

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1913 (Bryan) – As Amended March 28, 2022

**[This bill is double referred to the Natural Resources Committee and will be heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]**

**SUBJECT:** Los Angeles Community College District: California Center for Climate Change Education

**SUMMARY:** Authorizes the creation of the California Center for Climate Change Education for the purpose of promoting climate change education at the California Community Colleges and to establish hands-on learning opportunities for community college students. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the California Center for Climate Change Education (Center) to be located at the West Los Angeles College within the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD).
- 2) Clarifies the mission of the Center is to promote climate change education at the California Community Colleges (CCC) and to establish opportunities for students to participate in internships and other learning opportunities.
- 3) Specifies the center is to do all of the following:
  - a) Serve as an educational resource for community colleges on climate change education specifically focusing on climate change as a global issue of equity and justice;
  - b) Build pathways that lead to appropriate certificates and degrees in climate change that lead to employment opportunities;
  - c) Explore and expand internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, other work-based learning opportunities in the equity, environmental justice, and green jobs sectors;
  - d) Partner with local and regional entities to support the workforce training needed in the greening of the energy grid, and green jobs sectors; and,
  - e) Develop and sustain an urban climate change sustainability conference.
- 4) Requires the Center to work with the appropriate entities and faculty groups, including, but not limited to the CCC Chancellor's Office, the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) when establishing educational pathways for students seeking a four-year degree in climate change related subjects.
- 5) Appropriates \$5 million from the general fund for the purpose of developing the Center and maintaining its initial operations. The funding is to be available up to five years and is to be used for the following operations:
  - a) Developing curricula related to climate change education for community colleges;

- b) Providing opportunities for students to engage in internships and other learning opportunities; and,
  - c) Hiring staff to develop the Center.
- 6) Requires LACCD to prepare a summary report that includes an evaluation of the Center in accomplishing the mission as established in (2) and (3) of this analysis, recommendations for improving the programs offered by the Center, and an accounting of how the funds appropriated in (4) of this analysis were used.
- 7) Stipulates the Legislature finds and declares the need to create a climate change center, as defined above, within LACCD is a unique circumstance and therefore a special statute is necessary as a general statute is not applicable as defined by Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution.
- 8) Establishes, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this bill contains costs mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.
- 9) Makes various findings and declarations on behalf of the Legislature pertaining to climate change including but not limited to:
- a) The immediate threat global climate change poses to the United States' national security, public health, national economy, and the legacy we will leave our children;
  - b) The most vulnerable communities, as defined face even greater health risks due to climate change;
  - c) People of California overwhelmingly support teaching students about the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to global climate change;
  - d) Domestic clean energy jobs continue to be among the fastest growing occupations despite a temporary setback from the COVID-19 pandemic; and,
  - e) LACCD's West Los Angeles College offers the only Climate Change and Environmental Studies associate of arts degree in the state which provides students with understanding the impacts of climate change on their local communities and global society. This degree is designated as a pathway for students to transferring to a four year institution and for those who wish to pursue environmental-related careers.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the California Community Colleges (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) Establishes that CCC districts are under the control of a board of trustees, known as the governing board, who has the authority to establish, maintain, operate, and govern one or more community colleges, within its district as specified (EDC Section 70902).

- 3) Authorizes the Regents of the University of California (UC) to establish the California-China Climate Institute in partnership with the Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable Development at Tsinghua University and other entities and institutions in China and California (EDC Section 92687).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriates \$5 million from the general fund to accomplish the provisions contained within the bill.

**COMMENTS:** *Need for the measure.* According to the author, “LACCD’s California Center for Climate Change Education (the Center), to be based at West Los Angeles College, will not only aid the state’s climate change education efforts, but it will also focus on training and workforce development for the clean energy industry. The Center’s efforts for job and career development will be vital to ensuring that current fossil fuel workers and future generations of Californians receive the support necessary to transition into green jobs. California has directed millions in funding to the UC and the CSU for climate-focused initiatives and research, but the CCC remain an underutilized tool in our state’s plans to tackle climate change.”

