Date of Hearing: April 9, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Das Williams, Chair
AB 255 (Waldron) – As Amended: March 19, 2013

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: digital arts pilot program.

SUMMARY: Establishes a Digital Arts Degree Pilot Program (DADPP) at the California Community Colleges (CCC) and up to eight campuses of the California State University (CSU), and requests the University of California (UC) to establish at up to two campuses a digital arts degree. Specifically, this bill:

1) Establishes the DADPP for purposes of offering an associate degree and a baccalaureate degree in digital arts.

2) Requires any number of campuses of the CCC to establish a DADPP.

3) Requires up to eight CSU campuses to establish a DADPP.

4) Requests the Regents of the UC to establish at up to two UC campuses a DADPP.

5) Requires that on or before January 1, 2015, representatives from the CCC Chancellor's Office and the CSU Office of the Chancellor, collaborate with representatives of the digital arts design industry and the video game industry in order to develop a course of study leading to the award of an associate degree or a baccalaureate degree in digital arts.

6) Requests the Regents of the UC to appoint representatives to participate in the development of the course of study (as listed above).

7) Requires the first pilot programs to be established at all participating CSU and CCC campuses commencing at the start of the 2015-2016 academic year.

8) Repeals these provisions as of January 1, 2020.

9) Requires CCC districts to be reimbursed for costs if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown but potentially significant.

COMMENTS: Need for the bill. According to the author, the video game industry has been expanding rapidly; video games in 2011 drew in $74 billion in revenue and are projected to bring in $115 billion a year by 2015. The author states that, "Currently, California employs over 40% of employees in the national video game industry, but despite being home to such a large percentage of the video game industry, California only has two schools on the Princeton Review's list of best schools for video game design with only one public university on the list." The author contends there is a disconnection between recent California college graduates and video game employers searching for new employees and it is causing businesses to employ

individuals from out of state because California is lacking the programs and education to suit the industry's needs.

Creation of a new degree. Degree programs are offered as the result of faculty recommendations and campus consultation. The determination of degrees offered at the campuses of the three public segments (UC, CSU and CCC), is an internal process. Typically, the campuses engage in long-range (several years) planning each year. Adding degree programs requires justifying to their boards (Regents, Trustees, and Governors) that there are: 1) sufficient student demand to maintain enrollment required to sustain the program; 2) sufficient employer demand; and 3) sufficient resources (including faculty, staff, facilities, and equipment) to deliver a quality program.

Digital arts degree programs at the segments.

1) UC. The UC is comprised of 10 campuses; nine offer a multitude of degree programs that appear to be relevant to this measure. Additionally, according to the UC Office of the President, all UC campuses (with the exception of the San Francisco campus) and some UC extension programs offer digital arts or digital design courses.

2) CSU. The CSU launched the Entertainment Industry Initiative (EII) in December 2006 for all 23 of its campuses. According to the CSU Office of the Chancellor, the goal of the EII is to establish more prolific innovation and training structures in the system for students seeking careers in media industries; over 12,500 students in the CSU are pursuing degrees in entertainment arts programs. The EII is designed to prepare CSU students to serve the artistic, business, social, and cultural needs of entertainment industries; the EII strives to achieve curricular and technological goals driven by evolving industry standards. Additionally, the EII has four major components:

   a) Visiting fellows program where industry professionals lead workshops and seminars offering students the opportunity to learn firsthand from prominent leaders in entertainment.

   b) Equipment acquisition where the CSU leverages the buying power of the campuses to equip students and faculty with the most current hardware and software that the industry requires.

   c) Internship program where students can take advantage of meaningful year-round internships that provide relevant and practical training needed for entertainment industry careers.

   d) Advisory board where the CSU has partnered with highly knowledgeable and talented entertainment leaders who provide insight into industry trends and needs related to career preparation.

   With thousands of majors statewide, the CSU is the largest audio, video, film, and interactive media educational institution in the nation.

3) CCC. The CCC is comprised of 112 campuses; over half of the CCC campuses offer courses that appear to be relevant to this measure. Additionally, according to the CCC Chancellor's Office, from 2007 – 2012 almost 3,500 associate degrees and certificates were awarded to

students in the fields of computer graphics and digital imagery and digital media. Some campuses of the CCC offer specific associate degrees in electronic game design; others instruct game design as part of other digital arts related courses. Data is not available as to how many aspiring digital arts majors are on a degree track because the CCC does not require students to declare a major.

Definition of digital arts. It appears that the author's intent for the measure is to have a focus on video game design within digital arts; however it is not always obvious that a course within a digital arts program could lead to a career in game design, but it is possible. The term digital arts has different meanings to different faculty of the three segments. Potentially more courses and degrees related to digital arts could presently exist at the UC, CSU and CCC as it pertains to this measure, but without a definition of digital arts, it is challenging to predict.

Fiscal considerations. The creation of a new degree program, pilot or otherwise, can be very costly. Funding must be in place for potentially more full-time and part-time faculty, staff (administration and support), curriculum development, facilities (animation labs, testing rooms, etc.), and equipment (computers, software, game consoles and peripherals, etc.). An estimated cost analysis for the needs of each participating campus in the DADPP will potential vary from campus to campus, but could cost upwards of $1.4 million per campus.

Report on pilot findings. Although the measure incorporates a sunset, it does not include a reporting mechanism in order to evaluate the merits of the DADPP.

The committee may want to amend the measure to include a report to the Legislature on the merits of the DADPP.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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