

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 2738 (Reyes) – As Introduced February 18, 2022

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: community colleges: matriculation: assessment

SUMMARY: Requires California Community Colleges (CCC) to make available information regarding course schedules and degree completion and to offer courses associated with degrees and certificates within a specified timeline, as defined. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines the following:
 - a) “Chancellor’s Office” as the office of the Chancellor of the CCC;
 - b) “College” as the community college maintained by a district; and,
 - c) “District” means a community college district.
- 2) Require each governing board of each district, by January 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, to make available to the public, as defined, all of the following information:
 - a) The schedule of courses that must be completed to obtain each associate of arts degree and certificate offered by the college;
 - b) The number of academic years, months, semesters, or terms it takes to obtain each associate of arts degree and certificate offered by the college;
 - i) This data point will be disaggregated by each associate of arts degree and by each certificate offered by the college and will include the completion rates for the prior year disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and economic statuses of the college students.
- 3) Requires each governing board of a district, by a date to be determined by the Chancellor’s Office, but no later than a date yet to be determined in 2023 and annually thereafter, to submit a report to the Chancellor’s Office with information and data collected by the district’s college or colleges as required by (2) of this analysis.
- 4) Requires by January 1, 2024, for the governing board of each district to offer each course required for the conferral of an associate of arts degree offered by a college within the district every two years. To the extent this is not possible, a governing board of a district will:
 - a) Hold a public hearing and provide reasons on why offering required courses for every associate degree offered by the colleges within the district every two years is not possible and to report these finding to the Chancellor’s Office;
 - b) Develop, approve, and present to the Chancellor’s Office for review and approval, a plan to within six years or as soon as possible, to offer each course associated with an associate of arts degree every two academic years; and,

- c) Make available to the public the governing board's finding from the public hearing as described in (4) (a) of this analysis and the plan described (4) (b) of this analysis as soon as the Chancellor's Office has approved it.
- 5) Requires by January 1, 2024, for the governing board of each district to offer within an undefined period of months, each course required courses for the conferral of certificate offered by a college within the district. To the extent this is not possible, a governing board of a district will:
- a) Hold a public hearing and provide reasons on why offering courses every undefined number of months required for a certificate is not possible and to report these finding to the Chancellor's Office;
 - b) Develop, approve, and present to the Chancellor's Office for review and approval, a plan to within six years or as soon as possible, to offer each course associated with an certificate within an undefined number of months; and,
 - c) Make available to the public the governing board's finding from the public hearing as described in (4) (a) of this analysis and the plan described (4) (b) of this analysis as soon as the Chancellor's Office has approved it.
- 6) Authorizes the Chancellor's office to review and develop standards for the approved plans submitted by districts as defined in this analysis in (4) (b) and (5) (b) to comply with the requirements to offer required courses for an associate degree every two years and for certificates every undefined number of months.

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 CCC district 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 defined in Section 78213;
 - 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).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Need for the measure.* According to the author, "California Community Colleges play a key role in connecting California students, especially first-generation college students and those from low-income backgrounds, to well-paying careers and four-year universities. But two-year completion rates remain low, especially for our Latino, Black, and Indigenous students.

AB 2738 supports students' goals of earning their degrees and certificates within two years by requiring colleges to take concrete steps to make this timeline possible. This bill ensures accountability and transparency of information by requiring community colleges to publish course schedules for every associate's degree and certificate, as well as disaggregated data regarding completion rates."

Vision for Success and Guided Pathways. In 2017, the CCC Governing Board 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 supporting financial and educational decisions of the system to produce 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:

- Students with clear curricular pathways to employment and further education;
- Guidance to help students choose and enter their pathways;
- Supports to ensure students stay on their chosen educational path; and,
- 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 student's who are struggling, and instructional supports. Conceptually, Guided Pathways would have provided students with the course schedule mapping embedded in AB 2738 (Reyes); however, the implementation of Guided Pathways is not consistent across each campus of the 116 community college campuses.

In addition to funding the Guided Pathways, the 2017-2018 established the Student Equity and Achievement 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. According to the CCC Chancellor's Office Management Information System Data Mart, in fall 2021 459, 269 of the 1,399,683 students who attended courses at the CCC utilized the academic counseling services and 299,350 used the educational plan services. Therefore, there is a significant pool of the population who are currently not utilizing the Student Success Services who may benefit from having course schedules available online.

Course offerings and schedules. Currently nothing in Education Code nor in the California Title 5 regulations dictate how often a community college is to offer a course. Due to the myriad of factors which may influence how often or how many courses are offered for a specific program, the discretion is left to the individual campuses. Factors influencing course offerings include: availability of faculty, student enrollment figures, matriculation of students in the course sequences for a degree, and overall operational budgets of the campus.

Each community college campus must obtain and maintain accreditation through a regional accreditor in order to be an operating public higher educational institution in California, and technically in the United States. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC), accredits the campuses within the CCC. According to the ACCJC eligibility requirements for accreditation as adopted on June 2014, an institution must schedule courses in a manner that allows students to complete certificate and degree programs within a period of time consistent with established expectations in higher education. Therefore, if the CCC is hoping for students to matriculate to a degree or certificate within a given time such as two years, then to maintain their accreditation the campus must offer courses frequently enough for students to obtain the degree or certificate within that determined timeframe. Furthermore, according to the ACCJC, to maintain accreditation a community college must describe its certificates and degrees of their purpose, course requirements, and expected learning outcomes. Therefore, the data collection suggested by AB 2738 (Reyes) should already be completed for purposes of accreditation; however, the data is not readily available to the public.