*Climate change education in California.* Established in 1967, the CCC is the largest higher education system in the United States with 116 colleges serving roughly 1.8 million students. As an open access system, the CCC is often a student’s first step in their higher education journey. The primary mission of the CCC, as established in Education Code Section 66010.4, is to offer academic and vocational instruction of the lower division level for both younger and older students, including persons returning to school. Because of the broad scope of this mission, one will often find a range of courses at the same college from a variety of subjects including English and mathematics to courses that train welders, firefighters, and truck drivers. Of the 116 colleges, 20 colleges offer a total of 31 programs associated with climate change and environmental studies. Only West Los Angeles College offers a certificate or degree specifically in climate change; the other programs offer a certificate or degree in environmental studies, which often has at least one course in climate change.

If a student obtains a lower division degree in environmental studies or in climate change from the CCC, they will need to transfer to a four-year university in order to obtain a bachelor’s degree in the subject. Of the 23 CSU campuses statewide, 18 offer a program related to environmental studies or climate change. Of the nine UC campuses statewide, eight offer a program related to environmental studies or climate change.

Currently in the state of California climate change is taught under the description of environmental content and is not necessarily explicitly taught. In the Next Generation Science Standards for K-12 education, adopted by the State Board in 2013, environmental content is interwoven into the standards, specifically, the standards are built to ensure students have the skills to meet the environmental challenges of the future. However, in recent years, a movement has arisen to ensure environmental education contains content on the cause and effects of climate change. The California Department of Water Climate Change and the UC – CSU Environmental and Climate Literacy Summit created educational resources to help California educators integrate their environmental content with climate change cause and effect content. AB 1939 (Luz Rivas, et. al.) of 2022, would require science courses to emphasize the cause and effects of climate change no later than 2023-2024 and would make climate change education a graduation requirement beginning in 2027-2028. AB 1939 (Luz Rivas et. al.) currently awaits a hearing in the Appropriations Committee.

*Climate change and workforce development.* In 2017, the California Workforce Development Board invested \$10 million into the “High Road Training Partnerships” (H RTP) in order to model a systemic approach as to how industry could lead workforce development to address critical issues, including climate change. The overarching goal of the H RTP was to bring educational resources and industry together to upskill workers to meet the demands of California’s changing economy including jobs in climate resiliency. One of the H RTP programs combatting climate change is the “High Road to Rural Resilience”. This program based in Huron, California, seeks to create a statewide green job training program that will connect local residents with workforce development and in-demand jobs associated with electric vehicles, EV charging infrastructure, electric bicycles, and advanced agriculture. West Hills College is currently partnering with various key partners including the Building Trades Council to implement this project. Contained within the 2021-2022 Budget was \$600 million one-time funds for the Community Economic Resilience Fund for the purpose of implementing regional and industry specific transition strategies focused on supporting high road jobs in ‘advance energy’ industry such as renewable energy and zero-emission vehicles. The 2021-2022 Budget also included \$100 million one –time funds specifically for the Workforce Development Board to fund H RTPs in current and new sectors and \$20 million specifically to the CCC to support the system’s participation in H RTPs.

Contained within in the Chancellor’s Office of the CCC is a division entitled Workforce and Economic Development, whose purpose is to ensure CCCs are preparing students with flexible and manageable workforce training that leads to lucrative careers that contribute to the local and statewide economy. Contained within this division are the H RTPs, Strong Workforce Program, and other regional workforce development programs focused on preparing a skilled workforce for in-demand industries. While the division does have “agriculture, water, and environmental technology” and “energy, construction, and utilities” as two of the industry sectors it prioritizes for funding for workforce training models, climate change is not listed as a specified industry sector. One could argue that climate change is built into one of sectors listed as environmental technology or energy could have an environmental impact.

