

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 770 (Irwin) – As Amended April 6, 2015

SUBJECT: Community colleges: basic skills innovation program

SUMMARY: Authorizes the governing board of a community college district (CCD) to apply to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC), for multiyear financial grants and professional development (PD) funding, if a CCD adopts or expands the use of evidence-based models of academic assessment and placement, remediation, and student support that accelerate the progress of underprepared students toward achieving postsecondary educational and career goals. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes legislative findings and declarations, including, but not limited to the following:
 - a) Research in California has demonstrated that relatively few students who enter remediation ultimately attain a postsecondary degree, credential, or transfer to a four-year institution, and that students of color are disproportionately affected;
 - b) Drawing on national initiatives aimed at increasing student completion of college-level English and mathematics courses, efforts in California have demonstrated the success of innovative ways to deliver English and mathematics remediation; and,
 - c) In those pilot efforts, students' odds of completing college-level English courses more than double, and their odds of completing college-level mathematics courses are more than four times higher in comparison to students in traditional remediation. However, at most community college campuses, these new approaches are offered on a small scale and are not available to most students.
- 2) Establishes a financial grant and professional development funding program, administered by the CCC Chancellor.
- 3) Requires the CCC Chancellor to distribute multiyear financial grants and PD funding, upon appropriation by the Legislature for this purpose, to the governing board of a CCD that applies and satisfies the requirements, as specified.
- 4) Specifies that monies allocated for the program shall be expended for community colleges within the district to adopt or expand the use of evidence-based models of academic assessment and placement, remediation, and student support that accelerate the progress of underprepared students toward achieving postsecondary educational and career goals.
- 5) Specifies that the governing board of a CCD may apply for funds, as specified, if it is for the purposes of making more effective, evidence-based practices available to significantly more underprepared students who enroll at CCC campuses.

- 6) Specifies that a community college within the district may receive funds for purposes of implementing these evidence-based practices for the first time or expanding evidence-based practices that are in effect as of the date of the district's application for funds.
- 7) Requires that the evidence-based strategies implemented or expanded by the governing board of a CCD, as specified, shall include innovative basic skills improvement strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness in accelerating the progress of underprepared students toward, and increasing the number of underprepared students who successfully achieve, one or more of the following goals:
 - a) Completing a college-level English or mathematics course, or both, within a three-course sequence or less;
 - b) Earning eight units applicable to a college certificate or degree; and,
 - c) Earning a college certificate or degree approved by the CCCs.
- 8) Requires, as condition of receiving a grant, that the governing board of a CCD shall demonstrate in its application for funding that the community colleges that will participate in the grant program will redesign their curriculum, career pathways, assessment and placement procedures, or any combination thereof, to implement, or expand the use or application of, one or more of the following practices and principles:
 - a) Adopting placement tests and related policies that include multiple measures of student performance, including grades in high school courses, especially overall grade point average, and input from counselors;
 - b) Increasing the placement of students directly in gateway English and mathematics courses and career pathways supplemented by remediation;
 - c) Aligning content in remedial courses with the students' programs of academic or vocational study to target students' actual needs;
 - d) Completing a college-level English or mathematics course, or both, within a three-course sequence or less; recognizing that students pursuing mathematics-intensive courses of study may require a longer sequence of mathematics coursework;
 - e) Contextualizing remedial instruction in foundational skills for the industry cluster, pathways, or both, in which the student seeks to advance; and,
 - f) Providing proactive student support services that are integrated with the instruction provided;
- 9) Specifies that each participating community college shall be responsible for all of the following:
 - a) Developing a plan based on one or more of the evidence-based principles and practices (as described above in eight - 'a through f') that demonstrates a clear strategy for ensuring that all of the following occur within a five-year period:

