

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Mike Fong, Chair
AB 506 (Mike Fong) – As Amended April 17, 2023

SUBJECT: California State University: graduation requirement: ethnic studies.

SUMMARY: Delays implementation of the California State University's (CSU) ethnic studies graduation requirement by one year. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires that the CSU must collaborate with the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office, the Academic Senate of the CSU, the Academic Senate for CCC, the CCC Ethnic Studies Faculty Council, and the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies in order to develop a process for the CSU to approve eligible CCC ethnic studies courses, as meeting the requirements of an ethnic studies course provided, as specified, for students who transfer to the CSU from the CCC.
- 2) Delays implementation of the CSU ethnic studies graduation requirement by one year; from the 2024-2025 academic year (AY) to the 2025-2026 AY.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) 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 (Education Code Sections 66606 and 89500, et seq.).
- 2) Requires that the CSU must collaborate with the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies (Council) and the Academic Senate of the CSU in order to develop core competencies to be achieved by students who complete an ethnic studies course, as specified. Requires the Council and the CSU Academic Senate to approve the core competencies before commencement of the 2021–2022 AY.

Requires that beginning with students graduating in the 2024–2025 AY, the CSU must require, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of, at minimum, one three-unit course in ethnic studies.

Stipulates that the CSU is prohibited from increasing the number of units required to graduate from the CSU with a baccalaureate degree by the enforcement of this requirement.

Stipulates that this graduation requirement must not apply to a postbaccalaureate student who is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at the university if the student has satisfied either of the following:

- a) The student has earned a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency; and,
- b) The student has completed an ethnic studies course at a postsecondary educational institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency (EC 89032).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Background.* AB 1460 (Shirley Weber), Chapter 32, Statutes of 2020, requires CSU students graduating in 2024-2025 to complete a course in ethnic studies. As a general education requirement, community college students must complete an ethnic studies course in order to transfer to the CSU. Pursuant to the requirement in AB 1460 (Shirley Weber), core competencies were adopted by the CSU Ethnic Studies Council and the CSU Academic Senate.

Purpose of this measure. The author states that, “with over 90% of students who transfer to the CSU coming from the CCC, it is important for CCC courses to have transferability to the CSU. If CCC students are not able to take an approved course, their plan to transfer to a CSU could be delayed.”

According to the author, “underrepresented students make up a substantial portion of the student body at CCCs. The racial/ethnic breakdown of CCC students is as follows: 46% Hispanic/Latinx, 24% White, 11% Asian, 6% Black, 4% Multi-ethnic, 3% Filipino, less than 1% American Indian and Alaskan Native, less than 1% Pacific Islander, and 6% unknown. About half of California Community College [CCC] students are traditional aged (24 or younger) and half are adult students (25 or older). Sixty-four percent of students across the system are classified as Perkins Economically Disadvantaged.”¹

The author states that, “in order to increase the number of underrepresented students transferring to the CSU, the number of CCC approved ethnic studies courses must increase.”

Ethnic studies courses at the CSU. Commencing in 1968, CSU campuses responded to student demands and struggles and developed Ethnic Studies units in different forms. Some institutions like San Francisco State created a school, which later became a College of Ethnic Studies. Other institutions' separate and autonomous Ethnic Studies units became departments or programs, while others like Sacramento State and CSU, Fullerton formed a department constituted by different Ethnic Studies programs. These varied distinct and combined Ethnic Studies departments and programs focused on and fostered interdisciplinary scholarship, discourse and projects of national and international scope and import.

Status of the ethnics studies graduation requirement at the CSU. In late 2020, the CSU Office of the Chancellor started the first round of review of courses submitted by CCC campuses under the CSU Area F approval for the 2021-2022 AY. The submitted CCC courses must include three of the five core competencies. [Core competencies reflect the knowledge expected to be achieved by students who complete an ethnic studies course.]

