

Date of Hearing: June 27, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
Mike Fong, Chair  
SB 444 (Newman) – As Amended March 23, 2023

**SENATE VOTE:** 40-0

**SUBJECT:** Community colleges: Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) programs

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California Community College (CCC) Board of Governors to adopt regulations for the establishment and implementation of Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) programs and establishes statewide standards for the operation of MESA programs for the purpose of expanding access to and increasing success in MESA programs for community college students. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines the following:
  - a) “Four-year higher education institution” means a four-year baccalaureate degree program offered at the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), or an independent institution of higher education, as defined;
  - b) “MESA programs” means Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement programs established at community colleges to help underserved and underrepresented students majoring in calculus-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics academic fields who seek to transfer to four-year higher education institutions; and,
  - c) “STEM majors” means calculus-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics academic fields approved by the National Science Foundation.
- 2) Makes an array of declarations regarding the intention of the Legislature, including the following:
  - a) The CCC will recognize the responsibility for supporting programs that enhance educational opportunities for STEM majors and produce a diverse pool of baccalaureate degree graduates in STEM Majors by preparing students for transfer to a four-year education institution;
  - b) The CCCs are encouraged to establish MESA programs that identify and serve students who are affected by social, economic, and educational disadvantages. The MESA programs are meant to increase the number of students served by the MESA program and increase the number of students who successfully matriculate to a degree at a four-year higher education institution; and,
  - c) Clarifies the MESA programs are not to be viewed as the only means of meeting related student and employee diversity objects and for providing services to socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged STEM majors who are eligible to transfer to a four-year higher education institution.

- 3) Requires the Board of Governors of the CCC to adopt regulations for the operation of MESA programs. The regulations will accomplish the following goals:
  - a) Increase the number of socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged students pursuing bachelor's degrees in STEM majors who are eligible to transfer;
  - b) Implement efficient processes and practices and use existing college transfer centers to achieve greater MESA program student transfer to four-year higher education institutions;
  - c) Implement strategies to increase the rate at which MESA program students are deemed transfer-ready in STEM majors;
  - d) Improve the academic performance of MESA program students;
  - e) Increase the leadership skills and raise the educational expectations of MESA program students;
  - f) Strengthen relationships between educators and prospective employers in business and industry for the purpose of establishing student internships, scholarships, and other career opportunities for MESA program students;
  - g) Establish partnerships with the UC and CSU MESA programs and MESA college preparatory programs, California Alliance for Minority Participation, or similar programs in an effort to provide optimal student support services; and,
  - h) Implement strategies to collaborate with campus programs to leverage additional resources and opportunities for MESA students and to ensure that MESA programs are integrated into campus culture and infrastructure.
- 4) Clarifies that supports provided by MESA programs are meant to complement and not replace regular educational programs offered by the college to encourage and support the enrollment of MESA program students who wish to progress to a bachelor's degree program.
- 5) Requires a MESA program established pursuant to this measure to have a program director at the college. The program director will be a full-time position whose sole responsibility will be to administer the MESA program. The program director's salary will be funded by the governing board of the community college district. Permits instructors, counselors, and other staff at the community college to provide support to the program director as determined by the governing board of the community college. Staff support of the MESA program will not preclude them from participating in other programs at the college.
- 6) Prohibits the governing board of the community college from using the funds from the state for MESA programs to supplant funding from other programs or existing resources. Permits the governing board to use the MESA program funds to meet the matching requirements to receive federal funds or funds granted by nonprofit foundations if the funds are designated for the same purpose as described above.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the BOG of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in California. The CCC shall be comprised of community college districts (Education Code (EDC) Section 70900).
- 2) Establishes that CCC districts are under the control of a board of trustees, known as the governing board, who has the authority to establish, maintain, operate, and govern one or more community colleges, within its district as specified. Permits districts to establish policies for and the approval of courses of instruction and educational programs (EDC Section 70902).
- 3) Requires the Chancellor's Office of CCC, beginning July 1, 2023, to provide a multiyear database on student progression and completion of transfer-level English, mathematics, and English as a Second Language courses, disaggregated by community college and by various student groups including MESA program students (EDC Section 78213.1).
- 4) Requires the CCC and the CSU to collaborate with various stakeholders including students and faculty, to develop a student-centered communication and marketing strategy to increase the visibility of associate degrees for transfer for all students in California. The strategy shall include but is not limited to, outreach to high schools, information on pathways displayed at counseling offices and transfer centers, and targeted outreach to first-year students through orientation and student support service programs including MESA programs (EDC Section 66748.5).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) The Chancellor's Office estimates ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund costs of about \$23.3 million as a result of this measure. Of this amount, \$5.3 million would be needed to design a new academic program for the state's 116 local community colleges. The remaining amount of \$18.0 million would be needed for each college to hire a full-time MESA program director assuming a cost of \$155,000 each. However, because the bill does not specify how it would operationalize some of the intent language such as enrollment strategies into the MESA program and the provision of program supports (e.g. tutoring), the Chancellor's Office indicates that the costs could be higher.
- 2) The Chancellor's Office also indicates that the bill could result in one-time General Fund costs of approximately \$113,000 to adopt new regulations for the program and to comply with the Student Success Act of 2021 requirements.

