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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1468 **Hearing Date:** July 5, 2017  
**Author:** Chiu  
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**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** No  
**Consultant:** Olgalilia Ramirez

**Subject:** Community colleges: student equity plans

## SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the use of funding from the Student Equity Program not to exceed 7.5 percent and up to \$25,000 of apportionment funds per campus or both, for the provision of emergency student financial assistance to help eligible California Community College (CCC) students overcome unforeseen financial challenges that would directly impact the student's ability to persist in his or her course of study.

## BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the student success and support program (SSSP) in order to provide a variety of programs intended to ensure the success of CCC students, including, but not limited to: a) student assessment before course registration; b) counseling and other education planning services; c) advising; and, d) development of an education plan leading to a course of study. Specifies funding for the SSSP be targeted to fully implement orientation, assessment, counseling and advising, and other education planning services needed to assist a student in making an informed decision about his or her educational goal and course of study and in the development of an education plan. (Education Code (EC) § 78212).
- 2) Requires that all CCC districts, with the assistance of the CCC Chancellor, establish and maintain institutional research to evaluate the effectiveness of the SSSP, as specified, and of any other programs or services designed to facilitate students' completion of their educational goals and course of study.
- 3) Requires the metrics for such research to include, but be not limited to the following: a) prior educational experience, including transcripts when appropriate, as determined by the chancellor; b) educational goals and courses of study; c) criteria for exemption from orientation, assessment, or required counseling or advisement, if applicable; d) need for financial assistance; e) disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender, disability, age, and socioeconomic status, to the extent this information is available; f) academic performance, such as the completion of specified unit thresholds, success in basic skills courses, grade point average, course completion outcomes, transfer readiness, and degree and certificate completion; and, g) any additional information that the chancellor finds appropriate (EC § 78214).

- 4) As a condition for receiving Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) funding, and in order to ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances, the governing board of each California Community College (CCC) district is required to maintain a student equity plan that includes, but is not limited to, the following for each CCC:
  - a) Campus-based research as to the extent of student equity by gender and specified underrepresented groups.
  - b) Goals for access to, and completion of, basic skills, career technical education and workforce training, and transfer courses for the overall student population and for each population group of high-need or disadvantaged students, and a determination of what activities are most likely to effectively meet those goals.
  - c) Where significant underrepresentation is found to exist, measures for addressing the disparities in those areas, implementation activities designed to attain the specified goals, including, but not limited to, the adoption of evidence-based models of remediation; and, d) a schedule and process for evaluation. The plan shall be adopted by the governing board of the CCC district and submitted to the CCC Chancellor, as specified (EC § 78820).
- 5) Requires the CCC Chancellor to allocate funds provided for purposes of successfully implementing the activities and goals specified in the student equity plans, consistent with all of the following:
  - a) Submission of a student equity plan that is consistent, as specified in EC Section 78220.
  - b) CCC districts serving greater populations of students who are high-need or disadvantaged receive greater resources to provide services to students, consistent with the goals and activities specified in their student equity plans.
  - c) Criteria established by the Chancellor for calculating the number of high-need and disadvantaged students in a CCC district.
  - d) The list established by the Chancellor of eligible and ineligible expenditures and activities to ensure that funding is used to support the implementation of student equity plan goals and the coordination of services for the targeted student populations. (EC § 78221).
- 6) Requires a report by the Chancellor provided to the Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst, and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, on the expenditure of student equity funds. (EC § 78221).

