

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2014

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Das Williams, Chair

AB 2092 (Chávez) – As Amended: April 1, 2014

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: Donahoe Higher Education Act: 4-year baccalaureate degree.

SUMMARY: Requires the Trustees of the California State University (CSU), and requests the Regents of the University of California (UC), to offer to eligible students, as specified, an agreement guaranteeing that a student who meets certain conditions, as specified, may complete a baccalaureate degree within 4 academic years. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the CSU Trustees, and requests the UC Regents, to offer eligible students an agreement guaranteeing that a student who meets certain conditions may complete a baccalaureate degree within 4 academic years.
- 2) Specifies that an institution may provide for a longer period of completion for programs such as engineering or teacher training that may require more than 4 academic years to complete, but under no circumstances may the time to baccalaureate degree agreed to under the parameters established in this measure extend beyond 5 academic years.
- 3) Delineates that the agreement entered into shall comply with all of the following:
 - a) A student who scores in an unspecified percentile or above on any standardized college readiness assessment test, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test, ACT, or any other widely administered college readiness examination, shall be presumed to be eligible to enter into the agreement; and, a student who scores below the top unspecified percentile, but above an unspecified percentile may take another test of the institution's choice, and the institution shall establish a cut-off score for eligibility for the program pursuant to that test;
 - b) The agreement shall be executed by a student and an authorized representative of the institution before the end of the student's first semester or quarter of enrollment at the institution;
 - c) The agreement shall outline a general pathway for the coursework that the student must complete in order to continue to be qualified for the guarantee and receive his or her baccalaureate within the agreed-upon time;
 - d) The student shall not be required to declare a major field until the spring semester or quarter of the student's sophomore year;
 - e) The student shall be required to be a full-time student and maintain academic standards equivalent to those required for receipt of Cal Grant awards;
 - f) A student may also be required to attend orientation sessions and student success workshops in order to remain eligible for the guarantee;

- g) A student who executes an agreement shall be granted priority for enrollment for each course that is part of the general pathway outlined as part of the agreement, as specified; and,
- h) A student who meets all of the requirements of the agreement and, through no fault of his or her own, is unable to complete his or her baccalaureate degree within the guaranteed period shall pay no tuition to take the additional coursework required to complete that degree.

EXISTING LAW declares that it is the policy of the Legislature that all resident applicants to California institutions of public higher education, who are determined to be qualified by law or by admission standards, as established by the respective governing boards of the institutions, should be admitted to either a community college, CSU, or UC campus (Education Code § 66011).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Purpose of the bill. According to the author, over the past 10 years it has become increasingly difficult for students entering into the CSU to graduate in 4 academic years because they cannot access the courses needed. The author states, "By requiring each CSU and requesting each UC to develop a graduation contract, the school and the student each become accountable for the student's education and graduation date." The author argues, "The contract can also be used as a tool of the colleges to recruit top performing students who are increasingly tempted to attend private and out-of-state schools which can guarantee graduation in 4 years."

Background. Graduation rates on college campuses have become an important national issue. In 2010 President Obama called for raising the college graduation rate among 25 to 34 year olds to 60% by 2020, a 20% increase in just ten years. Governor Jerry Brown has set as a goal for each of the State's public universities a 10% increase in the proportion graduating in four years.

According to the January 2014 report, "California's Future: Higher Education, by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), three of every four bachelor's degrees awarded annually come from either a CSU or UC. PPIC found that compared to other states, California's college-bound high school graduates are more likely to enroll in community colleges than in four-year colleges or universities. However, according to PPIC, lack of preparation for college-level work and lack of financial resources keep many students from advancing in the higher education system.

PPIC found that only about half of CSU students graduate within 6 years of entering as freshmen and that 4 of every 5 students earn a degree within 6 years at the UC.

Budgetary constraints. According to the January 2014 PPIC report, over the past few decades, California's public higher education institutions have faced disproportionate cuts in state funding. For every General Fund (GF) dollar for corrections in 2001-02, the state spent \$1.89 for UC, CSU, and the community colleges; by 2011-12, the state spent only \$0.82 on UC, CSU, and the community colleges for every dollar it spent on corrections.

