

Date of Hearing: March 27, 2012

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Marty Block, Chair

AB 2202 (Block) – As Amended: March 20, 2012

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: expanding access.

SUMMARY: Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to conduct a study and make recommendations to the Legislature, by January 1, 2014, regarding opportunities for expanding access to postsecondary education in underserved areas, and requires the study to consider the possible expansion of distance education, the establishment of off-campus centers and new campuses, regional partnerships with existing postsecondary education providers, and local admissions guarantees.

EXISTING LAW establishes the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) as the coordinating entity for postsecondary education in California, declares Legislative intent that sites for new public postsecondary institutions or branches not be authorized unless recommended by CPEC, and requires that proposals for new colleges or programs be forwarded to CPEC for review. In the 2011-12 Budget Act, however, Governor Brown vetoed funding for CPEC, citing the agency's ineffectiveness in higher education oversight. CPEC ceased operations in the Fall of 2011. Currently functions related to campus growth and planning are not being performed by any higher education coordinating entity the State of California.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill has been keyed non-fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS: Purpose of this bill. According to the author, California's population is expected to grow by 7 million – 11 million new residents by 2025. Yet, our state's impacted higher education infrastructure has neither the space nor the resources to meet future needs. Difficult economic times coupled with growing market demand for higher education has seen California's public colleges and universities turning away tens of thousands of students. The author contends that more should be done to ensure that California's higher education system reaches those who are being underserved. This bill will direct the LAO to conduct a study of how best to expand postsecondary education access in this state. Particular emphasis will be made to studying distance education, the establishment of off-campus centers, regional partnerships and other strategies that the LAO finds to have merit.

A bill may not be necessary. The LAO operates as the non-partisan fiscal and policy advisor to the Legislature and the LAO staff routinely provides assistance and resources for Legislative offices upon verbal and written request. Legislation is not necessary to accomplish the reporting requirements contained in this bill. However, as the author notes, the LAO has recently reported on the budget reductions in higher education and the resulting impact at many CSU campuses. This bill requires specific follow-up to those findings and directs the LAO to focus on opportunities for expanding access that leverage existing resources. The author notes that while the LAO can conduct studies without a legislative mandate, this bill will ensure that this vital work is appropriately focused and completed in a timely fashion.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on File

Opposition

None on File

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