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes the use of funding from the Student Equity Program not to exceed 7.5 percent of the total allocation for that district for the program and up to \$25,000 of apportionment funds per campus or both, for the provision of emergency student financial assistance to help eligible students overcome unforeseen financial challenges that would directly impact the student's ability to persist in his or her course of study.
- 2) Specifies unforeseen financial challenges to include but is not necessarily limited to, the immediate need for shelter or food.
- 3) Encourages each community college district and campus to consider the unique characteristics of its student body in developing specific guidelines for further defining what constitutes an unforeseen financial challenge for its students.
- 4) Requires emergency student financial assistance to be included in the institution's plan for interventions to students in order to be considered an allowable use of Student Equity Program funds.
- 5) Defines the following terms for purposes of the bill:
  - a) "Eligible student," to mean a student who has experienced an unforeseen financial challenge, who currently meets the definition of satisfactory academic progress of the college he or she attends, and who is at risk of not persisting in his or her course of study due to the unforeseen financial challenge.
  - b) "Emergency student financial assistance" to mean financial support in the form of financial assistance to support a student to overcome unforeseen financial challenges so that he or she can continue his or her course of study.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "With the soaring cost of college education, students are continually strapped for cash and often lack the resources to cover basic needs such as housing, food, and transportation. Studies show that many students on the financial edge can have their entire community college career derailed by just one financial emergency. Emergency aid provides "just-in-time," grants to students who are facing unexpected financial emergencies due to medical expenses, car repairs or child care. Authorizing California Community Colleges to provide small emergency grants to students who are at risk of dropping out due to an unforeseen financial emergency would provide colleges with an effective tool to improve student success and completion rates."

This bill would authorize the use of community college apportionment dollars and funds designated for the Student Equity program for purposes of granting emergency aid to Community College students.

- 2) ***History of Student Equity Planning.*** In 1991, the California Legislature charged all levels of public education to provide education equity, “through environment in which each person...has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential.” In keeping with these requirements, the California Community Colleges (CCC) Board of Governors (BOG) adopted a student equity policy in 1992, to ensure that groups historically underrepresented in higher education have an equal opportunity for access, success, and transfer; enjoining all districts to develop, implement, and evaluate a student equity plan. In 1996, the BOG amended its policy to establish the adoption of a student equity plan as a minimum standard for receipt of state funding. In 2008-09, due to the economic downturn and state budget cuts many regulatory requirements related to student equity and other initiative, were suspended.

In January 2011, in response to SB 1143 (Liu, Chapter 409, Statutes of 2010), the BOG embarked on a 12-month planning process to improve student success, creating the Student Success Task Force. The Task Force published recommendations in early 2012, many of which became part of the Student Success Task Force. The Task Force published recommendations in early 2012, many of which became part of Student Success Act of 2012 the effort to improve student success established by SB 1456 (Lowenthal, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012). Among many important changes in the Act, it reaffirmed the importance of focusing on student equity in the effort to improve student success. In 2013, the Chancellor’s Office convened a Student Equity Workgroup to review and update the student equity planning process, ensuring that each college identifies strategies to address and monitor equity issues as well as to mitigate the disproportionate impact on student access and achievement.

- 3) ***Designated use of Student Equity funds at CCCs.*** In the 2014-15 Budget Act, the Legislature provided dedicated funding for student equity planning to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Colleges may use student equity funds to provide a broad array of services as long as these expenditures target student groups with achievement gaps identified in a college student equity plan submitted to the CCC Chancellor’s Office.

The Chancellor of the CCCs is to allocate the funds in a manner that ensures districts with a greater proportion or number of students who are high-need, as determined by the Chancellor’s Office, receive greater resources to provide services. In addition, as a condition of receipt of the funds, the districts are required to include in their Student Equity Plan how they will coordinate existing student support services in a manner to better serve their high-need student populations.

- 4) ***How are colleges using Student Equity funds?*** In its evaluation of the Student Success Act, the Legislative Analyst’s Office reports that many colleges use funds to support the following student equity activities:
- Expanding existing student support services such as tutoring and supplemental instruction.

