

Date of Hearing: March 24, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

AB 914 (Irwin) – As Introduced February 17, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: California State University: proficiency level of entering students.

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California State University (CSU) to provide specified information to the Legislature about the placement of freshmen at each CSU campus for purposes of certain general education requirements in one report to be submitted by April 1 of each year.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Reforecasts entry-level proficiency to general education written communication and mathematics and quantitative reasoning placement levels for the report CSU annually submits to the Legislature regarding first-time freshmen.
- 2) Deletes the requirement of a preliminary annual report on first-time CSU freshman be submitted to the Legislature and requires one report be submitted to the Legislature on or by April 1 of each year.
- 3) Stipulates the number and proportion of regularly admitted and specially admitted first-time freshmen who fall into the university's four levels of placement for general education written communication and mathematics and quantitative reasoning be included in the first-time freshmen report annually submitted to the Legislature.
- 4) Requires the CSU include the following in the first-time freshmen report annually submitted to the Legislature:
  - a) The number and proportion of regularly admitted and specially admitted first-time freshmen who meet the general education requirement for each category, per (3) above:
    - i) Prior to the fall term of the academic year;
    - ii) At the end of the fall term of the academic year;
    - iii) At the end of the spring term of the academic year; and,
    - iv) At the end of the fall term of the second academic year.
  - b) An analysis of the university's three factors that go into the multiple measures assessment of placement of freshmen into a specified level, and how predictive each of those factors is for student success indicators; and,
  - c) An analysis of any equity gaps by income, race, or ethnicity within and across the university's four levels of placement for general education written communication and mathematics and quantitative reasoning, and the university's plan to address any such gaps.

- 5) Stipulates that the CSU's three factors that go into multiple measures assessment of the placement of freshman are:
  - a) Course taking;
  - b) Grade-point-average (GPA); and,
  - c) Test taking.
- 6) Defines "student success indicators" as all of the following:
  - a) Persistence into the fall term of the second academic year at the CSU;
  - b) The number of units completed at the CSU in the first academic year; and,
  - c) GPA at the CSU in the first academic year.
- 7) Makes clarifying and technical changes to existing law.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires the CSU to provide specified information about the proficiency of freshman at each CSU campus in a preliminary report submitted on or before December 15 of each year and in a final report to the Legislature submitted on or before February 1 of each year (Education Code (EC) Section 66015.12).
- 2) 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 (EC Sections 66606 and 89500, et seq.).
- 3) Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), in consultation with the CSU, to submit a report to the Legislature detailing the impact of the CSU Early Start Program on student mathematics and English proficiency. The report to the Legislature shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, all of the following:
  - a) Information on how the CSU Early Start Program increases successful remediation rates as compared to the remediation rates that existed in the 2010–11 academic year;
  - b) Information on how the CSU Early Start Program expedites the student remediation process, or otherwise reduces the length of time that students spend on remediation;
  - c) Demographic information on participants in the CSU Early Start Program, including information relating to race or ethnicity, eligibility for financial aid, geographic origins, and other pertinent data;
  - d) The number of enrollees in the CSU Early Start Program, counted statewide and by campus, including the number who eventually earned credit from the program; and,

- e) As observed one year after participating in the CSU Early Start Program, counted statewide and by campus, how many enrollees became proficient, how many enrollees did not remediate successfully, and how many enrollees were disenrolled from CSU.

Requires the LAO, by December 1, 2021, to submit a report to the Legislature detailing the impact of policy changes required pursuant to CSU Executive Order No. 1110, including changes in the proportion and number of incoming freshmen who have been identified as in need of remediation, and the proportion and number who have persisted at the university past their freshman year, and the proportion and number who have graduated from the university. To note, this provision will be repealed on January 1, 2022 (EC Section 89007.7).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *Background.* During 2016, the Office of then Governor Jerry Brown, the Department of Finance, and the Legislature expressed concerns about some inconsistencies with the CSU General Education (GE) requirements, and encouraged the CSU to reexamine its policies and practices.

After over a year of consultation and discussion, the CSU Chancellor's Office issued Executive Order (EO) 1100-Revised. The CSU also saw the reexamination as consistent with CSU's efforts to remove administrative barriers to student success, one of six pillars, under CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025.

The goals of EO 1100-Revised were to:

- 1) Provide greater clarity regarding GE units, outlining the explicit minimum and maximum number of units for general education requirements;
- 2) Ensure equitable treatment of all students so that transfer students and entering freshmen have the same general education requirements; and,
- 3) Facilitate degree completion by explicitly allowing double counting of units that satisfy both GE requirements and major requirements.

To note, prior to EO 1100, students entering the CSU system had to demonstrate college level proficiency in English and math by taking placement exams. If a student failed to meet the required score in the placement exam, the student was automatically enrolled in up to three semesters of remedial education before being allowed to enroll in courses that counted toward their degrees. If students did not pass these remedial courses within the first year, they were disenrolled. Approximately 40% of freshmen each year were considered not ready for college-level work.

The adoption of EO 1100-Revised was to clarify and align GE policies in an effort to increase graduation rates and eliminate achievement gaps.

*Purpose of the measure.* According to the author, the Legislature cannot evaluate the effectiveness of EO 1100 and its impact on student success without access to meaningful data. The author contends that, "Opponents of the reforms to remedial education, including faculty groups, have claimed that a lack of student preparedness in English and Math due to prior

instruction at the high school level poses the primary barrier to student achievement.” The author states, “data will provide a better foundation for the Legislature to coordinate our K-12 and higher education systems and improve college completion rates.”

AB 705 (Irwin), Chapter 745, Statutes of 2017, reformed the placement and remedial education policies in the California Community Colleges. The author states, “This positive structural change was only made possible by having access to meaningful data on student outcomes.”

According to the author, “AB 914 will provide the Legislature with important information regarding the extent to which first-time freshmen are prepared to succeed in the CSU system.”

This measure requires the CSU to submit an annual report that summarizes data on completion rates, credits earned, and GPA during a student’s first three semesters. The author contends that, “This data will help the Legislature determine how to improve college readiness programs and how English and Math preparedness varies across the CSU system.”

To note, CSU campuses must also provide a plan to close equity gaps that may exist, which is an integral part of the Graduation Initiative 2025.

*Prior legislation.* AB 2578 (Irwin) of 2020, which was held in the Senate Education Committee, was virtually identical to this measure.

To note, Committee Staff understands that AB 2578 was held by said Committee due to a reduced number of bill hearings because of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

AB 2497 (Solorio), Chapter 430, Statutes of 2012, required the LAO, in cooperation with the CSU, to report by January 1, 2014, and every two years thereafter until January 1, 2018, specified information measuring the impact of the CSU's Early Start Program on students' mathematics and English proficiency.

As noted in the *Existing Law* section of this analysis, current law extends the initial sunset of the required report on CSU’s Early Start Program (as referenced in AB 2497 above).

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

None on file.

### **Opposition**

None on file.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Jeanice Warden / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960