

Date of Hearing: April 5, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1796 (Choi) – As Amended March 23, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: reenrollment

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California State University (CSU) and requests the University of California (UC) to provide reenrollment rights to students who are in good academic standing and left the campus without obtaining a degree. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Requires each campus of the CSU and requests each campus of the UC to grant previously enrolled students, who have withdrawn or have stopped attending, to reenroll in their chosen baccalaureate degree program if the student remained in good academic standing with the university.
- 2) Stipulates as a condition of reenrollment, that a student may be required to pay any outstanding tuition and fees and may be required to provide the campus with transcripts and proof of good academic standing from a college the student attended during their absence.
- 3) Clarifies the CSU and the UC may omit over the years a student was not enrolled at the campus for purposes of calculating real time to degree under a graduation initiative.
- 4) Encourages the CSU and the UC to implement an outreach program to students who left without completing their baccalaureate degree and the outreach is to prioritize the reenrollment of students who are closest to graduation.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents and grants the Regents full powers of organization and governance subject only to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with terms of its endowments, and the 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 Donahoe Higher Education Act and assigns the mission of the UC and the CSU (Education Code (EDC) Section 66010, et seq.).
- 3) Stipulates no provision of the Donahoe Higher Education Act shall apply to the UC unless the UC Regents adopts the provision (EDC Section 67400).
- 4) 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 (EDC Section 66606 and 89030 et seq.).
- 5) Expresses the Legislature's intent for the Regents of the UC and the Board of Trustees for the CSU when determining the standards and criteria for undergraduate and graduate admissions to their respective universities to do the following:

- a) Develop a process which is fair and easily understandable;
  - b) Consider the use of criteria and procedures that allow student to enroll even if they are not deemed eligible due to circumstances beyond their control and when appropriate require the student to make up the deficiency; and,
  - c) Consult with California's diverse ethnic and cultural communities (EDC Section 66205 (a)).
- 6) Expresses the Legislature's intent for the UC and CSU to enroll a student body, as defined, that meets high academic standards and reflects the cultural, racial, geographic, economic, and social diversity of California (EDC Section 66205 (b)).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Need for the measure.* According to the author "AB 1796 would require the CSU, and request the UC, to require each campus in their respective system to grant students the opportunity to reenroll in their baccalaureate degree program after withdrawing. This bill will let students know that their respective college supports their needs and their own personal timeline to receive their baccalaureate degree."

*Worldwide pandemic impact on enrollment.* In response to the coronavirus (COVID – 19) and a desire to keep students, faculty, and staff safe, higher education institutions have primarily offered online or remote education from the spring of 2020 through the winter of 2022. The national impact of COVID-19 on enrollment has been well-documented by the National Student Clearinghouse, which reported in January 2022, a national enrollment decline of 5.1% or 938,000 students since fall 2019. In the January 2022 report, "Current Term Enrollment Estimates" California saw an overall decline of more than 99,000 in undergraduate enrollment from fall 2020 to fall 2021.

The CSU saw an increase in undergraduate enrollment from fall 2019 to fall 2020 of 3,621 undergraduates. The increase applied to continuing students (not first time or transfer students) and first-time enrollees. However, from fall 2020 to fall 2022, the CSU saw a decline in undergraduate enrollment of 8,084; which, included a decline in new and continuing students.

The UC saw an increase in undergraduate enrollment from fall 2019 to fall 2020 and again from fall 2020 to fall 2021. Overall the UC increased its systemwide undergraduate enrollment by 9,446 students with the largest enrollment increase occurring between fall 2020 and fall 2021. However, continuing student enrollment decreased between fall 2019 and fall 2020 by 391 students. The UC continuing student enrollment recovered in fall 2021 with returning students returning to pre-pandemic numbers with the additional ten of students.

*Current readmission policies for the CSU and UC.* At the time of this analysis, neither the CSU nor the UC have a systemwide policy in place for readmissions to the system. At the UC, students who were previously enrolled at a campus and elect to return must contact the campus's registrar's office for procedures on how to enroll. At UC Davis, a student wishing to be readmitted must complete a readmission application which is reviewed by the college dean's office who makes a determination of whether the student is readmitted. The student must be in good academic standing with the university and during the application process they may be

required to submit transcripts from colleges of study during their absence or pay fees for the application and any outstanding tuition fees.

As part of the CSU Graduation Initiative 2025, CSU campuses have begun to implement outreach programs to encourage students, who have previously left the campus without earning a degree, to return and continue their education. The outreach programs specifically target underrepresented minority students. The CSU currently permits all former students to return to their campus and their major, regardless of whether the campus or major is impacted. To return, the student must be in good academic standing with the campus. A returning student who has been absent for longer than a year will be required to submit an application for reenrollment. The purpose behind the application and processing fee is to ensure the pre-existing campus records for the student are accurate. The CSU is currently in the process of implementing a more streamlined application for returning students who wish to reenroll. Committee staff understands the new streamlined application will go online this fall.

*Governor's budget.* In the January 10 budget proposal, Governor Newsom unveiled a proposal for a multi-year compact between public higher education institutions and the state. The Governor's proposal guarantees an increase of 5% to the base operation for the CSU and the UC each year for five years, if the systems utilize the funds to meet specific metrics as defined in their compact. For the CSU one of the conditions listed in the compact is for the funding to be used to advance systemwide and campus-level reenrollment campaigns and establish campus retention targets beginning in the spring of 2022. While the compact for the UC does mention increasing undergraduate enrollment, the compact is silent in terms of requiring the UC to conduct outreach for reenrollment purpose.

*Committee comments.* Both the CSU and the UC have localized campus policies in place for the reenrollment of students who have since stopped attending courses of study. AB 1796 codifies the requirement for the CSU and requests the UC to admit returning students who pay outstanding tuition and are in good academic standing with the campus they seek to return. AB 1796 goes beyond the Governor's compact proposal as it encourages the CSU and the UC to conduct an outreach program to reenroll students who have left the system without graduating.

AB 1796 does not address the specificities of how a campus may reenroll a student. Additionally, the bill does not address whether a student should be required to submit a streamlined application, pay a fee, or whether their courses of study successfully completed at other colleges or universities should count towards a degree. Furthermore, the bill does not address whether the student will be required to take additional courses of study to obtain a degree due to changes in the curricula during their prolonged absences. *The author's office may wish to continue to engage with the UC and the CSU to ensure students are not unintentionally burdened by administrative requirements to obtain their right of return and are informed of the academic requirements for their intended major.*

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

None on file.

### **Opposition**

None on file.

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