
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair
2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No: AB 1460 **Hearing Date:** June 26, 2019
Author: Weber
Version: June 17, 2019
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Brandon Darnell

Subject: California State University: graduation requirement: ethnic studies.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California State University (CSU), commencing with the 2020-21 academic year, to (1) provide courses in ethnic studies at each of its campuses; and (2) to require, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of, at minimum, one three-unit course in ethnic studies.

BACKGROUND

Existing law confers upon the CSU Board of Trustees the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, control of the CSU system and provides that the Trustees are responsible for the rule of government of their appointees and employees. (Education Code § 66606 and 89500, et seq.)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires the CSU, commencing with the 2020-21 academic year, to (1) provide courses in ethnic studies at each of its campuses; and (2) to require, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of, at minimum, one three-unit course in ethnic studies. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Expresses that the intent of the Legislature is for CSU students to acquire the knowledge and skills that will help them comprehend the diversity and social justice history of the United States and of the society in which they live in order to enable them to contribute to society as responsible and constructive citizens.
- 2) Requires each campus of the CSU, commencing with the 2020-21 academic year, to provide courses in ethnic studies.
- 3) Requires the CSU to collaborate with the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies and the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) in order to develop core competencies to be achieved by students who complete an ethnic studies course.
- 4) Requires the Council and ASCSU to approve the core competencies, pursuant to (3) above, before the start of the 2020-21 academic year.

- 5) Requires the CSU, commencing with the 2020-21 academic year, to require, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of one 3-unit course in ethnic studies.
- 6) Prohibits the CSU, when implementing the provisions of this measure, from increasing the required number of units to graduate from the CSU with a baccalaureate degree.
- 7) Specifies that the graduation requirement, pursuant to (5) above, does not apply to a postbaccalaureate student who is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at the CSU if the student has satisfied either of the following:
 - a) The student has earned a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency.
 - b) The student has completed an ethnic studies course at a postsecondary educational institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** “On August 23, 2017, CSU Chancellor Timothy White published Executive Order 1100, which would cap general education (GE) credits available for students at 48 units maximum, and would mandate that certain GE areas be no more than three units. The impact of this order is that it effectively lowers the demand for Ethnicity Studies, Comparative Cultural Studies, Gender, Race, Class, and Foreign Languages at many campuses.

Ethnic studies as a requirement for all students would advance a more inclusive society that values the diversity we represent in several ways. One, it maximizes the knowledge in the classroom by introducing new perspectives that represents a larger universe of experiences in society. Two, it helps students develop critical thinking skills by understanding their world from multiple perspectives, reducing group thinking that can be ethnocentric and intolerant of human diversity. Three, it better prepares our students to be productive and constructive workers/professionals in increasingly diversified and racial minority state. Four, it creates a sense of belonging that enhances graduation and success rates for underrepresented minority students. And lastly, education that reflects all racial ethnic groups’ experiences advances social justice and a democracy that works for everyone. A state curriculum that requires Ethnic Studies will help students learn lessons from the past to construct a better future.”

- 2) ***2014 ethnic studies task force and recommendations.*** In January 2014, Chancellor Timothy P. White formed a statewide committee called the *CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies*. The task force members were appointed by the Chancellor and included members drawn or nominated from the faculty, students, Academic Senate, campus presidents, provosts, and Student Affairs. According to the executive summary of the task force’s 2016 report, “its task was to identify, review and make recommendations concerning critical issues, policies and practices which impact the status, perceived and real value, functioning, sustainment and advancement of ethnic studies in the context of

their role in the mission of the university to provide a multicultural quality education which enables and enhances students' ability to function and relate effectively in a multicultural global society.”

Among the task force's ten main recommendations, it recommended making ethnic studies a general education requirement throughout the CSU system. Importantly, the task force identified best practices that allow for an ethnic studies requirement within the CSU's existing GE patterns and 120 semester unit requirements.

In response to the task force's report, the CSU Chancellor issued a 2017 status report on campus responses to the task force's recommendations. Specifically, as it relates to the recommendation to make ethnic studies a CSU system-wide graduation requirement, the CSU wrote. “As was referenced in Chancellor White's letter accompanying the Task Force report, the recommendations were expected to inform –but not constrain –the regular planning process of each campus. While ethnic studies has not been made a GE requirement throughout the CSU system, the report's recommendations are informing campus actions.”

- 3) ***Executive Order 1100-Revised.*** During 2016, Governor Brown's Office, the Department of Finance, and the Legislature expressed concerns about some inconsistencies with the CSU GE requirements, and encouraged the CSU to reexamine its policies and practices.

After over a year of consultation and discussion, the CSU Chancellor's Office issued Executive Order 1100-Revised. The CSU also saw the reexamination as consistent with CSU's efforts to remove administrative barriers to student success, one of six pillars, under Graduation Initiative 2025.

