

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1045 (Ávila Fariás) – As Introduced February 20, 2025

SUBJECT: California State University and University of California: financial incentives: nonprofit organizations: service learning.

SUMMARY: Requires California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses that choose to participate to provide financial incentives to partnering nonprofit organizations for purposes of facilitating service learning programs and opportunities for undergraduate students. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Stipulates that a participating campus of the CSU or UC who chooses to participate, must allocate funds to provide financial incentives to nonprofit organizations for purposes of facilitating service learning programs and opportunities for students.
- 2) Requires that a participating campus of the CSU or UC that chooses to participate, must use existing resources or secure additional funding, such as private donations or grants, to implement this measure.
- 3) Defines the following terms for purposes of this measure:
 - a) “Financial incentives” includes stipends to supervise students during their service learning placement;
 - b) “Nonprofit organization” means a tax-exempt organization as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code that partners with a participating institution to implement this section;
 - c) “Participating institution” means a CSU or UC campus that chooses to implement this section;
 - d) “Service learning” means an educational approach that intentionally combines meaningful community service activities with instruction and reflection to support student progress toward academic and civic engagement learning objectives while meeting societal needs; and,
 - e) “Student” means an undergraduate student enrolled at a participating institution.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents of the UC; and, grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services (Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution).

- 2) Establishes the CSU system, made of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the Board of Trustees, the power, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system (Education Code (EC) Sections 66606 and 89030, et seq.).
- 3) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act and assigns the missions of the CSU and the UC (EC Section 66010, et seq.).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Need for the measure.* According to the author, “service-learning is a creative educational approach that incorporates classroom learning objectives with community engagement and service. Studies have shown the positive impact and value service-learning provides, both in the classroom and in the local community. So much so, the UC and CSU have committed to expanding their efforts to integrating career-relevant knowledge and skills through avenues such as service-learning in the coming decade. Despite the benefits service-learning and other ‘learn by doing’ approaches provide, there are limited financial incentives to facilitate these types of learning programs and opportunities for undergraduate students attending California public universities.”

Further the author contends that, “AB 1045 authorizes participating CSU and UC campuses to provide financial incentives to partnering nonprofit organizations to facilitate service learning programs and opportunities for undergraduate students. This bill will not only assist our public universities in reaching their goals but further enrich their student’s education and experience as well.”

What is service learning? According to an article, entitled, *Service-Learning in Nonprofit Organizations: Motivations, Expectations, and Outcomes*, as published Spring 2006 by the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, service learning is a form of experiential learning in which classroom instruction is reinforced by community service. The article finds that service learning has become a common and well accepted curricular component at many institutions of higher learning in the nation. The article contends that service learning benefits students in two major areas: (1) students’ education is enhanced in many ways, including, but not limited to: improving critical thinking skills; integrating theory and practice; and, improving communication skills; and, (2) students are more likely to be engaged citizens throughout adulthood.

Committee Staff understands there are various types of service learning and projects these can include:

- 1) Direct service – which includes tutoring, serving meals, working with patients, helping a refugee family, walking foster dogs, or participating in events at a nursing or skilled facilities home.
- 2) Indirect service – which is doing something behind the scenes to assist, such as organizing a fundraising event, working in a resale shop, stocking a food pantry, collecting donations, or planting trees. Fields such as environmental studies and sociology tend to offer more indirect service opportunities.

- 3) Advocacy – which can take the form of students writing letters to government officials and educating others about possible policy changes utilizing various methods. Political science and criminal justice classes often feature more advocacy service opportunities.

Current service learning partnerships at the CSU and UC. The Center for Community Engagement at the CSU provides opportunities for CSU students to become engaged in their communities. For 20 years, the CSU has partnered with local communities for student placement and initiatives. According to the CSU, there are more than 5,800 partnerships within the communities they serve with more than 67,000 engaged CSU undergraduates and more than 3,500 service learning courses available.

Currently, CSU at Monterey Bay (CSUMB) is the only public university in California, and one of the few nationwide, that has made service learning a graduation requirement for all undergraduate students. Students generally complete two components of the CSUMB service learning requirement: lower division Civics/Service Learning; and, upper division Service Learning. Students entering CSUMB as lower division students will need to complete both requirements; however, students entering as upper division transfer students only need to complete the upper division requirement.

The lower division Civics/Service requirement is a three unit course that requires 25 hours of community service. This class is intended to provide a foundation in civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes to inform service and civic action work in the community. All Civics/Service Learning classes require students to complete 25 hours of service off-campus with a local organization. In addition, students complete a Civic Action project.

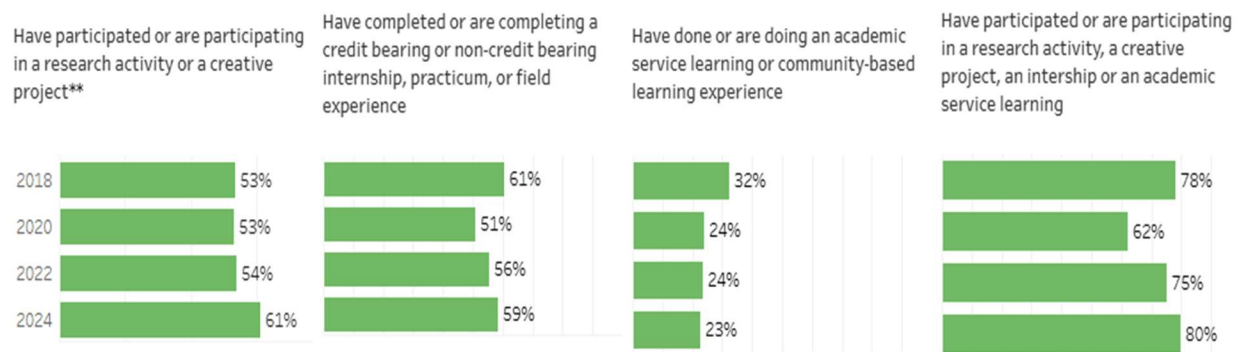
The upper division Service Learning classes require students to complete 30 hours of service off-campus with a community organization in a field related to their major. Focusing on the student's field of study and/or professional application.