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose of the measure.* As expressed by the author, "despite recent, significant investments and advances in teaching approaches, there continues to be uneven progress in increasing racial and ethnic diversity in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) jobs. Black and Hispanic workers remain underrepresented in the STEM workforce. Promoting the diversity of experience, background, and perspective that results from increased demographic diversity expands the potential for increases in productivity and wage growth as diverse groups are able to approach a problem differently and with a broader perspective."

The author further expounds that, "MESA programs, by their design, deliberately seek to increase the representation of currently underrepresented populations in the STEM workforce. MESA Programs in Community Colleges use equity-based practices to support first-generation, low-income students (particularly students of color) in the STEM transfer pipeline by offering

students academic and transfer counseling, mentorship, professional and workforce development, and opportunities for networking, internships, and research. Under SB 444, the MESA program will be codified into the California Education code, thereby providing the stability and ongoing evaluation necessary to best serve students across the state.”

The measure would establish statewide requirements for MESA programs at the CCC and require the Board of Governors to adopt regulations to ensure the operations of all CCC MESA programs are aligned with the intention of the Legislature to ensure socially economically and educationally disadvantaged students have the support necessary to be successful in pursuing science-based majors. Additionally, the measure would prohibit MESA program funds from supplanting any other regular educational programs offered by the college to support the enrollment of MESA program students in STEM majors. The measure *does not* require CCC to establish new MESA programs if they do not already have one on campus; rather, this measure would provide alignment to ensure all MESA programs across of 73 districts of the CCC system are operating in a manner that best serves students.

*MESA programs.* MESA is a nationally recognized educational intervention program designed to assist educationally disadvantaged students to excel in math and science by providing innovative academic support to help these students graduate from college with STEM baccalaureate degrees. The origins of the MESA program begin after the civil rights movement when a concerned group of educators and community activists commissioned a study to examine why there were so few Black, Latinx, and Native American students enrolled at the UC Berkeley College of Engineering. As a result of the data collected from the study, the first pre-college intervention was established at Oakland Technical High School with 25 students. The program had the original goals of developing students’ academic and leadership skills, raising educational expectations, and instilling confidence in students to help students progress to degrees in STEM.

What began as an experiment at the Oakland Technical High School in 1970 has since expanded to be the MESA program which has programs across the United States at the K-12 schools, community colleges, and four-year universities.

Level of MESA program:	What the Program provides:	How many students are served?
College-Prep (Middle and High Schools) – specialized to assist in early exposure to the STEM fields and to provide additional mathematical and science support to underrepresented students in the STEM fields.	The K-12 program provides;  Individual academic planning;  Hands-on math, science, and engineering competitions;  Exposure to technical careers and role models;  College campus tours;  MESA-specific classes (during and/or after school);	Offered at 375 middle and high schools serving more than 15,700 students throughout California.

