
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: SB 319 **Hearing Date:** April 19, 2017
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Version: March 30, 2017
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
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Subject: Public postsecondary education: remedial coursework

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) to inform, prior to completion of registration, an incoming student through entrance counseling and assessment or other suitable means of the specified remediation policies.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the mission and function of the CCC as the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level and the CCC are authorized to grant the associate in arts and the associate in science degree. The community colleges are also required to offer remedial instruction, English as a Second Language instruction, and adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level. (Education Code § 66010.4)
- 2) Under the California Code of Regulations (CCR), requires each community college district to adopt procedures that are clearly communicated to students regarding the college's sample test preparation, how the student test results will be used to inform placement decisions, and the districts limits on the student's ability to re-test. (California Code of Regulations § 55522).
- 3) Under the CCR, requires colleges to ensure that information regarding its matriculation policies is accessible and available to all students during or prior to enrollment (e.g., during orientation) and are included in class schedules, catalogs, or other appropriate communications describing student rights and responsibilities specified under existing regulations. (CCR § 55531 (a) and 55530)
- 4) Establishes a collaborative effort among the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the office of the Chancellor of CCC and the California State University, known as the Early Assessment Program headed by the California State University, to enable pupils to learn about their readiness for college-level English and mathematics before their senior year of high school. (EC § 99300-99301)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) to, prior to completion of registration, inform an incoming student through entrance counseling and assessment or other suitable means of any of the following:
 - a) Remedial coursework that a student is required to register for or complete and reasons for that requirement.
 - b) Exemption policies.
 - c) Availability of any test preparation workshops or programs.
- 2) Requires each community college district to implement any standards and procedures adopted by the Board of Governors of the CCC to effectuate the requirements outlined in the bill.
- 3) States legislative findings and declarations relative to existing research by the Public Policy Institute of California specific to Community College remedial education placement policies.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** A recent report by the Public Policy Institute, *Determining College Readiness in California's Community Colleges (CCC)*, found that remedial education placement policies at CCC vary widely throughout the state, and this lack of consistency presents an even greater challenge to those students who enroll in more than one community college. According to the author exemption policies are just as obscure and students may not be aware of the right to challenge a placement in remedial education courses. The author asserts that because of the varying policies, many first generation college students, including English learners, are disadvantaged and left without uniform guidance on the future of their college career.
- 2) ***Remedial education.*** Remedial education is intended to help students who are assessed as "unprepared" to succeed in college-level work. Remedial education is typically used interchangeably with development education and foundational skills and known as basic skills in community colleges. On March 1, 2017, the Senate Education Committee convened an oversight hearing on remedial education in California. The background paper provided by the Legislative Analyst's Office for the hearing noted that 75 percent of first-time CCC students are assessed as unprepared. The paper also stated that unprepared students are less likely to graduate with a 30 percentage point difference in graduation rates between incoming students assessed as college-ready versus not college-ready.
- 3) ***Basic skills reforms.*** In response to the high levels of remediation and increased interest in improving college completion rates, there has been a national movement to reform remedial education. According to Learning Works, a foundation supported organization operated under the fiscal sponsorship of

Foundation for California Community College (CCC), the non-profit auxiliary for the CCC, this movement has been spurred by three important trends in the national research on community colleges: 1) studies showing that huge number of students drop out before making meaningful progress in college, and that the more layers of remedial coursework students must take, the lower their completion of college-level English and math, 2) studies questioning the accuracy of the standardized tests that sort students into different levels of remediation, and 3) studies showing significantly better outcomes among students enrolled in accelerated models of remediation.

In an effort to transform the delivery of basic skills instruction and help improve student outcomes, Senate Bill 81 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 22, Statutes of 2015) established the Community College Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation program. As a condition of receipt of funding, community college districts are required to adopt or expand the use of evidence-based models for basic skills assessment, placement, instruction, and student support. SB 81 also established the Basic Skills Partnership Pilot program to promote collaboration in basic skills instruction between high schools, community colleges and California State University campuses. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, nearly every campus can point to an effective remedial practice program; however, these programs are pilots or small in scale and have not been implemented campus-wide.

- 4) ***Student notification.*** This bill aims to improve student awareness of remediation policies. Under the existing policy established in regulations, each community college district is required to adopt procedures that are clearly communicated to students regarding the college's sample test preparation, how the student test results will be used to inform placement decisions, and the district's limits on the student's ability to re-test. Additionally, colleges are required take steps to ensure that information regarding its matriculation policies are accessible and available to all students during or prior to enrollment (e.g., during orientation) and are included in class schedules, catalogs, or other appropriate communications describing student rights and responsibilities. According to the CCC Chancellor's Office, most colleges provide this information during the orientation process. Although there is some variation, the committee may wish to consider whether this bill is necessary given these existing policies.

SUPPORT

None received.

OPPOSITION

None received.

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