

Date of Hearing: March 28, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 394 (Medina) – As Introduced February 9, 2017

SUBJECT: California State University: assessment and course placement of admitted students.

SUMMARY: Requires the California State University (CSU) Trustees, as a condition of receiving state funding for the Graduation Initiative 2025, by August 1, 2018, to approve a pilot program where a minimum of 10 campuses use multiple measures for the assessment and course placement of admitted students; and, specifies that the multiple measures approach shall place significant weight on high school transcript data in the assessment of recent California high school graduates, on community college transcript data in the assessment of community college transfer students, and on those transcripts in the subsequent assignment of these students to English and mathematics coursework.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education, setting forth the mission of the CSU (Education Code (EC) Section 66010, et seq.).
- 2) Requires that the CSU shall be administered by a board designated as the Trustees of the CSU (EC Section 66600).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Background.* According to the Education Commission of the States, in its May 2016, "Blueprint for College Readiness," a slow but steady movement is emerging to rethink – and revise – the single test, single cut score approach that places new college and/or transfer students into remedial or credit-level courses. To counter the shortcomings of a potentially limiting and high-stakes practice, several states and postsecondary systems are beginning to use additional indicators to gauge students' college readiness.

The Commission contends that multiple measures could offer a more accurate way for students to demonstrate their potential to succeed in college-level courses and reduce the chance they will be placed in remedial courses.

California State University's current efforts with multiple measures. According to the CSU, there are multiple measures that CSU looks at for readiness in a college level course, including:

- 1) Tests taken by students in high school (e. g. SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement, or California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress);
- 2) Passing approved senior year courses with a grade of 'C' or better;
- 3) Use of the CSU's English Placement Test or Entry Level Math exam, from which students can be exempt by demonstrating proficiency via numbers one and two above; and/or,
- 4) Participation in the CSU Early Start program or other similar summer programs.

The CSU contends that through these efforts, as well as working to engage with community colleges, high schools, and even elementary/middle schools, they have made significant progress in the number of students entering CSU fully prepared in both English and math.

To note, it is important to highlight that it appears as if the CSU is referring to approved courses for “conditionally ready” students and that these courses do not even count for placement unless students get a particular score on a test, like the Early Assessment Program. This appears to be misaligned with what Committee staff understands the community colleges have been scaling up – using high school grade point average and/or high school transcripts in key courses (like algebra) for consideration when making placements.

According to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) February 2017 report, "The 2017-18 Budget: Higher Education Analysis", the CSU could improve its assessment and placement policies. The LAO report found that the CSU relies primarily on placement tests when assessing college readiness. Based on the placement test results, the CSU deems more than 40 percent of its admitted freshmen as unprepared for college-level math, English, or both; leading those admitted freshmen having to take remedial course work.

Additionally, according to the LAO analysis, national research shows reliance solely on placement tests routinely results in college-ready students being misplaced into remedial courses; leading to increased education costs for students and reducing their chances of graduating on time. Lastly, the LAO analysis found that 30 percent of incoming community college students to the CSU are put into remedial courses based on placement test results when they could have succeeded in college-level coursework.

Purpose this measure. According to the author, "Studies show that nearly one third of students are “misplaced” when they enter higher education due to the use of placement assessments that are not comprehensive enough, and end up placing students in lower courses than they should be enrolled in, or the incorrect courses altogether, which sets them up for potential failure to earn a college degree or credential."

This measure seeks to ensure that, as the CSU begins to utilize multiple measures in course placement of its students, high school and or community college transcript data be given a level of priority.

Committee comments and amendments. Committee staff understands that the CSU is already in the process directing all its campuses to incorporate more than just the assessment in determining course placement. Should this measure remain a pilot if all campuses are in the process of utilizing multiple measures?

Additionally, since the entire system is beginning to move in the direction of incorporating additional measures when determining course placement, should CSU's receipt of state funds for its Graduation Initiative 2025 be conditional to their implementing this measure?

Lastly, Committee staff understands that the CSU will be able to implement the changes to their multiple measures program to incorporate the requirements established by this measure via an executive order from the Chancellor.

Therefore, the Committee recommends, and the author has agreed to accept, the following amendments:

89012. ~~As a condition of receipt of state funding for the Graduation Initiative 2025, By~~ August 1, 2018, the California State University shall ~~approve a pilot program where a minimum of 10 campuses use~~ ***implement additional*** ~~multiple~~ measures for the assessment and course placement of admitted students. The multiple measures approach shall ***include, but not be limited to,*** place significant weight on high school transcript data in the assessment of recent California high school graduates, on community college transcript data in the assessment of community college transfer students, and on those transcripts in the subsequent assignment of these students to English and mathematics coursework.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Catholic Conference

Opposition

None on file.

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