

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Das Williams, Chair
AB 387 (Levine) – As Amended: April 15, 2013

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: California State University: online education.

SUMMARY: Expresses the Legislature intends for the Trustees of the California State University (CSU) to have a uniform definition of online education for the purposes of measuring its effectiveness and requires, among other things, that the CSU Trustees, on or before January 1, 2017, report to the Legislature on performance data. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the CSU Trustees, on or before January 1, 2015, for the purposes of measuring the effectiveness of online education, to establish a series of uniform definitions for online education that shall include a systemwide definition for online education.
- 2) Specifies that for the purposes of this measure, the definitions, at a minimum, shall include a systemwide definition for an online course where the course can be entirely completed remotely.
- 3) Requires the CSU Trustees on or before January 1, 2017, and on or before January 1 every two years thereafter, to report to the Legislature key performance data on online courses as defined in the measure, including, but not necessarily limited to, all of the following:
 - a) The number of students enrolled at each campus;
 - b) Course completion rates for courses other than online courses;
 - c) Completion rates for degree programs that include no online courses;
 - d) Grade point average for students enrolled in online courses;
 - e) The number of students cross-enrolled in online courses at a CSU campus other than the campus at which they are matriculated;
 - f) Course completion rates for students enrolled in online courses; and,
 - g) Completion rates for degree programs that include online courses.
- 4) Specifies that student enrollment and completion rate data shall be included in a report (and that the provision requiring the report will become inoperative on July 1, 2021) to be submitted to the Legislature pursuant to this measure and must be made available by demographics, including age, gender, and ethnicity.
- 5) Requires that as the CSU develops new programs of instruction, not less than 10% of new course offerings shall be online courses as defined in this measure.

- 6) Requires the CSU Trustees shall report to the Legislature, on or before January 1, 2015, on the feasibility of developing an accelerated bachelor's degree completion program consisting of online courses, aimed at students who started college but never obtained a degree.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Distance Learning Policy, which sets forth the guiding goal and principles for the utilization of technology in California postsecondary education (Education Code § 66940).
- 2) Establishes, until January 1, 2014, the California Virtual Campus, under the stewardship of the CCC Board of Governors and pursuant to annual Budget Act funding to, among other things, enhance the awareness of, and access to, highly engaging online courses of study, increase access to next generation Internet services, 21st century workforce development programs, and e-government services for students and staff served or employed by education entities and students served primarily online through partnerships with public libraries and community-based organizations (EC § 78910.10).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Background. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) 2013-2014 Analysis of the Higher Education Budget, distance learning offers numerous benefits. These include providing greater access to educational and training opportunities due to increased scheduling flexibility, as well as allowing campuses to serve more students without needing additional physical infrastructure.

According to the, LAO there is no common definition of distance learning among California's public postsecondary institutions, making it impossible for the Legislature and segments to measure workload and track enrollment trends.

Governor Brown has encouraged the University of California (UC), the CSU and the California Community Colleges (CCC) to expand their online offerings. The 2013-2014 budget allocates \$16.9 million to CCC and \$10 million to both the UC and CSU systems for online education.

Online education at the CSU. Launched in January 2013, CSU Online is the newest platform of services that supports students and faculty in teaching and learning through online programs. CSU Online will host both graduate and undergraduate programs, but has an initial focus on former students who have had to drop out of the CSU and are looking to complete their degrees.

CSU at San Jose (SJSU) recently launched a joint pilot program, partnering with Udacity (an independent online education company and innovators of massive open online courses [MOOCs]) and EdX (a nonprofit MOOCs provider). This joint pilot program creates a major expansion of course offerings for students and plans to expand its current enrollment of 300 students to 1,000. The joint pilot program used three entry-level courses that typically have high failure rates, intermediate algebra, college algebra, and elementary statistics and currently has an 85% retention rate.

Need for the bill. According to the author, this bill is aimed at addressing several policy problems that exist within the CSU. The CSU is seeking to deliver new and existing courses

through online education; which is a powerful tool, but as it continues to develop, the Legislature should ensure that it is appropriately measured so that adjustments and improvements can be made moving forward.

This measure is a companion measure to AB 386 (Levine) which seeks to streamline the concurrent enrollment process to allow CSU students to seamlessly cross-enroll in online courses offered throughout the CSU campuses.

Percentage of CSU created online courses? The bill requires that as the CSU develops new programs of instruction, not less than 10% of new course offerings shall be online courses as defined in the bill. The CSU maintains academic freedom, should the state mandate the percentage of CSU created online courses?

Staff recommend that the author delete § 89226.5 of the measure so that the CSU is not required to ensure that not less than 10% of new course offerings shall be online courses.

Other measures to address online education. There are several online education related measures pending Legislative action this session:

- 1) AB 386 (Levine), which will be taken up today in the committee hearing, would require that by the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year, students enrolled at the CSU be provided an opportunity to enroll in online courses available at other CSU campuses, would authorize any CSU student enrolled at a CSU campus to enroll in an online course provided by another CSU campus, and would require the CSU Trustees, on or before January 1, 2015, to establish an easily accessible online database of online courses available at the CSU.
- 2) AB 895 (Rendon), which will be taken up today in the committee hearing, would establish the California Postsecondary Online Education Task Force to evaluate and collect data on the current status of postsecondary online education.
- 3) AB 944 (Nestande), which will be taken up today in the committee hearing, would require the Trustees of the CSU and the Board of Governors of CCC and request the Regents of the UC, to report to the Legislature, by January 1, 2016, and every two years thereafter, on workload and key performance data on distance learning courses.
- 4) SB 520 (Steinberg), which will be taken up on April 24, 2013, in the Senate Education Committee, would, among other things, create the California Online Student Access Platform under the joint administration of the UC President, the Chancellor of the CSU, and the CCC Chancellor, with the academic senates of the respective segments, and would require the platform to provide an efficient statewide mechanism for online course providers to offer transferable courses for credit and to create a pool of these online courses.
- 5) SB 547 (Block), which will be taken up on April 24, 2013, in the Senate Education Committee, would, among other things, require the academic senates of the UC, the CSU, and the CCC to jointly develop and identify online courses that would be made available to students of each of the three segments for enrollment by the fall of 2014.

Prior legislation. AB 626 (Blumenfield, 2011), which remained in this committee, would have established a definition for "distance learning." AB 851 (Nestande, 2011), which was similar in nature to AB 944 (as described above); failed passage in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Bay Area Council
California State Student Association
California State University

Opposition

None on file.

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