Additionally, PPIC contends that over the past 10 years, per student GF allocations per student have fallen by more than 40% at CSU and by more than 50% at UC. California's public higher education institutions have responded to funding cuts by reducing expenses, including administrative and faculty costs, and increasing tuition and fees. PPIC notes that the revenue generated by tuition and fee increases has not fully compensated for GF cuts. Therefore, enrollment has been restricted even in the face of strong and growing demand. Hundreds of thousands of Californians have not been able to enroll in college, and those who do enroll are facing higher costs.

Four-year degree programs. This measure requires the CSU Trustees and requests the UC Regents to offer to eligible students, as specified, an agreement guaranteeing that a student who meets certain conditions may complete a baccalaureate degree in 4 years.

- 1) CSU. According to the CSU's systemwide Degree-Seeking First-Time Full-Time Freshmen Report, the number of CSU first-time freshmen systemwide in fall of 2007 was 50,866; after 4 years, 15.9% graduated, with 45.7% continuing on to additional year(s) of study. Additionally, first-time freshmen systemwide in fall of 2008 was 51,409; after 4 years, 16.2% graduated, with 47.5% continuing on to additional year(s) of study.

Currently, according to the CSU 2014-14 Admission Handbook, the CSU encourages all students who wish to graduate in four years to take advantage of CSU's 4-year degree programs. Each CSU campus has developed a four year program responsive to the needs of the campus community. The common core component for all 4-year degree plans is a strong advisement program. Students are expected to meet with advisors each term to plan a program of study that will assure appropriate progress toward meeting degree requirements.

Students participating in the CSU 4-year degree program must: 1) Arrive with English and mathematics skills needed to handle the demands of university study; 2) Declare a major at the time of admission (or shortly thereafter) and not change majors; 3) Enroll in a minimum of 15 semester/quarter units each term; 4) Fulfill all academic, grade, and coursework requirements; 5) Meet with an academic advisor on a regular basis and heed advice given; 6) Follow required administrative and academic policies and procedures; and 7) Meet the unit requirement (120-132 semester/180-198 quarter units) for the baccalaureate degree sought. Campuses must: 1) Ensure regular academic counseling; 2) Provide required courses; and, 3) Schedule sufficient class offerings.

Presently, it is unclear how many CSU students are taking advantage of the CSU 4-year degree program and how many of the 23 campuses are actively promoting their 4-year degree program. To note, Cal Poly Pomona has an active 4-year graduation program whereby they have a pledge with their 4-year degree program students. Cal Poly Pomona students must pledge that they: 1) will remain in the same major they selected when they entered the institution; 2) will successfully complete 25% of the required units for their degree per year to ensure meeting the minimum graduation requirements appropriate to the major; 3) will maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.2; and 4) must earn a "C" or better or credit/no credit in all course work taken. Cal Poly Pomona in turn pledges to the 4-year degree program students that if required course or appropriate substitutions are not available during the tenure of their program, the participating students will not be required to pay tuition fees otherwise required to subsequently register and enroll in courses necessary for graduation.

- 2) UC. According to the UC, their first-time freshmen 4-year graduation rates (systemwide roughly 60% of entering freshmen graduate in 4 years), are well above the national average. However, UC Riverside (UCR), has a significantly lower percentage of their entering freshmen graduating in 4 years.

UCR is presently considering an initiative to create a 4-year graduation contract with their students. It is unclear as to when UCR will determine if indeed they will launch this initiative.

Committee considerations. This measure allows students participating in the created 4-year completion program to not have to declare a major field of study until the spring semester or quarter of the students' sophomore year. If students wait this long to declare their major field of study, will this truly allow for them to graduate in 4 years? **Staff recommends that the author amend this provision to instead: specify that each campus shall determine the latest possible time for a participating student in the 4-year degree contract program to declare a major, but that a participating student shall declare his or her major no later than the fall semester/quarter of his or her sophomore year.**

As aforementioned, it is presently unclear how many of the campuses are encouraging their students to sign up for their 4-year graduation program. Instead of codifying the 4-year graduation program, the committee may wish to consider amending this measure to require the CSU to increase their efforts in ensuring entering freshmen are aware of the CSU's 4-year degree program.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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