

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1111 (Berman) – As Amended March 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: common course numbering system

SUMMARY: Requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) to adopt, at all community colleges and for each community college campus catalog, a common course numbering system, starting with courses included in the Course Identification Numbering System (C-ID) and expanding to general education requirements and transfer pathway courses, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Specifies that, in order to streamline transfer from two- to four-year postsecondary educational institutions and reduce excess credit accumulation, the California Community Colleges must adopt a common course numbering system that is student facing, starting with courses included in the C-ID and expanding to general education requirements and transfer pathway courses.
- 2) Specifies that the common course numbering system shall have the same alphabetical identifier and same numerical identifier for each course that shares the same C-ID course description, pursuant to both of the following:
 - a) For all courses included in the C-ID, the CCC will adopt the alphabetical and numerical identifier of the C-ID course descriptor as the same common course number at all community colleges and each community college campus shall incorporate the common course numbers in its catalog.
 - b) For all general education requirements and transfer pathway courses that are not included in the C-ID, intersegmental discipline faculty through the C-ID process must develop a C-ID course descriptor for each of these CCC courses. Once a C-ID course descriptor is developed, the CCC must adopt the alphabetical and numerical identifier of the C-ID course descriptor as the same common course number at all community colleges and each community college campus shall incorporate the common course numbers in its catalog.
- 3) States the intent of the Legislature to build upon and use the C-ID to develop a common course numbering system for students that would have the same alphabetical identifier, for example, “ENG,” and same numerical identifier, for example, “100,” for each course that shares the same C-ID course descriptor across all community colleges.
- 4) Makes various findings and declarations, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires, by June 1, 2006, the CCC and the California State University (CSU) to adopt, and authorizes the University of California (UC) and private postsecondary institutions to adopt, a common course numbering system for the 20 highest-demand majors in the respective segments. The act requires, by June 30, 2006, the Board of Governors (BOG) of the CCC and the Trustees of the CSU to report to the Legislature, and requests the Regents of the UC to

report to the Legislature, on the activities of their respective segments related to that numbering system and on plans to implement a numbering system for the majors that are not the 20 highest-demand majors. The act also requires each campus of a public postsecondary educational institution to incorporate the common course numbering system in its catalog at the next adoption of a campus catalog after June 1, 2006. (Education Code (EDC) Section 66725 et seq.)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, “In February 2021, the Recovery with Equity Taskforce that was established through the Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education released the report *Recovery with Equity: A Roadmap for Higher Education After the Pandemic*, which included a set of recommendations aimed at helping California’s higher education systems recover from the pandemic more integrated, equitable, and resilient than before, and more aligned with the economic needs of the state. One of the recommendations from the report is to develop a common course numbering system at the CCC, meaning comparable courses would have the same course number at all community colleges. The recommendation’s aim would be to align all community college courses so that students transferring to four-year institutions know, as they are pursuing their courses, that they are meeting the requirements of the receiving institutions.”

“AB 1111 is based on this recommendation and would create a common course numbering system at CCC campuses. Currently, differences in course numbers can unintentionally set students back and is a barrier to timely transfer. This common sense bill would reduce unnecessary confusion, ease advising, reduce excess credit accumulation, and make it easier for community college students to transfer and earn their degree, saving students both time and money.”

Background. SB 1415 (Brulte), Chapter 737, Statutes of 2004, established the existing requirement for the CCC and CSU to establish and utilize a common course numbering system. According to SB 1415 Senate Floor analysis in 2004, SB 1415 sought “... to facilitate the seamless integration of California's postsecondary education institutions by requiring the adoption and incorporation of a common course numbering system among community college and CSU campuses, and requesting adoption and incorporation among the UC and independent colleges and universities. This promotes the effective and efficient progression of students within and among the higher education segments and will minimize duplication of coursework. Reducing the duplication of coursework will save students unnecessary expenses and encourage more efficient use of resources within higher education institutions.”