- i) A significant share of the underprepared students who enroll at participating community colleges within the CCD achieve one or more of the three goals (as described above in seven – 'a through c'), and,
 - ii) Underprepared students who are enrolled at the community college achieve the three goals (as described above in seven – 'a through c') within a shorter time period than before the implementation of this measure at the community college.
- b) Ensuring that its faculty participate in PD regarding academic programs or new curriculum developed or expanded pursuant to this measure, using grant funds to support that faculty participation; and,
- c) Annually reporting to the CCC Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) on program outcomes, disaggregated by demographic characteristics of its students, for purposes of measuring progress compared to the community college's performance before its implementation of this measure. Specifying that these reports should include all of the following:
- i) The number and percentage of underprepared students served by the grant program,
 - ii) The number and percentages of these underprepared students achieving each of the three goals (as described above in seven – 'a through c'), and,
 - iii) The number of faculty involved and faculty needs regarding the innovation and operation of courses pursuant to this measure.
- 10) Requires the CCCCCO to be responsible for all of the following:
- a) Administering the grant program, and distributing and monitoring awards to recipient CCDs;
 - b) Developing application criteria, administrative guidelines, and other requirements for purposes of administering the grant program; and,
 - c) Aggregating, analyzing, and reporting annually the information submitted, as specified, to the Legislature on the progress of the grant program in achieving its prescribed purpose.

EXISTING LAW: establishes the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012, which, among other things, specifies that each community college, via their student services, has the responsibility, as specified, to provide a strong foundation and support for the educational goals of their students; cites the services as the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP); requires the services to include, but are not necessarily limited to, student referral to specialized support services as needed and available, including, but not necessarily limited to, programs that teach basic skills education and English as a Second Language (ESL) and evaluation of each student's progress and referral to appropriate interventions for students who are enrolled in basic skills courses; and, requires all CCDs, with the assistance of the CCC Chancellor to establish and maintain institutional research to evaluate the effectiveness of the SSSP, specifying that the metrics used for the research shall include, but not be limited to, 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 (Education Code Section 78210, et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Basic skills definition.* Generally, definitions for basic skills (often referred as "remedial" and/or "remediation") vary, however, for the CCC, "noncredit basic skills courses" are those courses in reading, writing, mathematics, and ESL which are designated by a CCD as noncredit courses pursuant to C. C. R., Title 5, Subdivision (c) of Section 55002. Additionally, "non-degree applicable basic skills courses" are those courses in reading, writing, mathematics, and ESL which are designated by a CCD as non-degree applicable credit courses pursuant to C. C. R., Title 5, Subdivision (b) of Section 55002.

Basic skills background. In 2004, the CCCCCO began a comprehensive strategic planning process with the purpose of improving student access and success; and, in January 2006, the CCC Board of Governors adopted the final draft of the plan. At that time, one of the goals of the plan was to focus on basic skills – ensuring that basic skills development became a major focus and was an adequately funded activity at the CCCs.

To ensure the former was achieved, the CCCCCO, in 2006, launched the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), which was a grant funded initiative as part of the strategic planning process. The goal of the BSI was to improve student access and success. The project addressed credit and noncredit basic skills as well as adult education and programs designed to help underprepared students.

A two-tiered approach by BSI created an environment for great accomplishments in basic skills. One tier of this plan allocated CCCs supplemental funding to specifically address basic skills needs. This funding was guided by locally developed action plans documenting usage of the funding. The outcomes of the BSI were tracked using the Accountability Report for Community Colleges. The second tier took the shape of a PD grant which was designed to address training needs for faculty and staff in basic skills, and ESL.

The CCCCCO Student Success Task Force issued a report, per legislative requirements, in 2012. This report issued several recommendations, including, but not limited to the following:

- 1) The CCC system must develop more effective models of basic skills instruction and implement them on a large scale (indicating that there are new models of basic skills instruction that have yet to be created and that to encourage innovation, the CCCs should provide incentives for developing alternative curricula and taking to scale model programs that work);
- 2) The state should develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing basic skills education in California that results in a unified system that provides all students with the access to basic skills courses in English and mathematics. Additionally, the state should develop a comparable strategy for addressing the needs of adults for courses in ESL; and,
- 3) The CCC system, with their K-12 and community-based partners, should develop a clear strategy to respond to the continuum of need in order to move students from educational basic skills to college and career readiness.

