
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 2822
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Consultant: Kathleen Chavira
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Student financial aid: Student Success and Support Program: emergency student financial assistance

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the use of up to 3 percent of Student Success and Support Program funding received by a community college campus or district for the provision of emergency student financial assistance.

BACKGROUND

Current law establishes the Student Success Act, which applies to all community college students, for the purpose of increasing student access and success by providing effective core matriculation services, including orientation, assessment and placement, counseling and other education planning services and academic interventions. Community colleges have the responsibility to provide student services and support, including orientation, assessment, counseling and education planning, referral to specialized support services, and evaluation of each student's progress and referral to appropriate interventions. Students have the responsibility to identify an academic and career goal, declare a specific course of study, be diligent in class attendance and completion of assigned coursework, and complete courses and maintain academic progress toward an educational goal. (Education Code § 78210-78219; 5 California Code of Regulations § 55500-55534)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes the use of Student Success and Support Program funding for emergency student financial assistance to help eligible students to overcome unforeseen financial challenges that would directly impact the student's ability to persist in his or her course of study.
- 2) Specifies that these challenges include, but are 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, as a condition of using funds for this purpose, that emergency student financial assistance be included in the institution's plan for interventions to students.
- 5) Requires an eligible student to:
 - a) Currently meet satisfactory academic progress at the institution of attendance.
 - b) Be at risk of not persisting in his or her course of study due to the unforeseen financial challenge.
- 6) Defines various terms for purposes of the bill.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, emergency aid provides "just-in-time" grants to students or quick infusions of funds when a student finds themselves with unexpected costs such as medical expenses, car repairs or child care. The author reports that three community colleges, Pasadena City College, Grossmont Community College, and Cuyamaca Community College have started such a program since 2010. The author contends that this type of assistance would further the ability of California Community Colleges to retain students by allowing grants for students who would otherwise be forced to leave school because of these unforeseen financial challenges. This bill proposes to fund such a program with Student Success Act funding currently provided for matriculation services.
- 2) ***Student Success at the Community Colleges.*** Pursuant to Senate Bill 1143 (Liu, Chapter 409, Statutes of 2010), the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges created the Student Success Task Force (SSTF); 20 individuals (community college chief executive officers, faculty, students, researchers, staff and external stake holders) who spent a year researching, studying and debating the best methods to improve student outcomes at the community colleges.

According to the SSTF report, which was unanimously adopted by the Board of Governors in January 2012, it was their goal to identify best practices for promoting student success and to develop statewide strategies to take these approaches to scale while ensuring that educational opportunity for historically underrepresented students would not just be maintained, but bolstered. The Student Success Task Force (SSTF) efforts resulted in 22 specific recommendations focused on the following eight areas:

- a) Increasing college and career readiness.
- b) Strengthening support for entering students.
- c) Incentivizing successful student behaviors.
- d) Aligning course offerings to meet student needs.

- e) Improving education of basic skills students.
- f) Revitalizing and re-envisioning professional development.
- g) Enabling efficient statewide leadership and increase coordination among colleges.
- h) Aligning resources with student success recommendations.

Implementation of these recommendations is being accomplished by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges via the "Student Success Initiative" through regulatory changes, system-wide administrative policies, local best practices and legislation. These implementation efforts include the following:

- a) SB 1456 (Lowenthal, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012) recast the Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act of 1986 in order to target funding to services such as orientation, assessment, and counseling and advising to assist students with the development of education plans. It also required that students define goals, required that students declare a course of study and mandated student participation in assessment, orientation and education planning.
- b) At a regulatory level, the Board of Governors approved regulations that provide enrollment priority to students who have participated in assessment, orientation, and who have developed an education plan. In addition, statutory priority enrollment extended to veterans, foster youth, Extended Opportunity Program & Services students, and disabled students requires participation in these Student Success Services and programs. Students are now required to complete core services as well as to declare a course of study. In addition, districts are now required to notify students that accumulating 100 degree applicable units or being on academic or progress probation for two consecutive terms will result in the loss of enrollment priority.
- c) Since 2012, the State has increased ongoing funding for community college student success and support by nearly \$600 million. These funds have been designated to support the Student Services Support Program (SSSP) established by SB 1456 (Lowenthal) to provide targeted services such as orientation, assessment, and counseling and advising to assist students with the development of education plans. In addition these funds support the creation of Student Equity Plans to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged groups, as well as a number of Chancellor's Office Initiatives to provide related support to districts.

In February 2016, this Committee held an informational hearing, *California's Community Colleges: Implementation of Student Success* where the committee received an update on the use of these funds, the progress made in

implementing student success strategies both systemwide and at the campus level, and heard preliminary reports on student outcomes.

- 3) **Related report expected** SB 1456 (Lowenthal, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012), in addition to establishing the Student Success Act of 2012, required the Legislative Analyst (LAO) to submit a report to the Legislature evaluating progress on implementation of the Act and impacts on student completion, by July 1, 2016. According to the LAO, this report should be available in mid-September 2016.

According to the LAO, the report will focus on implementation of the Student Success and Support Program and Student Equity Program. The LAO report will evaluate how the system and individual colleges and districts have implemented student success initiatives, including how they have used state categorical funding for these programs. The LAO will also examine the extent to which colleges have hired additional counselors, and the extent to which colleges are providing mandatory services to entering students. In addition, the LAO will attempt to determine the early effects of these programs on student success rates and student equity.

Should any expansion of the use of these funds be authorized prior to the LAO evaluation of the use/need for these funds for their original purpose?

- 4) **Dilution of SSSP efforts.** As noted in staff comment #2, the State has exerted extensive effort and allocated substantial funding to provide direct matriculation services to students through the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP). At current funding levels, this bill authorizes the use of up to \$9 million in SSSP funds for the provisions of emergency student financial assistance.

Should this Committee authorize the use of SSSP funds for purposes unrelated to the 6-year effort to implement strategies to incentivize successful student behaviors and improve completion at the community colleges? Would this bill set a precedent that dilutes SSSP funds intended for critical academic support services for the provision of nonacademic financial assistance?

The current 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?

- 5) **Alternative proposal?** According to the author, while some districts have auxiliary foundations which have established these types of programs, it is the intent of this bill to ensure that resources for this purpose are available to districts and campuses that may lack the resources and infrastructure to establish a local auxiliary to address these needs.

Current law provides for the establishment of an auxiliary organization to the Board of Governors for the purpose of providing supportive services and specialized programs for the general benefit of the mission of the California

Community College. Accordingly, if it is the desire of the Committee to establish an emergency assistance program, **staff recommends** the bill be amended to delete section 2 of the bill and instead require the statewide auxiliary organization to provide guidelines and resources to districts or campuses seeking to establish student emergency aid programs, authorize the auxiliary to solicit and accept private funds for this to be used for the specified purposes, and declare the intent of the Legislature that priority for these statewide funds be granted to districts or campuses based on their enrollment of student populations that are in the most need.

SUPPORT

Campaign for College Opportunity
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Scholarship America
The Institute for College Access and Success

OPPOSITION

None received.

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