The requirements of SB 1415 are carried out within the C-ID initiative, which is a collaborative faculty effort involving the CCC and the CSU intended to improve seamless articulation for students both intersegmentally (CCC to CSU) and intrasegmentally (among CCCs). Articulation is the process of developing a formal, written agreement that identifies courses (or sequences of courses) on a ‘sending’ campus that are comparable to, or acceptable in lieu of, specific course requirements at a ‘receiving’ campus.

According to the C-ID website, C-ID is a faculty-driven system that was initially developed to assign identifying designations (C-ID numbers) to significant transfer courses. The C-ID number

is a designation that ties that course to a specific course “descriptor” that was developed by intersegmental discipline faculty and reviewed statewide.

Most C-ID numbers identify lower division transferable community college courses (such as major preparation or general education requirements) that are commonly articulated between the CCC and four-year institutions including CSU, University of California (UC), and private institutions.

Currently, C-ID has 368 approved descriptors and 33 draft descriptors from over 81 different disciplines.

Recovery with Equity. In February 2021, the Recovery with Equity Taskforce established through the Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education released a report titled *Recovery with Equity: A Roadmap for Higher Education After the Pandemic*. The report recommended the adoption of a common course numbering system at the CCC. The recommendation’s aim would be to align all community college courses so that students transferring to four-year institutions know, as they are pursuing their courses, that they are meeting the requirements of the receiving institutions.

Community college students take courses at multiple community colleges within a district or even across districts, and many use different student-facing course numbering systems. According to the author, without a student-facing common course numbering system and comprehensive transfer policies, students struggle to transfer credits between institutions and to plan out a coherent roadmap to earning their degree.

The Public Policy Institute of California in their September 2020 report *Increasing Community College Transfers: Progress and Barriers* noted, “currently, California lacks systemwide transfer protocols, such as common course numbering and consistent lower-division requirements, across all majors and all colleges” and recommended, “...that transfer protocol should include clearly identified and commonly numbered lower-division courses. Within majors, consistency in course requirements among community colleges and at UC and CSU—including common course numbering—could eliminate a lot of confusion as well as smooth the transition from community colleges to four-year colleges.”

Arguments in support. The Campaign for College Opportunity wrote that, “CCC institutions are the gateway to opportunity for 2.1 million students each year, promising access to the California dream. California’s Master Plan for Higher Education has guided higher education systems for over 50 years, planning for 70 percent of public higher education students to enroll at CCCs, and promising that CCC graduates are guaranteed the right to transfer to a CSU or UC to obtain bachelor’s degrees.”

“Unfortunately, the troubling reality is that far too many students find themselves caught in a transfer maze, forced to navigate a transfer process that is patched together by individual campus and regional partnerships, and lacks state or systemwide coordination. Students hoping to find an affordable pathway to a four-year university instead find a maze of pathways and requirements that creates confusion, leads to unnecessary unit accumulation, secures no degree for far too many. Amongst students with stated transfer goals, only 19 percent transfer within four years, and 28 percent within six years. Transfer rates are especially concerning for California’s low income, first generation, Black, and Latinx students. Latinx students represent over half of the

students who declare a transfer goal, yet only 35 percent transfer within four years. Black students declare transfer goals at a much lower rate, only seven percent, and only five percent successfully transfer.”

The Hon. Eleni Kounalakis, the Lieutenant Governor of California and a member of the BOG of the CCC, wrote that “This bill would require the CCC to adopt a common course numbering system that is student-facing, starting with courses included in the C-ID and expanding common course numbering to include general education requirements and transfer pathway courses. C-ID provides a mechanism to identify comparable courses and is a critical step to developing a common course numbering system at the CCC that would be easier for students to understand and navigate.”

“As a member of the CCC BOG I have heard from countless students that the differences in the current course numbering system have created barriers to timely completion, transfer and can unintentionally set students back. This bill would make it easier for CCC students to transfer and earn their degree.”