According to the CSU Office of the Chancellor, the tables below show the final numbers on Area F (of which ethnic studies falls) course approvals. These courses are referred to as Area F in General Education (GE). Committee Staff understands that the CSU extended the Area F resubmission deadline in order to allow additional time for CCC to undertake course revisions. The summary chart below (from the CSU Office of the Chancellor) shows the total CCC course

¹ Student Enrollment and Demographics. The CCC Chancellor's Office. Retrieved March 29, 2023, from <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Digital-Innovation-and-Infrastructure/research-data-analytics/data-snapshot/student-demographics>

approval numbers for the GE cycle ending on September 30, 2022. The data shows that 47% of the courses meet the requirements needed for approval, pursuant to existing law (AB 1460, Shirley Weber).

All Area F Proposals for 2022-2023

AY

Area F Courses	Count	%
Approved	323	47%
Denied	370	53%
Grand Total	693	100%

Committee Staff understands that many community college districts throughout the state have expressed many concerns, including high rejection rates, lack of clarity on what needs to be in the courses in order to gain approval, lack of clarity on whether the proposed courses must include core competencies word for word, and inconsistencies of approvals by reviewers.

According to the CSU Office of the Chancellor, the chart below shows the approval rate of a subgroup of courses which were resubmitted. That is to say, the 188 courses in the chart below are also accounted for in the chart above.

Area F Resubmission (June to September 2022)

Area F Courses	Count	%
Approved	162	86%
Denied	26	14%
Total	188	100%

According to the CSU Office of the Chancellor, every CCC now has at least one Ethnic Studies course with Area F approval.

The author states that, “requiring the CSU Office of the Chancellor to consult with relevant entities, including both CCC and CSU ethnic studies councils, will help improve the process for approving CCC courses, increase approval rates, and make CCC ethnic studies courses more available.”

Committee comments. This measure, in part, delays the implementation date for meeting the ethnic studies graduation requirement by one year [from 2024-2025 AY to 2025-2026 AY] in order to provide additional time for more CCC course approvals.

Further, this measure will also require the CSU Office of the Chancellor to consult with CSU and CCC Academic Senates and the CSU and CCC ethnic studies councils regarding the approval process of ethnic studies courses for transfer. Committee Staff understands the University of

California (UC) is in the process of considering an ethnic studies course as a graduation requirement.

Moving forward, the author may wish to consider requesting the UC Academic Senate and the UC Ethnic Studies Council be a part of the collaborative process.

Arguments in support. According to the Los Angeles Community College District, “the California State University graduation requirement for Ethnic Studies is currently set to take effect beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year. However, there has been significant confusion surrounding the approval process for California Community College courses that would satisfy the graduation requirement for transfer students. AB 506 would delay the implementation of the graduation requirement until the 2025-2026 academic year to provide additional time for the aforementioned groups to develop a comprehensive course approval process. This would ensure that only courses that fit the four original, autonomous disciplines of Ethnic Studies are approved.”

Related legislation. AB 654 (Cervantes) of 2023, which, per the request of the author, is a two-year bill, requests the University of California to establish an ethnic studies undergraduate graduation requirement at the UC.

AB 1255 (Wendy Carrillo) of 2023, which, per the request of the author, is a two-year bill, requires the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to convene a statewide task force, composed of relevant stakeholders, and requires the task force, by September 1, 2024, to provide a report to the CTC and the Legislature with recommendations for the criteria that should be required in order to obtain a single-subject credential in ethnic studies. The measure requires the CTC, by January 1, 2025, to use the task force’s recommendations to begin developing the criteria that will be required in order to obtain a single-subject credential in ethnic studies.

Prior legislation. AB 1964 (Mike Fong) of 2022, which was held in this Committee, in part, would require the Chancellor of the CCC and the Chancellor of the CSU to ensure that at least one course identification (C-ID) descriptor number in certain ethnic studies areas is issued, as provided. Additionally, this measure would require each CSU campus to accept any community college course articulated or approved, as specified, as meeting the campus’ lower division ethnic studies course graduation requirement. Further, this measure would prohibit a CSU campus from revoking the approval of any community college course previously accepted as meeting the campus’ lower division ethnic studies course graduation requirement, except as provided.

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

AB 1460 (Shirley Weber), Chapter 32, Statutes of 2020, in part, enacted the ethnics studies graduation requirement for CSU students (see (2) in the *Existing law* section of this analysis for further details).

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

California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE)
Los Angeles Community College District

Opposition

None on file.

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