruitment and employment at the center includes, at a minimum, determining the salary, tenure, rank, and term of contract of center faculty and staff.
- Entitles a director to final administrative authority over salary decisions of the center, subject to direct review and approval for consistency with general university practices by the board of trustees.

Funding

- Requires each university housing a center to provide adequate annual financial resources to the center to achieve its mission.
- For the first four fiscal years following the bill's effective date, prohibits the sum of the annual money transferred from the university to the center and the annual appropriation from the state to the center from being more than the highest annual appropriation provided to the center in a main operating appropriation act.
- Requires a university's center to receive all tuition and other revenue from all courses and academic programs offered by the center, subject only to charges applied uniformly to all other academic units of the university.
- If a university uses only a centralized budget system without responsibility center management or incentive-based budgeting, entitles a center to receive a minimum of 80% of tuition and all other revenue from all of the courses and academic programs it offers.

American civic literacy courses

- Requires the Ohio Civics Board to adopt guidelines, standards, and policies for American civic literacy courses and a standard, uniform, and model curriculum for the course.
- Beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year, requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to follow the Board's guidelines, standards, and policies when approving an American civic literacy course.
- Requires the Board to review American civic literacy courses upon the Chancellor's request.
- Beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, requires that, in each state institution of higher education that has a center, the center must be the exclusive provider of any American civic literacy course in that institution, except that the center can designate another department or college at the institution as a provider.

Ohio Civics Board

- Permits the Ohio Civics Board to hire, fix the compensation of, and remove a director and a number of employees as the Board determines necessary.
- Requires the Board to, in consultation with the Chancellor, determine an annual amount to be contributed by each center to support the Board's operations and biennially identify funding sources to fund that amount.

Bill title

- Entitles the bill the Strengthening Ohio Civics Act.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Civics centers

The bill makes various changes to the law regarding the centers for civics, culture, and society established at the Ohio State University, Miami University, and Cleveland State University, the center for civics, culture, and workforce development at Wright State University, and the institute of American constitutional thought and leadership at the University of Toledo. For the purpose of this analysis, each is referred to as a center.

Governance

The bill clearly affirms that each university housing a center is governed by the university's board of trustees. It further entitles each center to all the rights and privileges of a college of the center's university.[1]

The bill also adjusts the management of the center director. Instead of reporting directly to the provost or the president as under current law, each center's director instead reports directly to the president of the center's university and consults with the university provost under the bill. Further, the university president may consider removal of the center director and make a recommendation to the university board of trustees. A director may be removed only with the consent of the board of trustees, based on the president's recommendation.[2]

Under continuing law, each center director must submit an annual report on the center's achievement, opportunities, challenges, and obstacles to the university board of trustees and the General Assembly. The bill permits a center to, at the director's request, report to the board of trustees in person.[3]

Hiring

The bill prohibits faculty outside of a center from having a role in center faculty promotion and tenure, except with the consent of the center director. The director must submit any recommendations on faculty promotion and tenure to the university board of trustees for approval.[4]

The bill expands on a center director's authority to recruit and hire center faculty and staff. In addition to a director's existing "sole and exclusive authority" to manage this process, the bill expounds on this to include the authority to include "all aspects" of the recruitment and hiring process. It also adds "to hire" to the ability to extend offers for employment to faculty and staff. The bill outlines a minimum list of actions covered under a director's personnel management authority, including determining salary, tenure, rank, and term of contract of all

[1] R.C. 3335.39(A)(1), 3339.06(A)(1), 3344.07(A)(1), 3352.16(A)(1), and 3364.07(A)(1).

[2] R.C. 3335.39(E)(2), 3339.06(E)(2), 3344.07(E)(2), 3352.16(E)(2), and 3364.07(E)(1).

[3] R.C. 3335.39(F), 3339.06(F), 3344.07(F), 3352.16(F), and 3364.07(H).

