

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

ACR 147 (Alvarez) – As Introduced February 16, 2024

SUBJECT: California’s First-Generation College Celebration Day

SUMMARY: Designates November 8, 2024, as “California’s First-Generation College Celebration Day” and urges higher education institutions in California to recognize and celebrate the day to further support first-generation college students. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Designates, on behalf of the Legislature, November 8, 2024, as “California’s First-Generation College Celebration Day.”
- 2) Urges, on behalf of the Legislature, for higher education institutions in California to do all the following:
 - a) Celebrate “California’s First-Generation College Celebration Day;”
 - b) Recognize the significance first-generation college students in developing the state’s future workforce;
 - c) Celebrate the Federal Higher Education Act of 1965 and the programs established by the act which assist first-generation and historically disadvantaged students in gaining access to higher education; and,
 - d) Support first-generation students by providing opportunities and equity in completing their desired degree.
- 3) Requires the Chief Clerk of the Assembly to transit copies of the resolution to the author (Assemblymember Alvarez) for distribution.
- 4) Makes various findings and declarations related to the Federal Higher Education Act of 1965 and various programs on California postsecondary campuses, all of which support underrepresented students; including, but not limited to:
 - a) The Federal Higher Education Act of 1965 signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on November 8, 1965 and is responsible for various programs designed to exclusively help low-income and first-generation students access higher education; and,
 - b) Various programs have been established to provide services to first-generation and underrepresented students in postsecondary education. These programs include Puente Project, Educational Opportunity Program, Umoja, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Student Achievement Program.

EXISTING LAW: *Federal law.*

- 1) Establishes the Higher Education Act, which governs the administration of federal funding for higher education programs, including federal financial aid, for the purpose of ensuring

every person has access to higher education (United States Code, Title 20, Chapter 28, Subchapter 1, Part A, Section 1001 et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Need for the measure.* As enumerated by the author, “As a first-generation college graduate and former Puente student in high school and TRIO McNair Scholar in college, I have experienced firsthand these remarkable programs that led to my college success. I’ve also worked for the TRIO Program and understand the genuine commitment that staff has for the students they serve. Without these program efforts, many of our first-generation students would not be completing their higher education dreams. We must acknowledge at the State Legislature the importance of these programs to first-generation students by celebrating an official day.”

In 2017, the Council for Opportunity in Education and the Center for First-generation Student Success instituted the inaugural “First-Generation College Celebration Day.” The purpose of the day was to establish a narrative where colleges and universities celebrate the success of first-generation college students, faculty, and staff. Since the inaugural, “First-Generation College Celebration Day,” the celebration has expanded to include national recognition with U.S. Senate Resolution 500 in 2023 by U.S. Senator Warnock of Georgia. The resolution recognized November 8, 2023 as “First-Generation College Celebration Day” and urged the people of the United States to celebrate the important role that first-generation college students play in helping to develop the future workforce.”

ACR 147 (Alvarez), builds upon the 2023 U.S. Senate Resolution 500 by establishing the first “California First-Generation College Celebration Day” beginning on November 8, 2024 and encourages colleges and universities within California to mark the occasion, by celebrating and supporting first-generation college students. ACR 147 (Alvarez) does not create a holiday for purposes of a day off from work or school, but rather raises awareness of the importance of equity and access by highlighting programs that help first-generation students succeed in postsecondary education.

The Higher Education Act of 1965. In April 2023, the Congressional Research Services (CRS) published a primer on “The Higher Education Act”. The CRS summarized the Higher Education Act of 1964 as the authorizing legislation for numerous federal aid programs which provide support to both individual pursuing a postsecondary education and the institutions of higher education. Contained within the Higher Education Act are the following sections:

- Title II, III, and V provide institutional aid and support, including funding for historically Black colleges and Hispanic serving institutions; and,
- Title IV – authorizes the federal government’s major student financial aid programs, including Federal Pell Grant and the TRIO programs;

Federal Pell Grants (Pell) are the largest source of grant aid provided by the federal government for students seeking to attend postsecondary education institutions. Pell is a need-based program that provides up to \$7,395 (in the 2024-2025 award year) each year to qualifying students. Typically, Pell is awarded to an undergraduate student with exceptional need and in recent years has been expanded to include eligible incarcerated students. The Pell is provided for no more than 12 terms or roughly six years and it can be prorated if the student enrolls in less than a full-time course load.

