

Date of Hearing: April 17, 2012

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Marty Block, Chair
AB 2427 (Butler) – As Introduced: February 24, 2012

SUBJECT: California State University: special session fees.

SUMMARY: Prohibits special session fees for courses at the California State University (CSU) offered to matriculated students for credit towards an undergraduate, graduate degree, or doctoral degree from exceeding fees charged per credit unit for any other academic term.

EXISTING LAW establishes CSU, under the administration of the CSU Board of Trustees, and requires certain fees to be required of and collected from students enrolled in each special session, pursuant to the rules and regulations prescribed by the CSU Board of Trustees. (Education Code § 66600, 89708)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Background. Before the recent budget cuts, the state provided funds to CSU to subsidize summer enrollment in an effort to encourage students to attend year round to better utilize facilities and speed time to graduation. To accommodate significant budget reductions, CSU has, among other measures, limited student enrollment, increased class sizes, increased tuition, and moved summer instruction to self-support, as this term is not mandatory and its enrollment is significantly lower than the regular academic year.

What is a special session? Governed by CSU Executive Order 1047, special sessions are offered as part of CSU's Extended Education to CSU students who are enrolled during the academic year on a self-support basis in locations that are not supported by state funds. Existing law prohibits special sessions from supplanting regular course offerings available on a state-supported basis during the academic year. Faculty who teach special session courses are compensated consistent with the terms of their collective bargaining agreement.

For a related group of courses or an entire program that leads to a degree, credential or certificate to be offered under special session, both of the following conditions must be met. For individual special sessions courses offered through self-support during summer sessions or intersessions, only the first criteria must be met.

- 1) State General Fund appropriations to support the program must be either unavailable or inappropriate.
- 2) The courses or program must be different from approved, state-supported programs operating on campus by one or more of the following:
 - a) The courses or program is designed primarily for career enrichment or retraining as defined in existing law.
 - b) The location of the courses or program offerings is significantly removed from permanent, state-supported campus facilities.

- c) The client group for the courses or program receives educational or other services at a cost beyond what could be reasonably provided under state support.

According to a September 2010 report to the CSU Board of Trustees, 149 special session degree programs are offered in special sessions in fields such as business, healthcare, nursing, biotechnology, criminal justice, and education, enrolling 16,115 annual full time equivalent students in 2008-09 in credit courses. The report notes that there has been a steady growth in special session degrees, with an approximate 50% increase in degree program registrations between 2007-08 and 2008-09. Most of the growth has been at the master's degree level in the fields listed above. Cal Grants and CSU institutional aid may not be used for special session courses.

Unintended consequences. Since special sessions fees reflect the full cost of the course, they are higher than the state-subsidized regular session fee. Thus, if fees do not cover the cost of the program, will this bill inadvertently result in fewer special session offerings for students, eliminating an option that students may wish to use to speed their time to degree?

Arguments in support. This bill's sponsor, the California Faculty Association, states that regularly enrolled students are taking longer to graduate because budget cuts have resulted in reduced course offerings. Since most financial aid programs are not available for courses outside the regular academic year, matriculated CSU students should be able to take the courses required in their program of study during special sessions at the same cost as the regular state-supported CSU sessions.

Arguments in opposition. CSU states that, if it were prohibited from operating summer sessions as a self-supporting enterprise, it would no longer offer summer instruction, reducing the opportunity for matriculated students to speed their time to graduation and for non-matriculated students, including working professionals, to pursue advanced degrees.

Related legislation. AB 515 (Brownley, 2011), pending in the Senate Education Committee, would authorize California Community College (CCC) districts to offer self-supporting extension programs for credit. SB 1550 (Wright), pending in the Senate, would authorize CCC districts to offer extension programs for credit in career technical education courses. SB 1011 (Calderon, 2010), which was never heard in the Senate, would have prohibited summer session fees from exceeding the fees charged per credit unit for any other academic term, except for courses taken solely for the purpose of career enhancement or job retraining.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Faculty Association

Opposition

California State University