	<p>and,</p> <p>Teacher professional development.</p>	
<p>Community Colleges – designed to produce a diverse population of transfer-ready students.</p>	<p>The CCC program provides:</p> <p>Internship opportunities;</p> <p>A dedicated study center for workshops, community building, and academic support;</p> <p>Provides connections to the workforce for students through the local industry board;</p> <p>Provides cohort clustering for students in core math and science course to encourage collaborative study;</p> <p>Academic and transfer counseling; and,</p> <p>Professional development for faculty.</p>	<p>In Spring 2021, 41 community colleges had MESA programs that served 3,562 students.</p>
<p>University – encourages matriculation to an engineering or computer science degree by continuing to academically support students as they progress to graduation.</p>	<p>Individualized academic planning;</p> <p>Study skills training;</p> <p>Peer group learning and class clustering;</p> <p>Exposure to college and career opportunities;</p> <p>Orientation services;</p> <p>Transfer assistance; and,</p> <p>Personal and social skills enhancement.</p>	<p>Offered at 13 public and private California Universities that serve more than 2,500 students/</p>

Source: [Mesa.ucop.edu](http://Mesa.ucop.edu) and The CCC Chancellor’s office

*Funding for MESA programs.* In the 2021-2022 budget year, the Legislature and the Governor agreed to provide \$10.7 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funding for MESA programs at the CCC. The only requirement for the funding was for qualifying CCCs to provide local matching funds for the funds received from the state categorical MESA funding. In the subsequent budget year, AB 183 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 54, Statute of 2022, increased the amount of ongoing funding to \$36.429 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funds for MESA Programs at community colleges. The increase in funding included the removal of matching funds and authorized the funding to be used to support and establish MESA programs for the purpose of enhancing California's STEM workforce while aiding the state and nation in reducing equity and achievement gaps. Additionally, AB 183 (Committee on Budget) authorized the Chancellor's office to ensure the funding provided to community colleges is used to further the MESA program goals; however, the "goals" are not specified in the budget measure, the Education Code, nor in the California Code of Regulations. This measure would standardize programmatic requirements for all MESA programs, including the requirement for the program to have a designated director. Additionally, the measure dictates the director's salary to be paid by the community college district thereby maximizing the use of state-categorical funds for student services provided by the MESA program.

At the time of this analysis, SB 101 (Senate Committee on Budget), 2023, has increased the funding for MESA programs at the CCC to \$39.4 million annually. *Committee staff notes SB 101 (Senate Committee on Budget) is currently enrolled and has not been signed by the Governor and the allocation amounts are subject to change.*

*MESA programs at the CCC.* As of March 2023, 85 community colleges were awarded programmatic funding to either establish or maintain a MESA program on campus. Each college was awarded \$428,578 in the current fiscal year (2022-2023) with future fiscal year projected award amounts equaling \$280,000. 57 of the 72 brick-and-mortar community college districts received state funding for MESA programs. Calbright, the 73 community college district, and online college, does not have a MESA program as it does not offer degrees in the STEM fields.

Of the 85 CCCs receiving state funding for MESA programs, 34 are under the restrictions of the 2021-2022 Budget Act which required community colleges to match state-provided categorical funding with local funds. The 2022-2023 Budget Act changed this and instead permitted community colleges to access the State allocated funds for MESA programs without the local match requirement. However, since the 2022-2023 Budget Act indicates that CCCs cannot supplant existing funding from a prior program, the original 34 CCCs are still required to use their local "matching dollars" to fund the MESA director. The remaining 51 CCCs who received funding under the 2022-2023 Budget Act are permitted to use MESA categorical funds to implement MESA programs without the local matching requirement and reserve the majority of the funding for the program director position. AB 444 (Newman) would provide parity between all CCCs, by requiring the MESA program director's salary to be paid by the community college district instead of by the campus or by categorical MESA funding provided to the community college campus.

In order to qualify for state funding each college had to meet the CCC Chancellor's office program components for MESA programs by the end of the first academic year. The requirements are divided into 13 categories ranging from administrative to required academic supports. Specific requirements in each of the 13 categories include, but are not limited to:

- A full-time permanent MESA Program director with no other responsibilities outside of directing the MESA program;
- A designated space on campus for the students including rooms for studying/tutoring and a location with lockers for supplies;
- Student support services including personal academic advising, skill development training, tutoring services, book and equipment loan activities, computer lab work, and assistance in applying for scholarships;
- Clustering of students into the same mathematics, engineering, and science classes including labs and discussion groups;
- Provide academic counseling with designated MESA counselors;
- Student outreach and recruitment efforts strategies; and,
- Partnerships with CSU and UC MESA programs to ensure the smooth transfer for MESA students.

