

Date of Hearing: June 26, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

SB 1071 (Roth) – As Amended June 18, 2018

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: Chancellor of the California Community Colleges: uniform policy to award course credit for prior military education, training, and service

**SUMMARY:** Requires, commencing January 1, 2019, the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC), 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. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the CCC, in collaboration with the Academic Senate to do both of the following:
  - a) Commencing January 1, 2019, begin development of uniform policy to award military personnel and veterans who have an official Joint Services Transcript containing courses evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE), course credit to fulfil general education requirements, as appropriate for the student's needs, in a course with subject matter similar to that of his or her military education, training and service; and,
  - b) Periodically review and adjust the policy developed in a) above to align it with policies of other public postsecondary educational institutions.
- 2) Requires, each community college district to:
  - a) Commencing January 1, 2019, begin adoption and implementation of the uniform policy described in (1) (a) above, as specified; and,
  - b) Post on its Internet Website the most recent uniform policy adopted.
- 3) Requires, if the policy required to be adopted in (1) (a) above is not implemented for the entering class in the fall 2019 academic term, the Chancellor of the CCC to report to the appropriate legislative committees the reasons for not implementing the uniform policy and the plan for implementing the policy for the entering class in the fall 2020 academic term.
- 4) States legislative findings and declarations relative to the thousands of veterans serviced by the CCC, the lack of a uniform policy for awarding course credit for prior military experience, and how the absence of a uniform policy creates academic and financial barriers for military veterans.
- 5) Establishes that if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.

**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: processing of admission applications, orientation and pre-orientation services concerning academic expectations and financial assistance, and assessment and counseling upon enrollment, as specified. (Education Code (EDC) Section 78212)
- 2) Requires, by July 1, 2015, the Chancellor of the CCC, using common course descriptors and pertinent standards of the 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 two years of leaving 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:** According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) This bill could create a reimbursable state mandate by requiring community college districts to adopt and implement a uniform policy for awarding course credit for military experience. A precise estimate of the mandate would vary depending on the policy to be developed by the Chancellor's Office, but the one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs could be in the tens of millions of dollars.
- 2) The Chancellor's Office estimates annual General Fund costs of approximately \$112,000 and one position to review all community college courses and determine which should be eligible for prior military education, training service credit. The Academic Senate may incur similar General Fund costs as well.

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose.* AB 2462 (Block, Chapter 404, Statutes of 2012) required the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to determine how much course credit should be awarded for prior military experience by July 1, 2015. However, citing shared governance regulations related to academic senates in the CCC having primary responsibility for academic matters including assessment for prior learning and lack of authority for awarding credit, the CCCCCO in its capacity only provided guidance to colleges and recommended best practices for granting credit.

According to the author, AB 2462 has not been properly implemented, "At present, almost six years after the chaptering of AB 2462, and nearly three years after the law's prescribed implementation date, California's community colleges still lack a uniform policy for the awarding of course credit for military education, training, and experience. As a consequence, veterans and California-based active duty military personnel who enroll in community colleges are often forced to retake courses they have already successfully completed while in the military. This ultimately creates academic and financial barriers for their enrollment and successful

completion of a college while also wasting the valuable GI bill benefits that our veterans have justly earned through their admirable service.”

This bill aims to ensure implementation of a uniform policy that supports granting course credits for prior military experience.

*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 2014-2015 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.

*ACE.* The military issues academic transcripts for active-duty 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 and the California State University have adopted 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.

*Community College of the Air Force.* The U.S. Air Force is the sole branch of the armed forces that has fully integrated their military occupational specialty job training with an accredited, degree-granting institution. The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) is a federally-chartered degree-granting institution that serves the United States Air Force's enlisted force. CCAF partners with over 108 affiliated Air Force schools, 82 Education Service Offices located worldwide, and more than 1,500 civilian academic institutions to serve approximately 300,000 active, guard, and reserve enlisted personnel. The college annually awards over 22,000 associate in applied science degrees from 68 degree programs.

CCAF gained regional accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, has awarded more than 490,000 associate in applied science degree since issuing its first degree in 1977.

While Air Force Servicemembers have access to CCAF transcripts, members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard rely on the Joint Service Transcript when having their prior military learning assessed.

*CCC recognition of prior learning.* The determination for awarding credit for prior learning including for military experience is the purview of the college’s faculty. As such, credit for prior learning policies and practices vary 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.* This bill requires adoption and implementation of a uniform policy for purposes of fulfilling general education requirements at a community college. A report by the Chancellor's Office related to AB 2462, 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.

*Prior legislation.* AB 1786 (Cervantes) of 2018, require the CCC chancellor to establish, by March 31, 2019, an initiative to expand the use of course credit at the CCC for students with prior learning. The bill would require the chancellor to submit, by January 1, 2020, a report on the initiative to the Legislature. AB 1786 is pending hearing in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

SB 466 (Hill) Chapter 489, Statutes of 2015, is described in the "CCC recognition of prior learning" section of this analysis.

SB 2462 (Block) Chapter 404, Statutes of 2012, is described in the "Purpose" section of this bill.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

None on file.

##### **Opposition**

None on file.

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