Each semester, the various CSUMB departments offer over 50 upper division Service Learning classes. Some fields of study, such as Liberal Studies, Environmental Studies, and Human Development & Family Studies, require two service learning classes.

According to the UC, undergraduates learn inside and outside of the classroom, including through research opportunities, internships, and service learning. These experiences are particularly important in providing students with career-relevant knowledge and skills.

The UC Undergraduate Experience Survey, provides metrics to assess participation in these activities. Overall, about four-fifths of bachelor's degree recipients reported in 2024 during the graduation term that they had participated in a research activity, an internship, or an academic service learning experience, with five percentage points increase from 2022 at 75%. The participation rate in 2020 (62%) was lower than that in other years due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bar graphs from the UC, on page four of this analysis, show the increase of student participation over the span of several years.



*Note: Some survey respondents graduated and received a bachelor's degree at the end of the spring or summer of the survey year. This filter allows us to understand the proportion of students who had experiences in research, internship, or community service learning among the general student population and among students who are at the end of their undergraduate education at UC.

**Note: the measure of participation in a research activity or a creative project includes four items: 1. Assist faculty in conducting research, 2. Assist faculty with their creative project, 3. Conduct own research or creative project under faculty guidance, and 4. Conduct own research or creative project without faculty guidance as presented in the "Research" tab. If a student has participated or is participating in any of these research or creative activities, this student is considered as having participated or currently participating in a research activity or a creative project.

In 2024, the item "Conduct own research or creative project under faculty guidance" is separated into two items "Conduct own research under faculty guidance" and "Conduct own creative project under faculty guidance". The item "Conduct own research or creative project without faculty guidance" is also separated into "Conduct own research without faculty guidance" and "Conduct own creative project without faculty guidance". These changes could contribute to a higher percentage of research/creative project participation in 2024.

Committee Staff understands that in response to the UC Multi-Year Compact Goal, UC will continue to expand efforts to integrate career-relevant knowledge and skills into the educational experience, in part, by establishing a goal of enabling all students to participate in at least one semester of undergraduate research, internships, and/or relevant on-campus or community service learning experiences.

Committee comments. This measure provides a participating campus of the CSU or UC to provide financial incentives to nonprofit organizations for purposes of facilitating service learning programs and opportunities for students.

While the measure also authorizes a participating campus of the CSU or UC to secure additional funding, such as private donations or grants in order to implement the provisions of this measure, it also requires a participating campus of the CSU or UC to use existing resources in order to implement the measure. With the CSU and UC facing an 8% budget cut in State appropriated funding, it is presently unclear, shy private donations, if the CSU or UC would be able to fund this.

Moving forward, the author may wish to delete the requirement that the CSU and UC have to use existing resources in order to provide financial incentives.

Further, the CSU and UC already have robust service learning programs, this measure could enhance the programs and partnerships with nonprofit organizations, but, *the Committee may wish to examine if it is an appropriate use of State resources to be provided as an incentive for nonprofit entities to participate in service learning with the CSU and UC?*

Additionally, as currently drafted, it is unclear if the CSU and UC campuses who choose to participate under the provisions of this measure, would need to establish new partnerships with nonprofit organizations. If new partnerships need to be established, it is unclear how said partnerships would be created.

Moving forward, the author may wish to work with the CSU and UC in order to determine if this measure is implementable.

Arguments in support. According to GENup, “universities across California have service learning initiatives of varying scopes. CSU Monterey Bay, for example, has implemented a service learning graduation requirement for all undergraduate students across every major, successfully integrating it into campus culture. While a campus-wide graduation requirement is unlikely to be feasible for most universities, scaling down this model to a single ‘department’ or ‘college’ at a small group of pilot campuses is indeed practical. There are likely several universities who have departments on campus – especially in the social sciences – that have already integrated service learning into their programs to an extent that it would not require much additional effort to turn it into a graduation requirement for a chosen subset of students.”

GENup contends that, “young people clearly state that they are looking for more service opportunities and ways to learn about the systemic factors shaping the communities where they study and live. Nonprofits are in need of talented human capital but are often short on funds to hire permanent staff. And our society desperately needs to build bridges and increase understanding between people with different life experiences.”

Prior legislation. AB 2152 (McCarty), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, which was held on the Suspense File in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, would, in part, commencing with the 2026–27 academic year, require each CSU and UC campus to provide on its internet website information on service learning programs and opportunities for undergraduate students. The bill, commencing with students graduating in the 2033–34 academic year, would require the CSU and the UC, for at least 3 campuses each, as specified, to adopt a pilot program making the completion of a service learning program a graduation requirement.

AB 1390 (McCarty), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, which was held on the Suspense File in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, was substantially similar to AB 2152 (McCarty), as described above.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Nonprofits

GENup (Generation Up)

Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties (Sponsor)

Opposition

None on file.

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