Launched in 2012, the Basic Skills Cohort Tracker gives CCC faculty online access to information about how students' progress through their basic skills sequences in English, reading, ESL, and mathematics. The Tracker was envisioned and sponsored by the CCC Success Network (3CSN) and developed through a partnership with the Research and Planning Group for the CCCs and the CCCCO. To note, through its regional networks and events 3CSN has provided trainings to faculty in how to use the tool, and through its partnership with the California Acceleration Project (CAP), 3CSN has also supported faculty to develop and pilot curricula models that improve completion rates among basic skills students.

Basic skills state statistics. According to information provided by the author's office, over 70 percent of first time enrolled students at the CCC are classified as underprepared for college-level course work and in need of remediation. Additionally, according to Learning Works' 2014 brief entitled, "New Study of the California Acceleration Project: Large and Robust Gains in Student Completion of College English and Math," accelerated models of remediation are producing great increases in student completion of gatekeeper English and mathematics requirements at CCCs. The brief found that effective accelerated pathways led to completion gains among all students, regardless of their level of preparation, demographic group, or socioeconomic status.

The brief contends that said findings are critical to note because remedial course sequences have been identified as a key barrier to college completion. The brief finds, "Across California, 70-90 percent of CCC students are designated underprepared for college and assigned to remedial courses in English, math, or both. According to the most recent Student Success Scorecard, just 41 percent of these students went on to transfer or complete a certificate or degree within six years statewide, a substantially lower completion rate than among students designated college prepared."

California Acceleration Project. The CAP is an initiative of the state-funded professional development network 3CSN. According to the brief (as referenced above), 16 CCCs piloting accelerated remediation models in 2011-12 as part of the CAP initiative, found that by redesigning their curricula to reduce students' time in remedial courses by one or more semesters, higher completion rates among students in accelerated remediation occurred. In English, students' odds of completing a college-level course were 2.3 times greater in high-impact models of acceleration than students in traditional remediation; and, in mathematics, students' odds of completing a college-level course were 4.5 times greater than students in traditional remediation.

To note, it presently unclear as to the exact number of CCCs that participate in the CAP initiative, but it appears that about half of the CCCs have at least one course (either of English, mathematics, or both), but are only accessible to few students.

Need for this measure. According to the author, "Many community college students are limited to the standard remedial courses in math and English that are yielding very poor results. Allowing for more subjectivity and innovation in remedial courses would allow faculty members to contextualize the remedial learning experience to the benefit of all students, regardless of what their educational goals may be."

Committee considerations. Presently, the measure is silent as to when the CCDs would be able to apply for the multiyear grant at the CCCCO. **Committee staff recommends the following amendment:** 88800. A financial grant and professional development funding program, administered by the chancellor, is hereby established. The chancellor shall distribute multiyear financial grants and professional development funding, upon appropriation by the Legislature, **no later than 180 days upon receiving the appropriation** for this purpose, to the governing board of a community college district that applies and satisfies the requirements of...

Additionally, the measure requires the CCCCO to submit an annual report to the Legislature about the program, but it is unclear as to when the initial report should be issued; and, the required annual report is in perpetuity. **Committee staff recommends the following amendment:** 88810. (3) (A) Aggregating, analyzing, and reporting **annually** the information submitted pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) to the Legislature on the progress of the grant program in achieving its prescribed purpose. **The report shall be issued every other year commencing the first year the Legislature appropriates funding for this purpose, until July 1, 2024. The initial report will be due to the Legislature on or before the end of the fiscal year in which the Legislature initially appropriated funds for this purpose. In subsequent years, the report will be due to the Legislature on or before July 1.**

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Asian Americans Advancing Justice
 California Business Roundtable
 California Edge Coalition
 California Manufacturers & Technology Association
 Campaign for College Opportunity
 College Advance
 Complete College America
 Fulfillment Fund
 Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
 Los Rio Community College District
 Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
 Orange County Business Council
 Parent Institute for Quality Education
 Southern California College Access Network
 2 Individuals

Opposition

None on file.

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