As noted by the Assembly Higher Education Committee, the goals of Executive Order 1100-Revised were to:

- Provide greater clarity regarding GE units, outlining the explicit minimum and maximum number of units for general education requirements;
- Ensure equitable treatment of all students so that transfer students and entering freshmen have the same general education requirements; and,
- Facilitate degree completion by explicitly allowing double counting of units that satisfy both GE requirements and major requirements.

Executive Order 1100-Revised does not prohibit a campus from requiring ethnic studies courses or any other courses within the established GE framework or as a campus requirement; however, this bill appears to be, at least in part, premised on an assumption that Executive Order 1100-Revised could lower the demand for ethnic studies, comparative cultural studies, gender, race, class, and foreign languages at many CSU campuses. According to information provided by the CSU, “ System wide data collected by the Chancellor's Office Institutional Research staff actually demonstrates that Ethnic Studies course enrollments increased from fall 2016 (one year prior to Executive Order 1100-Revised) to fall

2018 (one-year after Executive Order 1100-Revised.) During this time, course enrollments in the four areas highlighted in AB 1460 – Native American Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Latina and Latino American Studies – went from 8,213 to 8,935 fulltime equivalent students (FTES); an increase of almost 9 percent.”

4) **Existing ethnic studies efforts at the CSU.** According to the CSU Chancellor’s status report referenced above, the CSU has undertaken the following efforts, among others:

- a) Increasing access to ethnic studies courses: Campuses have hired additional faculty in ethnic studies programs to develop and teach new courses and additional course sections. At some campuses, general education programming or campus graduation requirements have been redesigned to include an emphasis on ethnic studies. At others, courses offered by ethnic studies departments have been redesigned to ensure availability to students earlier in their education. These efforts will result in more student awareness – earlier in their college years – of ethnic studies curricula and the opportunity to enroll in these courses.”
- b) Campuses are ensuring ethnic studies courses are well represented in GE categories, incorporating themes and language from the Task Force report into GE policy and strengthening graduation requirements that include ethnic studies courses, as shown below:

| Action | Campuses |
|--|--|
| Redesigned GE program around themes that will provide sustainability for the ethnic studies programs | Chico, East Bay, Fresno, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Stanislaus |
| Incorporated language from the ethnic studies report into mission -centered themes in the new GE Course Characteristics policy | Channel Islands, Pomona |
| Strengthened race and ethnicity graduation requirement | Channel Islands, East Bay, Los Angeles, Pomona, San Diego |
| Embedded ethnic studies throughout virtually all of the GE categories | Chico, East Bay, Los Angeles, Northridge, Sacramento |
| Increased number of courses from ethnic studies departments that are included in the GE curriculum | Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fullerton, Los Angeles, Pomona, San Francisco, San José |
| Campus overlaid with existing GE requirements | East Bay, Pomona, Sonoma |
| Ethnic studies courses have heavy representation in two GE areas; campus is exploring adding new ethnic studies course offerings that would fulfill the GE A1 Oral Communication requirement | Dominguez Hills, Fullerton, Pomona, Stanislaus |

- 5) **Value of ethnic studies.** A research review conducted by the National Education Association, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*, concluded that “considerable research evidence shows that well-designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for students and that curricula are designed and taught somewhat differently depending on the ethnic composition of the students and the subsequent experiences they bring. These positive findings should not be interpreted, however, as meaning that schools can assign any teacher an ethnic studies curriculum to teach, or that students of color will automatically achieve more if ethnic content is added to the curriculum. As noted above, well-planned and well-taught ethnic studies includes related components.”
- 6) **Academic freedom.** As noted by the Assembly Higher Education Committee, “while academic freedom may mean different things to different individuals, at the core of academic freedom, is the establishment of faculty members’ right to remain true to their pedagogical philosophy and intellectual commitments; it preserves the intellectual integrity of our higher education systems. Additionally, academic freedom means that the political, religious, or philosophical beliefs of politicians, administrators, and members of the public cannot be imposed on faculty or students.”

This bill requires the CSU to require a specific 3-unit course for graduation in ethnic studies, and requires the CSU to collaborate with the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies and the Academic Senate of the CSU (ASCSU) to develop core competencies to be achieved by students who complete an ethnic studies course for that purpose, and to do so before the 2020-21 academic year.

It should be noted that the CSU faculty continue to address the concerns about Ethnic Studies programs and courses, through work by the ASCSU. Over the past two years, the ASCSU has convened a GE Task Force, which issued a draft report in February 2019. One of the recommendations of this report is to include a specific 3-unit requirement within CSU GE for a course on cultural diversity within the United States. Presumably, this course would include courses across the spectrum of Ethnic Studies while providing flexibility to campuses.

The committee may wish to consider if the approach of dictating college-level graduation requirements unnecessarily impinges on the CSU Board of Trustees’ authority to manage the 23-campus CSU system overall and the ASCSU to guide and inform the academic and curricular decisions within the system.

