

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 2822 (Chiu) – As Amended March 17, 2016

SUBJECT: Student financial aid: Student Success and Support Program: emergency student financial assistance.

SUMMARY: Authorizes the use of Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) funds for the provision of emergency student financial assistance. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes funding for SSSP to be used for providing emergency student financial assistance in order to assist eligible students to overcome unforeseen financial challenges, including, but not necessarily limited to, the immediate need for shelter or food.
- 2) Specifies that in order for emergency student financial assistance to be an allowable use of SSSP funds, emergency student financial assistance shall be included in the institution's plan for interventions to students.
- 3) Defines "eligible student" to mean a student who has experienced an unforeseen financial challenge, who currently meets satisfactory academic progress of the institution he or she attends, and who is at risk of not persisting in his or her course of study due to the unforeseen financial challenge.
- 4) Defines "emergency student financial assistance" to mean financial support in the form of financial assistance to support a student to help overcome unforeseen financial challenges so that the student can continue his or her course of study.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Creates the SSSP in order to provide a variety of programs intended to ensure the success of CCC students, including, but not limited to: a) student assessment before course registration; b) counseling and other education planning services; c) advising; and, d) development of an education plan leading to a course of study. Specifies funding for SSSP shall be targeted to fully implement orientation, assessment, counseling and advising, and other education planning services needed to assist a student in making an informed decision about his or her educational goal and course of study and in the development of an education plan. (Education Code (EC) 78212).
- 2) Requires that all community college districts (CCD), with the assistance of the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor, establish and maintain institutional research to evaluate the effectiveness of the SSSP, as specified, and of any other programs or services designed to facilitate students' completion of their educational goals and course of study. Specifies the metrics for said research shall include, but be not limited to the following: a) prior educational experience, including transcripts when appropriate, as determined by the chancellor; b) educational goals and courses of study; c) criteria for exemption from orientation, assessment, or required counseling or advisement, if applicable; d) need for financial assistance; e) disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender, disability, age, and socioeconomic status, to the extent this information is available; f) academic performance,

such as the completion of specified unit thresholds, success in basic skills courses, grade point average, course completion outcomes, transfer readiness, and degree and certificate completion; and, g) any additional information that the chancellor finds appropriate (EC Section 78214).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Student success and support.* Senate Bill 1456 (Lowenthal), Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012, was enacted to implement some of the Student Success Task Force recommendations. Among other things, SB 1456 revised and recast the Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act of 1986 as the Seymour-Campbell Success Act of 2012 in order to target funding to services such as orientation, assessment, and counseling and advising to assist students with the development of education plans. It also required that students define goals, required that students declare a course of study and mandated student participation in assessment, orientation and education planning.

At a regulatory level, the CCC Board of Governors (BOG) has approved regulations that provide enrollment priority to students who have participated in assessment, orientation and who have developed an education plan. A revision of Title 5 regulations is in progress to implement provisions of SB 1456 to require students to complete core services as well as to declare a course of study. Additionally, in 2012 the Board of Governors adopted enrollment priorities and, in Spring 2013, districts are required to notify students that accumulating 100 degree applicable units or being on academic or progress probation for two consecutive terms will result in the loss of enrollment priority. Finally, as of Fall 2014, students who complete orientation, assessment, and have a student education plan, will receive a higher enrollment priority.

Funding structure for SSSP. Existing funding for the SSSP is targeted to fully implement core services: orientation; assessment; counseling; advising; and other education planning services needed to assist a student in making an informed decision about his/her education goal and course of study and to develop an education plan; and, follow up for at-risk students. Additionally, SSSP funds may only be used for core services and any CCD or college receiving SSSP funding must agree to implement the CCC BOG's system of common assessment.

Emergency aid. According to information provided by the author, the field of emergency aid is emerging as a best practice for community colleges around the nation; however, the field is remains relative new. California presently has three community colleges, Cuyamaca Community College, Grossmont Community College, and Pasadena Community College that have begun emergency aid programs. To note, Committee staff understands that anecdotally, many community colleges are hesitant to implement some form of emergency aid shy of clear direction from the Legislature.

Additionally, According to a December 2015 report, by Wisconsin Hope Lab, entitled, "Investing in Student Completion: Overcoming Financial Barriers to Retention Through Small-Dollar Grants and Emergency Aid Programs," a deepening financial need among students exists and growing concerns about college retention. The report finds that there is an increased interest in emergency aid programs, but also many challenges in implementing them effectively, due in part, to administrators having to delicately navigate tensions between providing access and support and rationing scarce resources. The report recommends that clear criteria for program

eligibility, while providing flexibility for determinations in unusual circumstances, must be established and clearly communicated.

This measure would provide clear authority to community colleges to be able to utilize SSSP funds for emergency aid, if they so choose.

Purpose of this measure. According to the author, "If California seriously wants to meet the goals outlined in the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act, then the CCCs should have every effective tool available to them." The author contends that, this measure provides the CCCs another means to supporting students, despite unforeseen financial emergencies.

This measure would allow California's community colleges to use SSSP funds in order to provide emergency aid to eligible students who face unforeseen financial challenges. The measure stipulates that eligible students must be making satisfactory academic progress and be at risk of dropping out of school, due to an unforeseen financial emergency.

The author argues that, "This measure would further the goals of California community colleges' to retain and graduate students by providing emergency aid, at just the right time, to students who would otherwise be forced to leave school because of a financial emergency."

Policy considerations. As presently drafted, this measure authorizes community college districts to use SSSP funds in order to provide emergency student financial assistance to students needing to overcome unforeseen financial challenges. While the measure indicates that unforeseen financial challenges may include the immediate need for food or shelter, the bill does not define the term "unforeseen financial challenges."

Moving forward, the author may wish to define the term "unforeseen financial challenges."

As aforementioned, this measure authorizes community college districts to use SSSP funds in order to provide assistance to students facing emergency financial situations; however, the measure is silent as to the percentage of SSSP funds that community college districts may appropriate in order to meet the financial needs of the students.

Moving forward, the author may wish to work with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, in order to provide clarity as to the usage of SSSP funds for the specified purpose outlined in this measure.

Previous legislation. SB 1143 (Liu) Chapter 409, Statutes of 2010, created the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force which made 22 recommendations to the CCC BOG to improve student educational achievement in the state. To note, the CCC BOG approved the recommendations in January 2012, which focused on increasing student graduation, transfer, and certificate completion rates at then all 112 community colleges.

SB 1456 (Lowenthal) Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012, established the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012, and among other reforms to the CCCs relating to student success, established the SSSP. To note, since the enactment of SB 1456, the Legislature and the Governor have continually provided funding to SSSP.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

The Institute for College Access & Success
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Scholarship America
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Jeanice Warden / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960