
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 770
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Urgency: No
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Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Community colleges: basic skills innovation program

SUMMARY

This bill adds new requirements for receiving grant funding under the recently established Community Colleges Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program, specifies the criteria and funding levels for distribution of the grant funds to recipient colleges, and requires that \$3 million of the \$60 million appropriated for the program in the 2015-16 Budget Act be set aside for statewide technical assistance, as specified.

BACKGROUND

Existing law establishes the Community Colleges Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program for the purpose of adopting or expanding the use of evidence-based models of academic assessment and placement, remediation, and student support that accelerate the progress of underprepared students toward achieving postsecondary educational and career goals. (Education Code § 88800)

Existing law outlines the responsibilities of community college districts, the responsibilities of the Chancellor's Office, and requires that the Legislative Analyst's Office aggregate, analyze and report specified information to the Legislature on the progress of the grant program by December 1, 2019. (EC § 88810)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires that a community college district submit a plan to the Chancellor's Office that details the strategy of a college or colleges within the district for achieving the goals of the grant program in order to receive a grant from the Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program.
- 2) Requires that two levels of funding be awarded to grant recipients as follows:
 - a) Requires a \$500,000 award to a recipient college that has no evidence based practices in place as of the date of the initial award and that in order to receive a grant from the Basic Skills Innovation Grant Program plans to implement two or more evidence-based practices.

- b) Requires a \$750,000 award to a recipient college that has at least one evidence-based practice in place as of the date of its initial award and plans to scale up one or more practices or implement at least one additional new practice, or both, as long as at least two evidence based practices are implemented or scaled up with the funds.
- 3) Encourages recipients to implement additional evidence-based practices as specified.
- 4) Authorizes, if funding is available, a college that receives a grant to submit plans to scale up one or more of its implemented practices to receive funds for years two or three or both, but provides that grant priority is required to be given to colleges yet to receive funding.
- 5) Requires that \$3 million of the funds be set aside statewide for technical assistance to be provided by content experts selected through a proposal process, developed by the Chancellor's Office, to provide technical assistance to colleges in the following areas:
 - a) Improving student placement using multiple measures, as specified.
 - b) Contextualizing remedial instruction, as specified.
 - c) Developing and offering effective and shortened English and math remedial course sequences, as specified.
- 6) Provides that technical assistance should help achieve the following goals:
 - a) Improve the accuracy of student placement.
 - b) Place as many students as appropriate directly in gateway, University of California and California State University transferable English and math courses and career pathways, with remedial instruction integrated for underprepared students.
 - c) Help students complete college-level English or math within a two or three course sequence.
 - d) Provide proactive student support.
- 7) Provides that technical assistance be provided during the first three years and authorizes a recipient college or district to use grant funds to purchase additional technical assistance, as appropriate.
- 8) Makes other technical changes.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author this bill would establish a more structured implementation of the Basic Skills and Student Outcome Transformation Program

recently authorized in the 2015-16 Budget Act. Its provisions are an effort to ensure that this funding is well targeted and provided at a level that ensures the success of high impact practices in the delivery of remedial instruction. The bill provides guidance to the Chancellor's Office in the administration of the program by outlining specific levels of funding, requiring submission of a plan, and setting aside \$3 million for technical assistance.

- 2) **Basic Skills.** Basic skills courses provide those foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL), as well as learning skills and study skills, which are necessary for students to succeed in college-level work. According to a survey by the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor's Office, about 85 percent of incoming community college students arrive unprepared for college-level work in math, and about 70 percent arrive unprepared for college-level English.

According to the Community Colleges 2012 report on *Basic Skills Accountability*, student progress metrics developed by the CCC find that:

- a) Of students who assessed at below transfer level in mathematics, the largest proportion assessed at three levels below transfer level, and only 14 percent of this proportion succeeded in completing transfer-level mathematics.
 - b) Of students who assessed at below transfer level in English writing, the largest proportion assessed at two levels below transfer level, and about 38 percent of this proportion succeeded in completing transfer-level English.
- 3) **Basic skills reform.** 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 Colleges (FCCC), the non-profit auxiliary for the California Community Colleges, this movement has been spurred by three important trends in the national research on community colleges: 1) studies showing that huge numbers 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.

According to a Learning Works' 2014 brief entitled, "New Study of the California Acceleration Project: Large and Robust Gains in Student Completion of College English and Math," accelerated models of remediation are producing great increases in student completion of gatekeeper English and mathematics requirements at CCCs. The brief found that effective accelerated pathways led to completion gains among all students, regardless of their level of preparation, demographic group, or socioeconomic status. According to the 16 CCCs piloting accelerated remediation models in 2011-12 as part of the California Acceleration Project (CAP) initiative, found that by redesigning their curricula to reduce students' time in remedial courses by one or more semesters, higher completion rates among students in accelerated remediation occurred. In English, students' odds of completing a college-level

course were 2.3 times greater in high-impact models of acceleration than students in traditional remediation; and, in mathematics, students' odds of completing a college-level course were 4.5 times greater than students in traditional remediation.

- 4) ***Community Colleges Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation Program.*** SB 81 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 22, Statutes of 2015) established a new program for the purpose of adopting or expanding the use of evidence-based practices for accelerating completion of basic skills courses. The Budget Act provided \$60 million for the program.

This bill sets aside \$3 million of the \$60 million for purposes of providing technical assistance and specifies the exact grant amounts to be awarded to districts. According to the author and sponsor, these provisions are motivated by a concern that the resources and expertise necessary for the success of the program do not currently exist within the Chancellor's office. The intent of this bill is to provide guidance to the Chancellor's Office in the administration of the program to ensure that sufficient funding is provided for campuses to successfully implement the strategies and reforms they propose and to ensure that grant recipients are provided with the technical expertise and assistance necessary to achieve the goals of the program.

However, as currently drafted the bill statutorily provides for the distribution and use of funds without any clear relationship to the scope and scale of the proposed plan. It also eliminates the discretion of the Chancellor's Office to determine the appropriate balance of funding for grants and technical support. In order to ensure that the Chancellor's office retains the ability and flexibility to administer the new program, but provide the support necessary for successful program implementation, **staff recommends** the bill be amended to delete lines 21-32 on page 6 and to delete page 7 and instead:

Staff recommends the bill be amended on Page 3 line 7 to require that the plan, at a minimum, specify the number of students served, strategies to be employed and the plan's projected outcomes.

Staff also recommends the bill be amended to expand the responsibilities of the Office of the Chancellor in subdivision (d) to additionally:

"3) Determine the level of funding to be awarded to a recipient based upon the scope and complexity of the work proposed in the plan as evidenced by the number of students served, strategies to be employed and projected outcomes.

4) Consult with internal and external stakeholders for the purpose of advising on the creation and composition of a team of technical assistance providers to provide assistance to colleges in the development of their proposals and the implementation of their plans.

(A) Stakeholders shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from campuses, faculty, administrators, and other experts with experience implementing evidence-based practices accelerating completion of basic skills courses.

(B) Technical assistance providers shall have demonstrated that they have expertise in the development and/or implementation of the evidence-based practices outlined in subdivision (a).

(C) The Chancellor's Office may contract with the identified technical assistance providers to provide assistance in the development and implementation of plans by applicant and recipient districts."

SUPPORT

Asian American Advancing Justice – Los Angeles
California EDGE Coalition
California Manufacturers & Technology Association
California Teachers Association
Campaign for College Opportunity
Community College League of California
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
MALDEF
ReadyNation California

OPPOSITION

None received.

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