

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Das Williams, Chair
AB 895 (Rendon) – As Amended: April 16, 2013

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: online education task force.

SUMMARY: Establishes the California Postsecondary Online Education Task Force (task force) and requires the task force to evaluate and collect data on the current status of postsecondary online education in both public and private institutions in California, and other states, as specified, and analyze methods to implement online education programs in all California postsecondary institutions. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Establishes the task force consisting of 15 members, who shall be selected on or before March 31, 2014, in accordance with the following:
 - a) Two faculty members from the California Community Colleges (CCC), selected by the CCC Academic Senate;
 - b) Two faculty members from the California State University (CSU), selected by the CSU Academic Senate;
 - c) Two faculty members from the University of California (UC), selected by the UC Academic Senate;
 - d) One member of the non-faculty staff of the CCC, selected by the CCC Chancellor;
 - e) One member of the non-faculty staff of the CSU, selected by the CSU Chancellor;
 - f) One member of the non-faculty staff of the UC, selected by the UC President;
 - g) One administrative officer or employee of the CCC, selected by the CCC Chancellor;
 - h) One administrative officer or employee of the CSU, selected by the CSU Chancellor;
 - i) One administrative officer or employee of the UC, selected by the UC President;
 - j) One CCC student, selected by the CCC Chancellor from a list of the names of at least two students submitted to the chancellor by the governing board of any statewide student organization that represents CCC students and the student body organizations of the CCC campuses;
 - k) One CSU student, selected by the CSU Chancellor from a list of the names of at least two students submitted to the chancellor by the governing board of any statewide student organization that represents CSU students of the and the student body organizations of CSU campuses; and,

- 1) One UC student, selected by the UC President from a list of the names of at least two students submitted to the president by the governing board of any statewide student organization that represents UC students and the student body organizations of the UC campuses.
- 2) Specifies that a member of the task force shall serve at the pleasure of the entity that selected him/her.
- 3) Specifies the duties of the task force to include, but not necessarily limited to, all of the following:
 - a) Evaluating and collecting data on the status of postsecondary online education in both public and private institutions, including out of state online education providers offering online courses in California, including, but not necessarily limited to, all of the following:
 - i) The number of students, course offerings, types of course offerings, and full degree programs in each institution,
 - ii) The average amount of student loan debt and the status of repayment of these loans,
 - iii) The amount of money invested per student per program,
 - iv) The completion rate of students enrolled full time in online courses and part time in online courses,
 - v) Data on student demographics, including, but not limited to, matriculated compared to nonmatriculated students, and students enrolled full time in online courses compared to students enrolled part time in online courses, and,
 - vi) Data on faculty teaching online, including, but not limited to, tenure status, years of teaching in a classroom compared to online teaching, and the number of classes taught.
 - b) Identifying the role of online education programs in California's public postsecondary education system;
 - c) Identifying evidence-based best practices, including, but not necessarily limited to the following:
 - i) Identifying courses best and least suited for online education, and,
 - ii) Identifying students best suited for online education.
 - d) Determining and describing the fiscal impact of online education on all of the following:
 - i) The students,
 - ii) The three segments of public postsecondary education, and,

- iii) The state General Fund.
 - e) Identifying resources, including, but not necessarily limited to, fiscal resources, labor and staff, and technological infrastructure and support, needed for the effective delivery of online education; and,
 - f) Analyzing methods to implement online education programs in California postsecondary institutions.
- 4) Requires the task force to submit a report, by January 1, 2016, and every two years thereafter, to the Legislature.
 - 5) Specifies that the submitted reports shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, information obtained pursuant to this measure, and recommendations of innovative online education methods.

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 state colleges and universities to expand their online offerings. The 2013-2014 budget allocates \$16.9 million to CCC and \$10 million to both the CSU and UC systems for online education. All 112 campuses of the CCCs offer online education, and the California Virtual Campus provides course information and class schedules for all CCCs. Cal State Online, an initiative focusing on helping students finish course work to obtain degrees, was launched in January 2013. The UC system launched UC Online last year, which offers courses to non-UC and UC students for credit.

Need for the bill. According to the author, no working group currently exists to study the possible outcomes for students and faculty if offerings of online courses in the UC and CSU systems are increased. Information to policymakers and the public on these outcomes at public institutions offering online courses is limited. The author states, "Quality of education, accessibility, affordability, cheating, ownership and development of curriculum, and career counseling and mentorship access, are some of the concerns faculty members have in regard to online education expansion." With this in mind, this bill would bring policymakers, stakeholders and subject matter experts together to carefully evaluate and create a thoughtful approach to implementing online education in our higher education institutions.

Issues to consider.

- 1) Role of the private postsecondary institutions? This measure requires the task force to evaluate and collect data on the status of postsecondary online education in both public and private institutions. The committee may want to consider if representatives from both private non-profit and for-profit California postsecondary institutions should have membership on the task force.
- 2) Sunset? The bill requires the task force, on or before January 1, 2016, and every two years thereafter, to submit a report to the Legislature. The committee may want to consider adding a sunset to this measure.
- 3) Proposed California Higher Education Authority. AB 1348 (John A. Pérez), which will be presented in this committee today, proposes to create the California Higher Education Authority. This Authority, among other things, will be tasked with developing, presenting, and monitoring postsecondary education goals for the state. The committee may want to consider if the proposed Authority should be the entity to gather and collect data and best practices as it relates to online education for all California postsecondary institutions and report to the Legislature on key findings and recommendations.

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 387 (Levine), which will be taken up today in the committee hearing, would require the CSU to have a uniform definition of online education, beginning January 1, 2017; would require the CSU Trustees to report performance data about online education to the Legislature every two years until 2021; would require, in the development of new programs and instruction at each CSU campus, that not less than 10% of new course offerings be online courses; and, would require the CSU Trustees, on or before January 1, 2015, to report to the Legislature 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.

- 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

California Faculty Association (Sponsor)
California Federation of Teachers
California Teachers Association
Service Employees International Union

Opposition

None on file.

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