

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 2419 (Jones) – As Introduced February 19, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: The New University of California

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the New University of California (New UC) as a segment of public higher education to provide college credit and baccalaureate and associate degrees to any person capable of passing appropriate examinations. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the New UC under the administration of the New UC Board of Trustees (BOT) to provide no instruction, and with the limited mission of issuing college credit and baccalaureate and associate degrees to any person capable of passing the examinations administered by the New UC.
- 2) Provides that the goal of the New UC is for its students to obtain the requisite knowledge and skills to pass the examinations administered by the university from any source, such as massive open online courses, the student deems appropriate.
- 3) Provides that when the student feels that he or she is ready to take an examination, the student shall pay the examination fee, present acceptable identification at the examination, and, upon passage of the examination, receive academic credit. Requires the New UC to issue the appropriate degree when a student receives sufficient academic credit.
- 4) Provides that New UC may contract with qualified entities for the formulation of peer-reviewed course examinations the passage of which would demonstrate that the student has the knowledge and skill necessary to receive college credit for that course.
- 5) Provides that New UC may charge students a fee for the taking of examinations and those fees charged may not exceed the amount necessary to recover the costs of administering the examination.
- 6) Provides the New UC may apply for accreditation to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), or a successor body, or any other appropriate accrediting entity.
- 7) Provides that the New UC BOT shall authorize a Chancellor to grant baccalaureate and associate degrees in fields of study they deem appropriate. In selecting the fields in which degrees are to be awarded by the university, the board of trustees shall consult the labor needs forecasts issued by the Employment Development Department.
- 8) Provides that the New UC BOT shall include 11 voting members, as follows:
  - a) Five ex officio members: the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Speaker of the Assembly, or their designees; and the person named by the BOT to serve as the Chancellor; and,

- b) Six members of the public appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by a majority of the membership of the Senate. Provides that the terms of two of the members of the public appointed shall commence on July 1, 2017, and terminate on July 1, 2019. The terms of two of the members of the public appointed shall commence on July 1, 2017, and terminate on July 1, 2021. The terms of two of the members appointed shall commence on July 1, 2017, and terminate on July 1, 2023. Thereafter, the terms of all of the members of the public appointed under this paragraph shall be six years.
- 9) Provides that members of the BOT shall receive no salary for their service, but shall be reimbursed for the expenses they incur while carrying out their duties.
- 10) Provides that all meetings of the board of trustees shall be subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.
- 11) Provides that the Chancellor of the New UC shall be the chief executive officer of the university. The chancellor shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the BOT. The chancellor shall be authorized to employ and fix the salaries of, employees to assist him or her in carrying out the functions of the university.

**EXISTING LAW:** Establishes California's public higher education segments as the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) with the goals of providing access to education for all qualified Californians, quality teaching and programs to provide students the opportunity to address issues central to their full development as responsible citizens and educational equity through diverse and representative student body and faculty. Each of the segments has distinct missions and responsibilities, but also is required to collaborate and coordinate toward California's common educational goals. (Education Code Section 66000 et seq.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose of this bill.* According to the author, "for centuries and even for millennia, special knowledge has resided and was created in the minds and libraries of institutions of higher learning throughout the world. Students had to travel to those institutions in order to obtain that knowledge. When the institution determined that the student had obtained the requisite knowledge and skills a certificate in the form of a college degree was awarded to the student.

The advent of the Internet has changed the whole concept of learning. Nearly all of the special knowledge of the world is now or is quickly becoming available to anyone with access to the internet. What is sorely lacking is an institution that specializes in certifying competencies - certifying that a student is sufficiently knowledgeable to be deserving of a college degree. This new type of institution also needs to be of sufficient stature to provide legitimacy to the degree awarded and so it needs to be created and operated by the state as another segment of public higher education.

There is no such institution under current law although most, if not all, public institutions have a hint of it in the form of credit by exam, such as Advanced Placement. This new institution would essentially be credit by exam on steroids."

*Is existing credit by examination and distance learning efforts insufficient?* All three segments currently have policies providing for awarding alternative credit and making distance education available to students for degree credit. According to a 2010 Legislative Analyst Office report, *Using Distance Education to Increase College Access and Efficiency*, distance education courses are offered at virtually all CCCs. CSU reports that it offers 84 undergraduate and master's programs online, over 13,000 full online and hybrid courses, and 150 professional development certificate programs online. In addition, individual faculty and institutions throughout the public postsecondary education system have voluntarily partnered with private online providers to develop courses, some of which are available for credit. If the author believes existing efforts are insufficient, rather than establish a New UC to provide degrees solely through credit by examination it might be more appropriate to expand opportunities for alternative credit and distance education at the existing public segments.

*Is credit by examination a substitute for faculty and classroom learning?* Credit by examination is just one of many strategies possible for successfully meeting the increasing demand for higher education opportunity in California. This bill, however, would allow a college associate and baccalaureate degree to be granted through credit by examination; these degrees would be issued with no requirements for specific coursework and faculty/student engagement. In recent years California has moved away from measuring student preparedness through a single examination score. While the author points out that a variety of online sources for information exists, in general online courses have shown mixed results as a tool for student learning and success.

*Quality of credit by examination degrees.* This bill would authorize, but not require, the New UC to be accredited by WASC. However, based on the requirements for WASC accreditation (faculty, libraries, student learning outcomes, etc.) it is unlikely that the New UC could obtain WASC accreditation. In the absence of accreditation, how would these degrees be valued in the marketplace? Would other institutions recognize these degrees for purposes of transfer? Would the State of California recognize these degrees for purposes of licensure?

*Funding is not provided.* According to information provided by the author, the New UC would be self-sustaining through examination fees. However, costs associated with administration of the examinations and, should the New UC apply, accreditation by WASC could be significant. It is unclear if the author intends for fees to be sufficient to cover these additional costs. If that is the case, this would impact the affordability of this option for students.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

None on File

### **Opposition**

California Federation of Teachers

**Analysis Prepared by:** Laura Metune / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960