
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: SB 1071 **Hearing Date:** April 11, 2018
Author: Newman
Version: March 22, 2018
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

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

SUMMARY

This bill, commencing January 1, 2019, requires 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.

BACKGROUND

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 § 78212)
- 2) Requires, by July 1, 2015 the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC), 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. (EC § 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. (EC § 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 § 2786.1)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (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, 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 for military education, training and service.
 - b) Periodically review and adjust the policy developed above in a) 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 above in (1) (a), as specified.
 - b) Post on its Internet Web site the most recent uniform policy adopted.
- 3) Requires, if the policy required to be adopted above in (1)(a) 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 if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** AB 2462 (Block, Chapter 404, Statutes of 2012) required the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to determine for which 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.

- 2) ***Veterans in California Community Colleges (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.
- 3) ***American Council on Education Guide (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 (UC) and the California State University (CSU) have adopted the American Council and Education 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.
- 4) ***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.
- 5) ***Focus on general education***. 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. This bill specifically requires the development of a uniform policy for awarding course credit to fulfill *general education* requirements for prior military experience.

- 6) **Renewed effort and funding.** Saddleback Community College earned an Innovation award 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 by establishing systems, policies and process 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 California State University (CSU) campuses to establish a pathway from military service to community college to ultimately a four-year-degree. It appears that the plan is to bring this project to scale and replicate the model systemwide. Its staff understanding the author's office is working with the Chancellor's office to ensure that the goal of this bill and grant objectives are aligned.

- 7) **Technical amendment.**

66025.71. (a) The office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC), in collaboration with the Academic Senate for the CCC, shall do both of the following:

(1) Commencing January 1, 2019, begin development of, and each community college district subsequently shall begin adoption and implementation of, a uniform policy to award military personnel and veterans **with who have** an official Joint Services Transcript containing courses that have been evaluated by the American Council on Education with full descriptions and credit recommendations, course credit for California Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum, CSU General Education Breadth, or local community college 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.

- 8) **Related legislation.** AB 1786 (Cervantes, 2018) This bill would require a statewide articulation officer at the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to, using common course descriptors and pertinent recommendations of the American Council on Education, determine, by July 1, 2019, for which courses credit should be awarded for prior military experience. AB 1786 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

None received

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