Many of the goals and requirements of this measure would be realized if the 13 programmatic components are met by the participating community colleges. However, these programmatic components do not exist for all MESA programs, as not all programs are funded with state dollars. Of the 85 programs currently being operated by community colleges, only one is funded entirely by local dollars and therefore, is not beholden to implementing the programmatic components established by the Chancellor's office. By establishing regulations the Board of Governors would establish continuity among MESA programs and ensure the programs are implementing best practices to ensure students are receiving the support required to succeed.

*Arguments in support.* As explained by the sponsors of the measure, the Community College Association of MESA Directors, "The proposed bill, SB 444, is an important step towards ensuring our programs are sustained locally, so MESA can be there for our students. By codifying MESA into (the education) code, the program will receive greater recognition and support. The MESA program has a proven track record of success, and it has helped many students overcome the barriers that prevent them from pursuing careers in STEM fields."

Additionally, the sponsors add, "a lack of statutory protection for MESA has resulted in years of inadequate and delayed funding, insufficient evaluation, and instability, despite the program's high success rate and benefits for students. This bill would prevent community college districts from diverting money meant for MESA programs, services, and students. The bill will not only boost students' ability to thrive and explore new opportunities within STEM, but it will also significantly contribute to the expansion of California's STEM workforce and aid the state in eliminating equity and achievement disparities."

*Amendments.* After conversations with the Chancellor's office, the sponsors of the measure, and the author's office, the following amendments were suggested by the Committee and accepted by the author to provide clarity as to the bill's intentions:

- 1) Amends Section 88682, subdivision (a), subparagraph (4) to clarify the Legislature's intention regarding the use of MESA program funding provided in the annual budget act –

~~(4) The Legislature further intends that the establishment, expansion, and development of MESA programs and services are essential to the development of the cultural, social, economic, intellectual, scientific, and technological resources of the state. The Legislature further intends the categorical funding for MESA programs provided in the annual Budget Act for community colleges to be used for the establishment, expansion, and development of MESA programs and services for the purpose of enhancing California's STEM workforce while aiding the state and nation in reducing equity and achievement gaps.~~

- 2) Amends Section 88682, subdivision (b) to clarify the intention of the bill to have the Board of Governors adopt regulations for MESA programs that align with existing programmatic components for MESA programs –

~~(b) The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges shall adopt regulations for purposes of this part. The operation of MESA programs and the regulations adopted by the board of governors shall be consistent with this part and accomplish all of the following goals: The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges shall adopt regulations for the operation of MESA programs at community colleges that align with the programmatic components of MESA programs. The operation of MESA programs and the regulations adopted by the board of governors shall accomplish all of the following goals:~~

- 3) Amends Section 88682, subdivision (d), subparagraph (1), (2), and (3), to clarify the salary of the MESA program director is not paid for by the community college district and can use only a limited portion of state categorical funding provided for MESA programs for the MESA director. Amends the language as follows:

~~(d) (1) A MESA program established pursuant to this part shall be managed by a program director at the college. The program director shall be a full-time employment position. The program director's sole responsibility at the college shall be to administer the MESA program. The program director's salary shall be funded by the governing board of the community college district.~~

~~(2) A community college that has received funding from the Annual Budget Act for a MESA program shall not use more than fifteen percent of the funds for the salary of the program director.~~

~~(3) (2) Instructors, counselors, and other staff at the community college shall provide support to the program director as determined by the governing board of the community college district. Staff support in a MESA program shall not preclude their participation in any other program offered by the community college district.~~

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Anaheim Chamber of Commerce  
 California Faculty Association  
 California Teachers Association  
 Community College Association of Mesa Directors  
 San Jose-evergreen Community College District



Student Senate for California Community Colleges

**Opposition**

None on file.

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