[4] R.C. 3335.39(B)(1), 3339.06(B)(1), 3344.07(B)(1), 3352.16(B)(1), and 3364.07(F).

faculty and staff. The bill also entitles a director to final administrative authority over salary decisions of the center, subject to direct review and approval for consistency with general university practices by the university's board of trustees. The bill permits a director to seek advice from faculty outside of the center but prohibits requiring a director to do so.[5]

Funding

The bill requires that, regardless of whether a university allocates or distributes tuition or other revenue to its academic units, and notwithstanding any university budget allocation methodology to the contrary, a university's center receive all tuition and other revenue from all courses and academic programs offered by the center, subject only to charges applied uniformly to all other academic units of the university. However, if a university uses a centralized budget system without responsibility center management or incentive-based budgeting, a center must receive a minimum of 80% of tuition and all other revenue from all of the courses and academic programs it offers. The tuition and other revenue that a center receives cannot be considered part of the financial resources distributed to the center by the university.

The bill further requires each university to provide adequate annual financial resources to its center to achieve the center's mission, as determined by the center director in consultation with the university provost. For the first four years following the bill's effective date, the bill prohibits the sum of the annual money transferred from the university to the center plus the annual appropriation from the state to the center from being greater than the highest annual appropriation provided by the state to the center in a main operation appropriation act. The tuition and other revenue that a center receives from its courses and academic programs cannot be considered part of these financial resources. In other words, the adequate financial resources a university must provide a center to achieve its mission is in addition to any tuition or other revenue that a center receives from its courses and academic programs.

The bill clarifies that the provisions regarding center funding do not preclude a center from applying for external funding opportunities or negotiating overhead charges, as jointly determined by the center director and either the president or provost of the university. Continuing law prohibits a university from charging or assessing overhead or indirect fees, costs, expenses, or charges to a center.[6]

Endowments

The bill requires the board of trustees of each state university that has a center to establish an endowment for the sole use and benefit of the center. The board may place funds from whatever source, including gifts, donations, grants, and university funds, in the endowment.[7]

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[5] R.C. 3335.39(E)(3), 3339.06(E)(3), 3344.07(E)(3), 3352.16(E)(3), and 3364.07(G)(1).

[6] R.C. 3335.39(B)(2) to (4), 3339.06(B)(2) to (4), 3344.07(B)(2) to (4), 3352.16(B)(2) to (4), and 3364.07(A)(2) to (4).

[7] R.C. 3345.162.

Purpose of the institute at the University of Toledo

The bill revises the purpose of the institute at the University of Toledo by eliminating the purpose to form future leaders of the legal profession. The remaining purpose of the institute, creating and disseminating knowledge about American constitutional thought through research, scholarship, teacher, collaboration, and mentorship, is unchanged.[8]

American civic literacy courses

The bill requires the Ohio Civics Board to adopt guidelines, standards, and policies for American civic literacy courses offered to satisfy the course requirement under existing law, including those offered under the College Credit Plus Program. The Board must also adopt a standard, uniform, and model curriculum for the American civic literacy course for use, exclusive or otherwise, in state institutions of higher education.

Beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year, the bill requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to follow the Board's guidelines, standards, and policies when approving an American civic literacy course. The Chancellor may also request the Board to review a course to ensure it meets the course requirements under continuing law and the Board's guidelines, standards, and policies. The Board must make recommendations to the Chancellor on whether a reviewed course may be offered by an institution to meet the course requirement. The Chancellor must consider the Board's recommendation when determining whether a reviewed course meets those requirements.

Also beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, the bill requires that, in each state institution of higher education that has a center for civics, culture, and society, the center must be the exclusive provider of any American civic literacy course in that institution. The bill entitles the center providing the course to the tuition, state share of instruction (SSI) funds, and all other standard revenues associated with that course in the institution. The bill permits a center to designate providers of the course on terms and conditions determined by the center director. A center may only designate providers that are other departments or colleges within the institution.[9]

Ohio Civics Board

The bill permits the Ohio Civics Board to hire, fix the compensation of, and remove a director and the number of employees as the Board determines necessary.

The bill requires the Board, in consultation with the Chancellor of Higher Education, to determine an annual amount to be contributed by each center to support the Board's operations. Each biennium, the Board and Chancelor must identify funding sources to fund that amount,

[8] R.C. 3364.07(A)(1).

[9] R.C. 3345.382(F) and 3345.58(C).

which may include state appropriations, payments made by each of the centers, or other sources.[10]

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	06-22-26

ANSB0461(L3258-9)-136/ks

[10] R.C. 3345.58.