

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 1786 (Cervantes) – As Amended March 20, 2018

SUBJECT: Community colleges: academic credit for prior military experience

SUMMARY: Requires the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCCCO), by March 31, 2019, to designate a statewide articulation officer at the CCCCCO and requires that the statewide articulation officer determine for which courses credit should be awarded for prior military experience.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes a matriculation process at CCCs with the purpose of realizing a student's educational objectives. Matriculation services to be made available by the colleges include, but are not limited to, (a) processing of admission applications, (b) orientation and pre-orientation services concerning academic expectations and financial assistance, and (c) assessment and counseling upon enrollment, as specified. (Education Code (EDC) Section 78212)
- 2) Requires, by July 1, 2015 the CCCCCO, using common course descriptors and pertinent standards of the American Council on Education (ACE), to determine for which courses credit should be awarded for prior military experience. (EDC Section 66025.7)
- 3) Requires the California State University (CSU) and CCC to grant priority registration for enrollment to former members of the Armed Forces of the United States within the two years after their having left active military duty. (EDC Section 66025.8)
- 4) Requires the Board of Registered Nursing to adopt regulations by January 1, 2017, requiring schools to have a process to evaluate and grant credit for military education and experience. (Business and Professions Code Section 2786.1)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: *Need for the bill.* According to the author, “AB 1786 will establish an articulation officer within the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office to develop a program to facilitate the transition of recent veterans to institutions of higher education. Upon this implantation, military-to-college articulation can happen much more effectively state-wide. This program will enable community colleges to speak more directly to our veterans and will allow these individuals and colleges to leverage military training more effectively. Additionally, it will reduce the amount of time veterans spend in college and significantly improve career attainment for California Veterans.”

Veterans in CCC. California has an estimated 1.8 million veterans residing in the state. According to the CCC, the number of veterans utilizing veteran education benefits at CCC grew from 44,000 in 2010-11 to approximately 70,000 in 2014-15 and will continue to increase dramatically. In addition, there are an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 active duty personnel enrolled annually at community colleges across the state, not including dependents.

American Council on Education Guide (ACE). The military issues academic transcripts for service members and veterans. The transcripts issued by the various service branches are endorsed and periodically evaluated by ACE and bear its seal. ACE also publishes the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services, which provides recommendations to colleges for evaluating these transcripts. The Guide's credit transfer recommendations are based on reviews of military coursework by a panel of university faculty members convened by ACE. These faculty members review military coursework and occupational training descriptions pertaining to their own academic disciplines, evaluating them according to disciplinary standards and expectations. Both the University of California (UC) and CSU) have adopted the ACE standards for evaluating the academic credit or prior service of veterans, and in 2011 the CCC Academic Senate passed a resolution urging local academic senates to award credit in accordance with ACE standards.

CCC recognition of prior learning. The determination for awarding credit for prior learning including for military experience is the purview of a college's faculty. As such, credit for prior learning policies and practices varies widely across CCC. The one exception relates to policies established under SB 466 (Hill, Chapter 489, Statutes of 2015) governing nursing programs. SB 466 mandates that nursing programs in California offer students credit for prior military experience or risk negative action by the Board of Registered Nursing

Focus on general education. A report by the Chancellor's Office related to AB 2462 (Block, 2012), recommends that credit for prior learning should apply toward a student's major or general education program rather than as an elective, as elective credits "will generally be of limited value for a CTE certificate or a transfer degree." There is a general concern of over awarding elective credits for prior military experience that could have unintended consequences. The report notes that there are caps on the number of units veterans can earn and still receive financial aid, and providing them with additional unnecessary elective credit can push them over those caps without getting them closer to their academic goals.

Renewed effort and funding. Saddleback Community College earned a grant to develop an online credit translator that will help military veterans identify and determine which credits they may qualify for at the college. The primary goal of the project is to increase the number of prior learning credits awarded to veteran students through existing articulation methods and establish systems, policies and processes to recognize the types of military occupations, experiences, skills, education and training, prior certifications, and examinations that may count toward college credit. The grantee partnered with local CSU campuses to establish a pathway from military service to community college and ultimately to a four-year-degree.

Committee comments. According to the Chancellor's Office, "in Fall of 2017, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office received a \$1 million grant to develop a supportive structure for instituting credit for prior learning (CPL) throughout the system. By recognizing previously acquired knowledge and experience, more students can receive an industry-valued credential or transfer to a university. Offering CPL will help both returning adults (such as returning military veterans) and students with no recognized postsecondary education by decreasing the number of units they must take to finish, thereby making completion of degrees and certificates quicker and more affordable. This is an important step in building the Chancellor's Office capacity to achieve the goals in the *Vision for Success* and better serve more Californians."

Committee staff recommends, and the author has agreed, to amendments aligning this bill with the efforts already underway at the Chancellor's Office to expand the use of credit for prior learning, as follows:

66025.7. (a) By March 31, 2019, the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges shall *establish an initiative to expand the use of credit for prior learning in the California Community Colleges. The initiative shall identify best practices in the provision of credit for prior learning, curate resources and provide professional development related to credit for prior learning best practices, identify emerging practices in credit for prior learning for potential pilot programs, and provide recommendations for system-wide policies governing the provision of credit for prior learning.* designate a statewide articulation officer at the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

(b) By July 1, ~~2019~~, *January 1, 2020*, ~~the officer designated pursuant to subdivision (a)~~ *Chancellor shall, report to the Legislature regarding the activities of the initiative and make recommendations regarding policy changes necessary to implement the best practices identified by the initiative.* ~~using common course descriptors and pertinent recommendations of the American Council on Education, shall determine for which courses credit should be awarded for prior military experience.~~

Prior legislation. SB 1071 (Newman), of 2017, pending in Senate Appropriations, requires the CCCCO, in collaboration with the Academic Senate to develop a uniform policy for awarding course credit for prior military education, training and service. This bill also requires each community college district to adopt and implement that policy, as specified.

AB 2462 (Block) Chapter 404, Statutes of 2012, required CCCCO to determine for which course credit should be awarded for prior military experience by July 1, 2015.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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