Arguments in support. According to the National Community College Hispanic Council, "recent study by the Campaign for College Opportunity found that, in 2012-13, only 40% of CCC students seeking to transfer to a four-year university did so within six years, and only 2.5% did so within two years. These trends disproportionately impact students of color. While 79% of Black and 78% of Latino students declared transfer as their goal in 2013, only 9% and 10%, respectively, had transferred within four years.

Furthermore, AB 2738 will enable students to earn their community college degrees within two years by requiring colleges to take concrete steps toward making two-year completion possible. Specifically, this bill requires CCC's to annually publish on their websites: 1) The schedule of courses that must be completed to obtain every associate's degree or certificate, 2) the time it takes to complete, and 3) data regarding completion rates by race, ethnicity, and economic status. This bill then requires community colleges to make available the classes necessary for students to complete their degrees within two years. CCC's that are unable to meet these requirements must hold a public hearing to develop and approve a plan to address this issue within six years."

Committee comments and amendments. The schedule of courses is not a word defined in AB 2738 (Reyes), but is used throughout. A schedule of courses can have many meanings including the courses offered by a campus in a given semester, the sequence of courses required in order required for a degree or certificate, or the actual courses a student schedules each semester. Since most campuses already offer a schedule of courses which includes the annual offering of courses with descriptions, *the Committee would suggest the author refine the definition of schedule of courses as currently the Committee interprets this to mean the pattern of courses required for a student to obtain a degree which the majority of campuses has listed somewhere on their website.*

AB 2738 (Reyes) offers an unobtrusive plan to provide information to students by requiring colleges to provide a schedule of courses, time to degree, and annual disaggregated completion rates for degrees. Currently, all campuses offer a schedule of courses offered each year through their course catalogue. Each program offered by a campus has a list of courses required to complete the degree online. However, what is missing is the completion rates by degree available in a comprehensive report. AB 2738 (Reyes) takes steps to rectify this oversight by requiring campuses to publish the information; however, the bill is silent on how this information will be made available to the public.

AB 2738 (Reyes) also requires community college campuses to offer courses associated with an associate degree every two years. If a campus is unable to offer the courses in that timeframe, then the governing board must hold a hearing to discuss the reasons why they are unable to comply and to create an action plan to comply within six years. However, AB 2738 (Reyes) never actually requires campuses to comply with the regulation of offering the courses every two years. There are various factors which may influence a district's ability to comply with AB 2738 (Reyes) most of which are out of their control such as the availability of faculty, enrollment figures, and budgetary constraints. Ideally a college should be able to offer the courses for both an associate degree and a certificate within a reasonable timeframe for students; however, assigning a timeframe without acknowledging the factors beyond a district's control which influence course offerings is unreasonable.

To address drafting errors, to address the above concerns, and to offer community college the opportunity to explain why they are unable to offer courses in a timely manner for students to matriculate to degree or certificate attainment, the Committee has offered and the Author has accepted the following amendments:

To include all associate degrees, Section 78217 (b) (1) – (b) (1) (A) is amended to read:

(b) (1) On or before January 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the governing board of each district shall make available to the public ~~in a manner most convenient to the~~

~~public, including~~ by publishing on a college's internet website and the district's internet website, all of the following information:

(A) The schedule of courses that must be completed to obtain each associate ~~of arts~~ degree offered by the college.

To include all associate degrees and address a drafting error,, Section (b) (2) is amended to read:

(2) Information published pursuant to subparagraphs (C) and (D) of paragraph (1) shall be disaggregated by associate ~~of arts~~ degrees and certificates, and shall include associate of art degree and certificate completion rates for the prior year disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status ~~of the college's students~~.

To include a specific date and to require the information to be published, Section 78217 (3) is amended and (4) is added to read: (3) On or before a date determined by the chancellor's office, but no later than December 31, 2023, and December 31 of each year thereafter, the governing board of each district shall submit a report to the chancellor's office in the form determined by the chancellor's office. Each report shall include the information and data collected from the district's college or colleges pursuant to this subdivision for the prior year.

(4) The chancellor's office shall compile the reports provide pursuant to (3) and shall transmit the reports to the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, by March 31, 2024.

To include all associate degrees and to enable district's the opportunity to provide to the Legislature reasons why they cannot offer courses associated with degrees every two years Section 78217 (c) (1) and (2) is amended to read and (3) is deleted:

(c) On or before January 1, 2024, the governing board of each district shall within two academic years offer at a minimum each course required for the completion of each associate ~~of arts~~ degree offered by a college maintained by the district. To the extent that compliance with this subdivision is not practicable, the governing board shall do all of the following:

(1) Hold a public hearing and make findings on the reasons why compliance with this subdivision is not practicable, and report these findings to the chancellor's office by May 1, 2024.

(2) The chancellor's office shall compile the reports provide pursuant to (1) and shall transmit the reports to the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, by September 1, 2024.

To include a timeframe by which certificates must be offered, to and to enable district's the opportunity to provide to the Legislature reasons why they cannot offer courses associated with certificates as defined Section 78217 (d) (1) and (2) is amended to read and (3) is deleted:

(d) On or before January 1, 2024, the governing board of each district shall ~~within _____~~ months offer at a minimum each course required for the completion of each certificate offered by a college maintained by the district at least once within the timeframe a part-time student would complete the certificate. To the extent that compliance with this subdivision is not practicable, the governing board shall do all of the following:

(1) Hold a public hearing on and make findings on the reasons why compliance with this subdivision is not practicable and report these findings to the chancellor's office by May 1, 2024.

(2) The chancellor's office shall compile the reports provide pursuant to (1) and shall transmit the reports to the Legislature, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, by September 1, 2024.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Latino Community College Trustees & Administrators
Cerritos College
College of the Desert
Cuyamaca College
National Community College Hispanic Council

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Ellen Cesaretti-Monroy / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960