

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2403 (Bonta) – As Amended March 20, 2024

SUBJECT: Community colleges: student equity plan

SUMMARY: Requires a student equity plan to also include a description of the active involvement of all groups on campus in developing the student equity plan for each community college in a community college district (CCD). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Specifies that, as a condition for receiving Student Success and Support Program funding, and in order to ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances, the governing board of each CCD must maintain a student equity plan that includes a description of the active involvement of all groups on campus in developing the student equity plan for each community college in the CCD.
- 2) Makes various grammatical and technical changes.
- 3) Establishes that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs will be made, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The CCC shall be comprised of community college districts (Education Code (EDC) Section 70900).
- 2) Creates for each CCD a board of trustees, known as the governing board, and authorizes the governing board to establish, maintain, operate, and govern each CCC within their district in accordance with state and federal law, as specified. The governing board may initiate and carry on any program, activity, or may otherwise act in any manner that is not in conflict or inconsistent with any law and that is not in conflict with the purpose of a CCC district, as specified. (EDC Section 70902).
- 3) Establishes the Student Success and Support Program for the purpose of encouraging the matriculation of students towards their educational goals. Specifically funding allocated through the program to districts is to be used for the following:
 - a) Orientation services designed to provide students with information on campus procedures, academic expectations, financial assistance, and other matters the district deems appropriate;
 - b) Assessment before course registration, as specified; and,
 - c) Counseling and other educational planning services including, but not limited to:

- i) Assisting students in the exploring educational and career interests, identifying educational objectives including degree obtainment;
 - ii) Developing an educational plan leading to course selection that lead to the conferral of a degree or certificate that is aligned with the student's educational goal;
 - d) Referrals to special support services, including but not limited to financial aid, health services, foster youth services, and disabled student services; and,
 - e) Evaluation of each student's progress and referrals for academic interventions, as defined (EDC Section 78212).
- 4) Establishes the Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) Program and requires a CCD, as a condition of the receipt of funds under the program, to comply with specified requirements, including the maintenance of a student equity plan to ensure equal educational opportunities and promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances. (EDC Section 78222)
- 5) Requires a student equity plan to be developed with the active involvement of all groups on campus as required by law, including, but not limited to, the academic senate, academic faculty and staff, student services, and students, and with the involvement of appropriate people from the community. (EDC Section 78220)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, “approximately \$450 million dollars are annually provided to [CCDs] through the SEA Program...the purpose of these plans is to ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students. In order to successfully promote equity and achievement, it is critical that stakeholders, especially students, are engaged in the development of these plans. By requiring student equity plans to detail how stakeholder engagement was executed, we can ensure that funds are used effectively and appropriately to best target student needs.”

Vision for Success and Guided Pathways. In 2017, the CCC Board of Governors adopted the Vision for Success, a comprehensive framework to improve student outcomes by closing achievement gaps, increasing degree and certificate attainment, increasing transfers to four-year institutions, reducing excess unit accumulation by students, and provide the necessary skills for gainful employment. The Vision for Success has acted as the foundation in supporting financial and educational decisions of the system in producing student-driven results. Incorporated within the Vision for Success was the implementation of Guided Pathways across all community college campuses. In the 2017-2018 Budget Act \$150 million in one-time funds was allocated to establish Guided Pathways at all CCCs within five years. The principles of Guided Pathways is to provide:

- 1) Students with clear curricular pathways to employment and further education.
- 2) Guidance to help students choose and enter their pathways.
- 3) Supports to ensure students stay on their chosen educational path.

- 4) Ensure that learning occurs with intentional outcomes such as skills mastery, credentials or degree attainment.

Specifically, the model produced by Guided Pathways would provide all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns that promote informed enrollment decisions that aligns with the student's chosen educational goal and seeks to provide support services to ensure students matriculate into their chosen career field. Some of the key elements of guided pathways would include proactive academic and career counseling, early alert systems for intervention for students who are struggling, and instructional supports.

In addition to funding the Guided Pathways, the 2017-2018 established the SEA Program to support the community colleges with implementing Guided Pathways and to advance the systemwide goal to eliminate achievement gaps for students from traditionally underrepresented groups. This program consolidated the Basic Skills Initiative, Student Equity, and the Student Success and Support Program. As part of consolidating these programs, colleges would maintain an equity plan, provide matriculation services, including counseling, adopt placement policies, and provide all students with an educational plan. Ideally an educational plan would be a roadmap for a student on how to achieve their intended degree or educational outcome.

Equity plans are focused on boosting achievement as measured by specific "success indicators" (access; course completion; English as a second language and basic skills completion; degrees and certificates awarded; and transfer rates) and require each college to develop detailed goals and measures addressing disparities that are discovered.

Arguments in support. Public Advocates, the sponsor of AB 2403 (Bonta), wrote in support, noting that "as a condition of funding through the SEA Program, the governing boards of CCC districts are required to maintain a student equity plan. The purpose of these plans is to 'ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students.' Plans are required to include campus-based research on a variety of demographic categories. Additionally, student equity plans are already required to be developed with the active involvement of all groups on campus including the academic senate, academic faculty and staff, student services, students, and other appropriate people from the community."

"Public Advocates conducted an analysis of the 113 SEA Plans submitted to the Chancellor's Office. After analyzing the plans, specifically Section 9.3 (which describes strategies deployed to leverage student voice), Public Advocates discovered inconsistent engagement across the state. Only 14 colleges (12.38%) had multi-pronged strong engagement strategies and 53 colleges (46.90%) didn't list specific student engagement strategies. This bill strengthens SEA Program guidelines by requiring CCC districts to detail their strategies to engage relevant stakeholders, including students, within their student equity plans."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Teachers Association
Public Advocates

Opposition

None on file

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