*California Budget and climate change.* In the 2021-2022 budget, Governor Newsom prioritized mitigating climate change efforts by providing it a specific section within the California Budget. While there were no education specific allocations in the climate change section of the Budget, the Governor did signal his desire to focus state resources on mitigating the impacts of climate change. In the 2022-2021 January Budget Proposal, Governor Newsom highlighted the need to help current and future workers develop the skills needed for transitioning to a cleaner and more sustainable economy. The proposal provided \$85 million to the UC for regional incubators and workforce development and training hubs to support workers. Additionally, as part of the multi-year compact the Governor has asked the CCC to establish coordinated educational pathways from high school to a four year institution in high needs fields including climate action. AB 1913 (Bryan) builds upon the Governor’s request by establishing a center to help coordinate workforce development and climate change education across the entire CCC.

*Arguments in Support.* As a proponent of AB 1913, Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) highlights “in the past two years, climate-focused initiatives have been established at California’s two other public university systems, the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) systems. Last year, the UC launched the UC Center for Climate Justice and Governor Gavin Newsom’s FY 2022-2023 budget announced plans for an Energy and Innovation Building at CSU Bakersfield. Both of these centers place heavy emphasis

on research, rather than job training and workforce development. The Los Angeles Community College District California Center for Climate Change Education at West Los Angeles College will focus on job training and workforce development for the anticipated job growth in green jobs over the next decade.”

Furthermore according to LACCD , “as our state works toward a future of clean, renewable energy, we need to ensure that our efforts focus on reversing negative environmental impacts for communities of color and ensuring that workers in the oil and gas industry have pathways to new job training in the clean energy industry. AB 1913 establishes an educational center to accomplish this.”

*Committee Comments.* AB 1913 (Bryan) seeks to establish a climate change center at West Los Angeles College for the purpose of establishing hands-on learning opportunities and curriculum on climate change that can be used at CCCs across the state. Curriculum and program development at the CCC is delegated to individual faculty, Academic Senates of CCC campuses, and the California Community College Curriculum Committee (CCCC unit) housed within the Curriculum and Instruction Unit of the CCC Chancellor’s Office. What is actually taught in the classroom and the educational materials used is the purview of the faculty, the campus academic senates create curriculum and course development, and the CCCC unit provides guidance on local and regional implementation of curriculum policy and regulations for all programs within the system. As defined within AB 1913 (Bryan), the Center is charged with serving as a resource to assist these various curriculum creating entities as they create climate change curriculum to be implemented on campuses.

The concepts contained within AB 1913 (Bryan) are not unique and have been established for other industry sectors. In 1975, a grant was provided by the California Department of Real Estate to the CCC for the purpose of creating a center to increase the number of real estate practitioners enrolled in real estate education courses. The Real Estate Education Center (REEC), hosted by Saddleback College, works with instructors to ensure high quality instruction and to support students seeking vocational real estate and appraisal education. The REEC has a project manager who oversees the center which conducts activities to encourage enrollment in real estate courses, support faculty through professional development, host an annual conference, and promote career opportunities for students.

West Los Angeles College is uniquely qualified to provide the Center established by AB 1913 (Bryan) as it is the only CCC with a degree specifically in climate change and it is located adjacent to one of the largest oil fields in the state. The workforce currently tending to the oil field will eventually need upskilling to transition from fossil fuel related jobs to green jobs as California transition towards cleaner energy.

The policy provisions within AB 1913 (Bryan) establish a center that builds upon the principles contained within the Governor’s budget for the CCC to build hands-on learning opportunities and to establish pathways for climate change education. The Committee would agree with the author that the community colleges are the appropriate venue for the upskilling of workers to meet the demands of the green energy sector and establishing regional hubs at the UC seems not only redundant, but unnecessary considering the regional partnerships and relationships with industry already established by the CCC through HRTPs and the Strong Workforce Program.

*The Committee would suggest moving forward the Author may wish to amend subdivision (e) as the current language has the district preparing a report, but not actually delivering the report to*

*any entities nor to the public. The Committee would recommend the Author require the district to transmit the summary report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature and to the office of the Chancellor of the CCC.*

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

California Environmental Voters (formerly CLCV)  
California Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO  
Emerald Cities Collaborative  
Los Angeles Community College District  
Outward Bound Adventures  
Strategic Energy Innovations  
The Energy Coalition  
U.S. Green Building Council, Los Angeles

**Opposition**

None on file.

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