Arguments in opposition. The Academic Senate of the CCC (ASCCC) passed a Resolution on April 17, 2021 in opposition to AB 1111, writing that “...the provisions in AB 1111 proposing changes to Section 66725.5 of the EDC are in direct conflict with the existing and unaltered authority of local governing boards and academic senates as set forth in EDC Section 70902, which authorizes local governing boards to establish policies for and approve courses of instruction, including individual courses, and ensures the rights of local academic senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards.”

“C-ID descriptors, including subject codes and numbering, were developed to describe minimum conditions for local course alignment but do not limit local colleges from developing courses that go beyond those minimum standards and adapting their curriculum to meet local student needs and do not require local colleges to change course subject codes or numbering systems to be deemed comparable to the C-ID descriptor and other courses aligned with the same descriptor.”

“The mandates of AB 1111 would create undue and unnecessary difficulties for colleges regarding educational planning, student information systems, curriculum management systems, institutional data analysis and reporting, program review, college publications, articulation databases, student transcripts, and other areas and would potentially increase confusion for disproportionately impacted students who may have gaps in their education when courses are renumbered or when deleted courses are replaced with renumbered active courses in college catalogs.”

The Faculty Association of the CCC (FACCC) wrote that “there are a number of issues and discrepancies this bill doesn’t account for. Three community college campuses are on the quarter system and would not be able to adopt a common course numbering system. There are unit discrepancies among the districts as many districts have developed general education math or English sections with student support built in as a result of the passage of AB 705 (Irwin) in 2017. Old courses and new courses would also have to be equated in the college’s databases and the state would need to develop a workaround to deal with retired course numbers.”

Committee comments. Opposition to AB 1111 notes that requiring alignment of numbering amongst CI-D courses could cause discrepancies for co-requisite courses established pursuant to AB 705 (Irwin), and that any change to the numbering system would require potentially significant back-end work to ensure the alignment of numbering on transcripts and throughout data systems. Furthermore, there has been no feasibility study conducted to determine whether the change in course number would impact the creation of the California Cradle-to-Career Data System.

Yet committee staff also notes the intent of SB 1415 as codified in EDC Section 66725 sixteen years ago, which explicitly states that “...the purpose of building and implementing a common course numbering system is to provide for the effective and efficient progression of students within and among the higher education segments and to minimize duplication of coursework.” Students, and their decisions in selecting courses, play a crucial role in minimizing the duplication of coursework and providing for effective and efficient progression. Recent reports from PPIC and the Governor’s Council on Post-Secondary Education highlight the need for student-facing action. Staff notes that AB 1111 has no timeline for implementation, instead focusing on providing guidance and strategic-level policy.

Prior legislation. SB 1155 (Hertzberg, 2020) would have established the Los Angeles County Community Colleges Common Course Numbering Pilot Project, and would have required the chancellor to convene a pilot project task force to develop a common course numbering system in the subjects of mathematics and language arts. SB 1155 was held in the Senate Committee on Education due to COVID-19 bill restrictions.

SB 1415 (Brulte), Chapter 737, Statutes of 2004, required the CCC and the CSU, and authorized the University of California UC and the state’s private postsecondary institutions, to adopt a common course number system for their 20 majors in highest demand by June 1, 2006. The bill required the BOG of CCC and the CSU Trustees, and requested that the UC Regents, to report to the Legislature by June 30, 2006, on the status of implementing this program and on plans to implement a common course numbering system for all other majors. The bill also required each campus of each segment to incorporate the common numbering system into its next catalog issued after June 1, 2006.

SB 450 (Solis), Chapter 493, Statutes of 1995, required the BOG of the CCC to develop, maintain, and disseminate a common numbering system for use by each community college district. The bill required the office of the Chancellor of the CCC to absorb the costs of developing, maintaining, and disseminating a general common course numbering system within the office's existing resources.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alliance for a Better Community
California Association of School Counselors
Campaign for College Opportunity
Cerritos College
Community Equity Collaborative
Council for a Strong America

John Burton Advocates for Youth
Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis
Readynation
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
University of California Student Association
Western Association for College Admission Counseling (WACAC)
Young Invincibles

Opposition

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges

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