TRIO Programs are six discretionary grant programs designed to provide financial assistance to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds prepare and complete postsecondary education. TRIO Programs primarily serve students who are first-generation, low-income, students with disabilities, students at risk for academic failure, veterans, homeless youth, foster youth, or/and individuals who are underrepresented in graduate education. TRIO programs include the following:

- Education Opportunity Centers – a program designed to offer counseling and information on college admissions to qualified adults who either wish to enter or continue their postsecondary education journey. The goal of the centers is to increase the number of adult participants who enroll in postsecondary education;
- Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement – assists undergraduate students in the preparation required for doctoral study. The program provides research opportunities, internships, counseling, tutoring and stipends to help disadvantage students pursue their doctoral degrees. Funding is provided to institutions of higher education to help prepare eligible students for doctoral studies;
- Student Support Services – provides awards to postsecondary education institutions for the purpose of developing and providing programs to help assist and motivate students towards successful completion of their postsecondary education. For example, an institution may receive the funding and establish academic tutoring opportunities or additional financial aid support for students;
- Talent Search – the purpose of the program is to increase the number of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who complete both high school and college. The program identifies and assists these individuals by providing academic, career, and financial counseling to help encourage completion;
- Training Program for Federal TRIO Program Staff – is a grant program specifically designed to support training to enhance the skills and expertise of staff who are employed in Federal TRIO programs;
- Upward Bound – serves high school students from low-income families and high school students who would be considered first-generation college students. The program provides academic instruction, tutoring, counseling, and mentoring to help students who are underrepresented in higher education persist to enrollment in higher education;
- Upward Bound Math-Science – same as Upward Bound but specifically targets underrepresented, low-income, or first-generation high school students who wish to enroll in math and science majors in college; and,
- Veterans Upward Bound – serves veterans by motivating and assisting them in developing academic skills necessary to successfully graduate from a postsecondary education institution.

First-generation college students in California. California is home to the largest and most diverse postsecondary education system in the United States. One of the primary goals of the public higher education systems is to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion; which begins by

increasing access for first-generation and underrepresented students. The California Community College DataMart system, identified 433,792 first-generation students attending a California Community College in the fall 2023. The Academic and Student Affairs Institutional Research and Analysis Department of the California State University, found in fall 2023, 136, 292 undergraduate students had parents who did not attend college. The University of California in fall 2023, reported 37% of undergraduates identified as first-generation college students.

To support first-generation students, an array of programs have been established on campus to help students from all backgrounds succeed in their higher education goals. The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), established in 1969, focuses on providing support programs to help first-generation and economically disadvantaged students succeed in their undergraduate programs. While the EOP is primarily on CSU campuses, a version of EOP also exists on CCC campuses and is called Extended Opportunity Programs and Services. The Puente Project was originally established by Chabot College and has since expanded to community colleges across that state. Puente Project primary goal is to help community college students successfully transfer to four-year universities by providing academic and mentoring support. The Umoja program is nationally recognized program, currently offered at the CCC, CSU, and UC and is focused on assisting Black students matriculate to graduation. Both the CSU and the CCC have an Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Student Achievement Program designed to provide tailored academic assistance for underserved and first-generation AANHPI students. The goals of all the programs listed above are aligned with ACR 147 (Alvarez) as each wishes to acknowledge the lived experience of first-generation students, provide academic supports to ensure equity with their peers, and celebrate the success of these students.

Arguments in support. As enumerated by the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, “ACR 147 should be passed because it will provide much-needed recognition and support to the large number of first-generation college students enrolled in community colleges across the state. First-generation students frequently face unique challenges and barriers to success, such as unfamiliarity with the college setting, limited access to resources and support systems, and financial constraints. By establishing a day to celebrate and support these students, the bill would raise awareness of their experiences and the importance of providing them with the resources and opportunities they require to succeed academically.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Community College League of California
Faculty Association of California Community College

Opposition

None on file.

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