

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1390 (McCarty) – As Introduced February 17, 2023

SUBJECT: California State University: University of California: graduation requirements: service learning

SUMMARY: Requires the California State University (CSU) and, if the Regents of the University of California (UC) adopt an appropriate resolution, the UC, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of service learning commencing with students graduating in the 2027–28 academic year, as provided. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes following definitions apply:
 - a) “Postsecondary educational institution” means a campus of the CSU or the UC; and,
 - b) “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.
- 2) Requires, commencing with the 2024–25 academic year, each postsecondary educational institution to provide, on its internet website, information on service learning programs and opportunities for undergraduate students.
- 3) Requires, commencing with students graduating in the 2027–28 academic year, the CSU and the UC, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of service learning. The CSU and the UC will not increase the number of units required to graduate from their universities with a baccalaureate degree by the enforcement of this requirement. This graduation requirement will not apply to a postbaccalaureate student who is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a postsecondary educational institution if the student has satisfied either of the following:
 - a) The student has earned a baccalaureate degree from a higher education institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency; and,
 - b) The student has completed a service learning requirement at a higher education institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents of the University of California (UC); and, grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to ensure 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 Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the UC, California State University (CSU), and California Community Colleges (CCC) (Education Code (EDC) Section 66010, et seq.).
- 3) Confers upon the CSU Trustees the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, control of the CSU system and provides that the Trustees are responsible for the rule of government of their appointees and employees (EDC Sections 66606 and 89500, et seq.).
- 4) Requires the CSU, commencing with the 2021-22 academic year, to 1) provide courses in ethnic studies at each CSU campus; and, 2) require, as part of the CSU graduation requirements commencing with students graduating in the 2024-25 academic year, the completion of, at a minimum, one three-unit course in ethnic studies. (EDC Section 89032)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, “students are not currently encouraged to participate in service learning within current curriculum and program requirements at the CSU and UC. Only CSU Monterey Bay (CSUMB) requires service learning to be done both curricular (course with units) and co-curricular (hour requirement) prior to graduating.”

“Service learning has been shown to have positive effects on academic performance (including GPA), values, self-efficacy, and leadership, for example, when implemented at the undergraduate level. Service learning also benefits the community that is being serviced as a result (local non-profits who take on a student for their service learning requirement, for example).”

“There are programs aimed at placing the student in service that exist, such as the College Corps, but limited slots are available to students, and the monetary incentive for students, while incredibly beneficial to the student, does not allow the state to expand this program; particularly in a tough budget year. In order to encourage students to pursue service learning, there must be a requirement, similar to CSUMB’s structure, to fulfil service learning. The ideal setting for service learning is both curricular and co-curricular; particularly in a setting where the student can process the service learning experience.”

CSUMB service learning. 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 meets the CSU general education Area D requirement for social sciences. 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, upper division Service Learning is intended to help students learn firsthand about real social challenges that communities face, while also examining and learning to ways to address underlying issues of systemic inequality such as: racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism, among others.

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.

Arguments in opposition. The Cal State Student Association wrote in opposition, noting that, “while we full heartedly believe in the concept of service learning, and in providing students across all 23 campuses access to opportunities to give back to their communities, imposing another graduation requirement on students is inequitable. Our students are working tirelessly already in their efforts to receive their degrees. Many of them are working multiple jobs, while still trying to keep up in their coursework. A new requirement is just another barrier for CSU students. This premise also contradicts the prioritization of the CSU’s, Governor’s, and Legislature’s dedication to increasing graduation rates and making it as easy as possible for students to obtain their bachelor’s degree.”

Segmental concerns. The CSU wrote to the Committee expressing concerns about mandating a service learning requirement. The concerns centered on three core areas:

- 1) *Curricular concerns.* The CSU expressed that they strongly believe that decisions regarding curriculum and graduation requirements should remain in the purview of university faculty and administration. They note that many STEM and Business students are already tightly scheduled to complete their degrees in four years, fitting in another requirement could add more time to degree completion;
- 2) *Impact on students and graduation rates.* CSU notes that most CSU students already have part- or full-time employment commitments, and that many balance jobs with family commitments, such as raising a child. CSU also suggested that AB 1390 (McCarty) will create challenges for many undocumented students, as a number of community partners require background checks.
- 3) *Costs and implementation.* CSU believes that service-learning programs are very costly because they require additional faculty as well as a significant amount of administrative time to find and manage community partners. Each community partner must undergo a site assessment and enter into an agreement with each university. CSU expects that scaling this program to serve more than 450,000 students will cost tens of millions of dollars and likely require agreements with hundreds of new community partners.

CSU suggested amendments that would instead strengthen campus infrastructure for service learning while removing the system wide service learning requirement.

Academic freedom. While academic freedom may mean different things to different individuals, at the core of academic freedom is the establishment of faculty members’ right to remain true to

their pedagogical philosophy and intellectual commitments; it preserves the intellectual integrity of our higher education systems. Additionally, academic freedom means that the political, religious, or philosophical beliefs of politicians, administrators, and members of the public cannot be imposed on faculty or students.

As currently drafted, this bill would require the CSU and, if the Regents of the UC adopt an appropriate resolution, require the UC to complete service learning as an undergraduate graduation requirement.

The Committee should consider the precedent that would be set with this bill and determine whether it infringes on academic freedom and, conversely, whether the decisions on curricula and graduation requirements should remain in the hands of CSU faculty and administrators.

Although this measure specifies that the amount of units to graduate shall not be increased, *the Committee should consider whether an additional course requirement would result in many degree programs having to be restructured, particularly those in high unit majors (such as Business, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).*

Timeline for implementation? Should this measure be enacted, developing service learning curricula; hiring qualified faculty, and implementing a requirement for graduation by the 2027-28 will likely be impossible

The author has agreed to take amendments to delay implementation of the service learning requirement in AB 1390 (McCarty) to students graduating in the 2032–33 academic year.

Related and Prior legislation. AB 506 (M. Fong), Delays implementation of the California State University's (CSU) ethnic studies graduation requirement by one year. AB 506 (M.Fong) is scheduled to be heard in this Committee on April 25, 2023.

AB 1040 (Muratsuchi) of 2021, which was held in the Senate Committee on Education, would, in part, require, commencing with the 2022-2023 AY, each community college district to offer courses in ethnic studies at each of its campuses; and, would require, beginning with the 2024-2025 AY, each CCD to require the completion of at least one course in ethnic studies of at least three-units as a requirement for a student to obtain an associate degree.

AB 1460 (Weber), Chapter 32, Statutes of 2020, requires the CSU, commencing with the 2021-22 academic year, to 1) provide courses in ethnic studies at each CSU campus; and, 2) require, as part of the CSU graduation requirements commencing with students graduating in the 2024-25 academic year, the completion of, at a minimum, one three-unit course in ethnic studies.

AB 3310 (Muratsuchi) of 2020, which died for a lack of hearing by this Committee, was substantially similar AB 1040 (as described above).

AB 2408 (Shirley Weber) of 2018, which was held by this Committee, per the request of the author, was very similar in nature to AB 1460 (as described above).

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

Cal State Student Association
4 Individuals

Analysis Prepared by: Kevin J. Powers / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960