- 7) **Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT).** The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act, established by SB 1440 requires California community college (CCC) districts to develop and grant a transfer associate degree that deems the student eligible for transfer into the CSU, when the student meets specified course requirements. Completion of an ADT guarantees:
- a) Admission with junior status to a CSU campus to a major determined to be similar to the ADT, but not to a specific campus or major.
 - b) No additional lower-division CSU coursework.

- c) No more than 60-semester units of upper division CSU coursework to complete a bachelor's degree that, in addition to the 60 units completed at community college, results in a 120-unit pathway to a bachelor's degree.
- d) Priority admission at CSU.

For students transferring to University of California, under the comprehensive review policy the ADT is among one of the nine criteria campuses are able to use to select their admitted class when they receive more minimally qualified applicants than they can admit.

According to a 2015 Legislative Analyst report, "to meet the act's requirements, the CCC and CSU have jointly developed 33 'transfer model curricula.' Each of these curricula identifies pre-major CCC courses that prepare students for upper-division CSU coursework in that major. The act requires that by fall 2015, each community college offer an associate degree for transfer in each of the majors corresponding to the first 25 transfer model curricula developed (if the college already offers an associate degree in that major). For other majors, community colleges must offer an associate degree for transfer within 18 months after the curriculum is finalized. The legislation requires CCC and CSU to develop four additional model curricula for "area of emphasis" associate degrees that prepare students for a broad set of related majors. Responding to concerns about limited choices for transfer students in certain CSU majors, the legislation requires CSU campuses to make every effort to accept associate degrees for transfer in every concentration within their majors.

According to the CSU Chancellor's Office, since the establishment of the ADT program, over 112,000 transfer pathways between CSU and CCC have been approved.

The committee may wish to consider the effect of imposing a new graduation requirement might have on existing ADT pathways.

- 8) ***More graduation requirement proposals likely to follow.*** The graduation requirement proposed by this bill is limited to ethnic studies. If the bill were to take effect, it seems likely that the Legislature would see additional proposals in future years to add additional graduation requirements. For example, it is easy to envision a proposal to require a gender studies or LGBTQ+ studies requirement, or perhaps a graduation requirement centered on climate change or environmental education.

Evidence of this possibility can be seen in the K-12 graduation requirements, where the Legislature has considered a burgeoning list of subjects for a new graduation requirement in recent years, including financial literacy, service learning, health, and ethnic studies. Additionally, the Legislature has authorized AP computer science to count toward local math graduation requirements beyond the state requirements, and expanded the foreign language or visual and performing arts requirement to also be satisfied by a career technical education course. Moreover, other bills have attempted to revise the number of courses required for certain existing subjects. ***The committee may wish to consider***

whether delving into the topic of college-level graduation requirements – even for topics for which there may be widespread agreement on – could ultimately lead to a tipping point of too many legislatively imposed graduation requirements at the college level.

- 9) ***Related and previous legislation.*** AB 331 (Medina, 2019) adds, commencing with the 2024-25 school year, a semester-long course in ethnic studies, based on the ethnic studies model curriculum, to the list of statewide graduation requirements; and applies all of the statewide graduation requirements to charter schools.

AB 2408 (Weber, 2018) was very similar in nature to this bill. AB 2408 was held in the Assembly Higher Education Committee at the request of the author.

SUPPORT

California Faculty Association (Sponsor)
 California League of United Latin American Citizens
 Black Community, Clergy and Labor Alliance
 Black Lives Matter Global Network
 Black Student Union at Sacramento State University
 California State University, Long Beach – Department of Africana Studies
 California State University, Long Beach – Dept. of Asian and Asian American Studies
 California State University, Los Angeles – Department of Pan-African Studies
 California State University, Northridge – Department of Social Work
 California State University, Northridge – Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies
 California State University, Stanislaus – Ethnic Studies program
 Center for the Study of Peoples of the Américas
 Critical Race and Ethnic Studies program at University of California, Merced
 Los Angeles County Democratic Party
 National Council for Black Studies
 National Council of Negro Women, Sacramento Valley Section
 Service Employees International Union California
 Taskforce for the Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice at Sacramento State
 Padres Pioneros
 University of California, Riverside – Ethnic Studies Department
 Multiple Individuals

OPPOSITION

Academic Senate of the California State University
 California Polytechnic State University, Pomona
 California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
 California State University
 California State University, Bakersfield
 California State University, Channel Islands
 California State University, Chico
 California State University, Dominguez Hills
 California State University, East Bay
 California State University, Fresno

California State University, Fullerton
California State University, Long Beach
California State University, Los Angeles
California State University Maritime Academy
California State University, Monterey Bay
California State University, Northridge
California State University, Sacramento
California State University, San Bernardino
California State University, San Marcos
California State University, Stanislaus
Humboldt State University
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San José State University
Sonoma State University

-- END --