Date of Hearing: June 10, 2014

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Das Williams, Chair
SB 1200 (Padilla) – As Amended: April 22, 2014

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: academic standards.

SUMMARY: Requires the California State University (CSU) and requests the University of California (UC) to develop guidelines for high school computer science courses that may be approved for recognition of admission. Encourages UC, for computer science courses deemed to satisfy mathematics subject area requirements, to ensure courses build upon fundamental mathematics content provided in courses that align with the academic content standards developed by the Academic Content Standards Commission (ACSC).

EXISTING LAW

1) Requires CSU and requests UC establish a model uniform set of academic standards for high school courses for the purposes of recognition for admission; and to develop and implement a speedy process whereby high schools may obtain approval of their courses to satisfy specified admissions requirements.

2) Establishes the ACSC to develop academic content standards that are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation, consistent with the common core curriculum.

FISCAL EFFECT: The Senate Appropriations Committee determined, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, this bill has a negligible fiscal impact.

COMMENTS: Background. To be considered for admission to UC and CSU, high school students must take a minimum of 15 academic courses from a list of established common high school course requirements ("a-g"). This course pattern is intended to ensure students have achieved a basic level of academic preparation for university level coursework. The a-g requirements are as follows:

Area	Subject	Years
(a)	History/Social Science	2
(b)	English	4
(c)	Mathematics	3
(d)	Laboratory Science	2
(e)	Language Other than English	2
(f)	Visual and Performing Arts	1
(g)	College Preparatory Elective	1

California high schools submit their courses to UC for a-g review during the annual a-g cycle. Once approved, courses are added to the school's official A-G course list maintained by UC, which is available to the public online. The CSU generally defers recommendations of additions or revisions to the a-g requirements to the UC.

Computer science courses. According to the Status Report on High School Computer Science Courses, issued by UC in January of 2014, in the 2013-14 academic year, over 400 high schools (approximately 20%) offered at least one UC-approved computer science course to their students. The majority of currently approved computer science courses satisfy the college preparatory elective (requirement g).

In March 2013, the UC Board of Admissions & Relations with Schools (BOARS) convened six faculty advisory workgroups to review and update course criteria for the A-G requirements. A focus of the mathematics working group was to establish parameters for courses that use mathematical concepts to meet the mathematics requirements. The revised a-g requirements, applicable beginning in the 2015-16 school year, explicitly mention computer science courses as able to satisfy the math subject requirement. UC indicates that courses which include a mathematics prerequisite and are intended for 11th and 12th grade students, "such as discrete mathematics or computer science", may be deemed to satisfy the mathematics requirement.

Purpose of this bill. According to the author, the majority of high schools only require students to use computers for basic typing or essay assignments and seldom provide students opportunities to develop coding skills. Additionally, the author notes that high schools are not encouraged to establish advanced computer courses for college bound students because courses generally do not satisfy core a-g requirements for college admissions, and are only counted toward electives. This bill will require CSU, and request UC, to establish guidelines to help high schools design advanced computer science courses that will meet mathematics requirements for undergraduate admissions.

UC position. UC is neutral on this bill. According to UC, if enacted, BOARS will work to develop guidelines for advanced computer science courses. However, these courses should be seen as a supplement to, and not a replacement for, the three years of mathematics that serve as the cornerstone of the "c" requirement. Additionally, UC notes support for full implementation of the Common Core State Standards and is pleased to see that SB 1200 calls for new computer science guidelines to be aligned with Common Core.

Related legislation. AB 1764 (Olsen and Buchanan) would allow a school district to award mathematics credit for completion of a CSU and UC approved "Category C" computer science course, if the district requires more than two years of mathematics courses for graduation. AB 1764 is currently pending in the Senate Education Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Chamber of Commerce
California Federation of Teachers

Opposition

None on file.

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