

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Jose Medina, Chair
AB 2056 (Eduardo Garcia) – As Amended March 28, 2016

SUBJECT: Cal Grant Program: graduation verification

SUMMARY: Requires, for the purposes of the Cal Grant Awards Program, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to allow a school district to electronically submit high school graduation verification for former grade 12 students as many times as necessary to ensure information is transmitted and received, and requires high schools to verify graduation by October 1 of the academic year immediately following the students graduation.

EXISTING LAW: Authorizes CSAC to require verification of high school graduation or equivalent to be submitted electronically for all grade 12 pupils who graduated from public schools in the prior academic year, except for pupils that have opted out. Establishes legislative intent that high schools verify graduation of their pupils in time to meet the applicable deadline (December 31 of the academic year immediately following the date of application).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: To apply for a Cal Grant award, students (or parents of dependent students) are required to: (1) complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and, (2) file a verified GPA with CSAC. In 2013, the Education Trust-West (ETW) issued a report finding that only 54% of California's 12th graders completed a FAFSA in 2012, and only 50% completed both steps of the requirements to apply for a Cal Grant by the March 2nd deadline. ETW found that one high-impact practice to encourage financial aid applications employed by districts is to submit GPAs electronically for all students. ETW research indicates that districts that piloted using electronic GPA verification and other data-driven practices found a 15% increase in Cal Grant completion. In 2014, AB 2160 (Ting), Chapter 679, required all high schools to submit a GPA for all high school seniors to CSAC electronically (electronic submission occurs through the CSAC WebGrants system).

Building upon the foundation of AB 2160, last year AB 1091 (Garcia), Chapter 637, Statutes of 2015, authorized CSAC to require electronic submission of graduation verification data (an eligibility condition of Cal Grant) for students and established legislative intent that high schools verify graduation of their pupils in time to meet the applicable deadline. The bill further established legislative intent that CSAC provide to high schools and school districts a list of all high school pupils who have not completed a FAFSA or Dream Act application.

According to the author, it is not currently a statutory requirement for school districts to verify high school graduation on behalf of their students. This bill is intended to ensure that school districts understand their responsibility to verify high school graduation. This bill is intended to provide another step forward to removing barriers for students and helping students qualify and access financial aid.

According to CSAC, current practice allows a high school to resubmit graduation verification information as many times as necessary to ensure CSAC is in receipt of this data. This portion is consistent with current CSAC operations. The change to require high schools to submit

graduation verification data by October 1 of the academic year is intended to provide guidance to school districts; the current due date is December 31 of the year following high school graduation.

Suggested amendments. Consistent with the author's intent, committee staff recommends the following amendments:

(b) If the commission requires verification of high school graduation or its equivalent pursuant to paragraph (1), then ~~both of the following shall occur:~~

~~(1) The commission shall allow a school district to submit the verification as many times as necessary to ensure that each pupil's graduation information is transmitted and received.~~

~~(2) the commission should provide guidance to H~~high schools or high school districts shall to ensure that high schools and high school districts verify the graduation of their pupils as soon as possible upon a pupils graduation, including for pupils' whom graduate during the summer following the grade 12 academic year, and no later than October 1August 31 of the academic year immediately following the pupils' graduation.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on File

Opposition

None on File

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