- Implementing peer mentoring programs and learning communities for underrepresented minorities
  - Offering equity-focused professional development for faculty and staff.
- 5) **Emergency aid.** According to a December 2015 report, by Wisconsin Hope Lab, entitled, "Investing in Student Completion: Overcoming Financial Barriers to Retention Through Small-Dollar Grants and Emergency Aid Programs," a deepening financial need among students exists and growing concerns about college retention. The report finds that there is an increased interest in emergency aid programs, but also many challenges in implementing them effectively, due in part, to administrators having to delicately navigate tensions between providing access and support and rationing scarce resources. The report recommends that clear criteria for program eligibility, while providing flexibility for determinations in unusual circumstances, must be established and clearly communicated.
- 6) **Non-tuition costs.** According to the California Student Aid Commission, "non-tuition" costs exceed \$18,000 annually for California Community College (CCC) students living independently. Research by the Institute for College Access and Success reveals a student's ability to pay the full cost of attendance is an important factor in his or her success. As such, a student who cannot afford to fully cover access costs such as textbooks, transportation, food, and housing may make choices that undermine their ability to complete their education. For example, they may need to work more hours at the expense of studying. In response to this need, the state has increased efforts to provide additional aid specifically for Community College Students to cover living expense.
- 7) **Recent efforts to help CCC students cover the full cost of attendance.** In order to assist low-income students pay for non-tuition cost and help them reach their academic goals in a timely manner, the state enacted several aid programs. With the recently enacted Budget, an eligible student could receive up to \$4,270 annually for living expenses. These programs include the following:
- a) Cal Grant B access award provides students who meet the income and GPA (at least 2.0) requirements an annual allowance of \$1,670.
  - b) Full-Time Student Success grant provides an annual supplemental award of \$600 to Cal Grant B and C recipients who are enrolled full-time (12 units or more).
  - c) Completion Grant, established by SB 85 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 23, and Statutes of 2017) provides a grant award of \$2,000 annually to Full-Time Student Success recipients who complete 15 units within an academic year.

To qualify for these additional aid programs, a student would need to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid or California Dream Application. Community college student are less likely to complete the FAFSA or DREAM application and miss grant aid opportunities. If it is the desire of the committee to

move this measure forward **staff recommends that the bill be amended to** require a student seeking, “Emergency student financial assistance,” to complete and submit either a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or a California Dream Act application.

- 8) **Other related budget activities.** In addition to establishing the Completion Grant, SB 85 appropriates \$2.5 million from the General Fund to the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (CCCs) to provide grants to community college districts to be used for purposes related to addressing student hunger at community colleges.
- 9) **Is this the appropriate remedy?** Student equity planning focuses on increasing access to, and completion of, English as Second Language and basic skills, degree, certificate and transfer courses for the overall student population and for each population group of high-need or disadvantaged students. Each college develops specific goals/outcomes and actions to address disparities that are discovered, disaggregating data for indicators by student demographics. College plans must describe the implementation of each indicator, as well as policies, activities, and procedures as they related to student equity at college. Student equity plans are prepared with three-to-five year time frames in terms of planned activities and improvements, to align with the Student Success and Support Program plan.

As noted in staff comments #2 and #3, the state has exerted extensive effort and allocated funding to better coordinate delivery of existing student support services to reduce equity gaps through the Student Equity Program. This bill authorizes the use of up to 7.5 percent in Student Equity funds for the provision of emergency student financial assistance.

- Should this Committee authorize the use of Student Equity funds for purposes unrelated to the effort to implement strategies close access and achievement gaps among demographic groups?
- Would this bill set a precedent that dilutes Student equity funds intended for critical academic support services for the provision of nonacademic financial assistance?
- The current emergency aid programs at Pasadena City College and Grossmont College were funded from external sources, such as district foundations and other fundraising efforts. Are these more appropriate funding sources?
- If state funds are to be used for this purpose, would it be more appropriate to expand the resources available through state financial aid programs?

10) **Related and Prior legislation.**

SB 307 (Nguyen, 2017) Requests the Regents of the University of California (UC) to convene a task force, consisting of three representatives from the UC,

California State University (CSU) and California Community Colleges (CCC), selected by the governing boards of each segment for the purpose of conducting a study to determine the extent, causes, and effects of housing insecurity and homelessness of current and future students. SB 307 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 543 (Limon, 2017) requires the CSU Trustees, the CCC Board of Governors, and encourages the University of California (UC) Regents, to designate as a "hunger free campus" each of its respective campuses. The provisions in AB 543 were adopted into SB 85 budget trailer bill.

AB 2822 (Chiu, 2016) would have required the CCC Chancellor's Office to provide guidelines for community college districts or campuses that seek to establish student emergency aid programs among the services they provide. AB 2822 authorized the solicitation and receipt of funding from private sources to cover the cost of the emergency aid program. AB 2822 was ordered to inactive file at the request of the author and subsequently died.

**SUPPORT**

A Place Called Home  
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office  
Consumer Attorneys of California  
Courage Campaign  
First Place for Youth  
Emergency Aid for College Students  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce  
Scholarship America  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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