

Date of Hearing: March 27, 2012

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Marty Block, Chair
AB 1955 (Block) – As Introduced: February 23, 2012

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: campus law enforcement agency and student liaison.

SUMMARY: Requires the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees and requests the University of California (UC) Board of Regents, to designate an individual at each campus to serve as a liaison between campus law enforcement agencies and students exercising rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the California Constitution.

EXISTING LAW prohibits the UC Regents, CSU Trustees, and the governing board of any community college district from making or enforcing a rule subjecting a student to disciplinary sanction solely on the basis of conduct that is speech or other communication that is protected by specified provisions of the United States or California Constitutions.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Background. On December 14, 2011, the Assembly Higher Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee held a joint oversight hearing into the policies, procedures, and responses of campus police to recent student protests, including UC Davis police officers' use of pepper spray on nonviolent student protesters on November 18, 2011. Numerous investigations are underway that can inform campuses' responses to future student protests. One theme that emerged from the hearing was the lack of communication between members of the university police departments, the university administrators that oversee those departments, and the students and demonstrators protesting on campus.

Need for this bill. According to the author, this bill "... opens the lines of communication between university campuses and student protestors by mandating the appointment of an individual who would serve as a liaison between campus police departments and students who are exercising their first amendment rights."

CSU and UC policies. CSU has systemwide policies and guidelines related to campus demonstrations, including activation requests, operational plans, reporting requirements, arrest procedures, and "use of force" guidelines. UC does not appear to have detailed system-wide policies; however, as mentioned previously, UC is conducting a review of campus police policies that is expected to result in best practices recommendations for policing protests. Further, the Chairs of the December 14, 2011, hearing requested UC develop a systemwide policy that offers a clear and consistent definition of the "use of force," that clarifies the command when "use of force" is authorized, and that clearly outlines the responsibility and accountability of both the campus administration and the campus police.

Current practices. CSU campuses do not appear to have liaisons as envisioned in this bill. At UC campuses, only San Diego appears to require a liaison who is responsible for coordinating with its Office of Student Affairs to ensure health and safety.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

National Association of Social Workers

Opposition

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