
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 1786 **Hearing Date:** June 13, 2018
Author: Cervantes
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Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Lynn Lorber

Subject: Community colleges: academic credit for prior military experience.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor's Office to establish an initiative to expand the use of credit for students with prior learning.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Chancellor of the CCCs, using common course descriptors and pertinent standards of the American Council on Education, to determine, by July 1, 2015, for which courses credit for prior military experience should be awarded. (Education Code § 66025.7)
- 2) Requires the Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education to use funds to make awards, and requires funds to be awarded for innovations that reduce the time it takes students to complete degrees and credentials or reduce the total cost of attendance for students, or both, through any of the following:
 - a. Redesign of curriculum and instruction, such as implementation of three-year degrees.
 - b. Programs that allow students to make progress toward completion of degrees and credentials based on demonstration of knowledge and competencies, including military training, prior learning, and prior experiences.
 - c. Programs that make financial aid more accessible, including by increasing the number of students who apply for financial aid, or that reduce the costs of books and supplies. (EC § 66010.97)
- 3) Requires each state-level board to inquire in every application for licensure if the individual applying for licensure is serving in, or has previously served in, the military, and requires a board that authorizes veterans to apply military experience and training towards licensure requirements to post information on the board's Internet Web site about the ability of veteran applicants to apply military experience and training towards licensure requirements. (Business and Professions Code § 114.5)

- 4) Requires the Board of Registered Nursing to adopt regulations by January 1, 2017, requiring schools of nursing to have a process to evaluate and grant credit for military education and experience. Existing law requires the Board of Registered Nursing to deny the application for approval made by, and revoke the approval given to, any school of nursing that does not give student applicants credit in the field of nursing for military education and experience by the use of challenge examinations or other methods of evaluation. (BPC § 2786.1)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor's Office to establish an initiative to expand the use of credit for students with prior learning. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the CCC Chancellor's Office, by March 31, 2019, to establish an initiative to expand the use of course credit at the CCCs for students with prior learning.
- 2) Requires the initiative to do all of the following:
 - a) Identify best practices for the use of course credit for students with prior learning.
 - b) Locate and collect available resources.
 - c) Provide professional development in connection with the identified best practices.
- 3) Requires the initiative to identify the best practices for purposes of establishing potential pilot programs and provide recommendations for internal systemwide policy changes to expand the use of course credit at the CCCs for students with prior learning.
- 4) Requires the Chancellor of the CCC, by January 1, 2020, to submit a report to the Legislature on the initiative, including but not limited to activities established by the initiative. This bill requires the report to include recommendations for legislative policy changes necessary to implement the best practices identified by the initiative.
- 5) Sunsets the reporting requirement on January 1, 2024.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author's office, "Although this bill looks at credit for prior learning for multiple subgroups of students (nurses, firefighters, etc.) it is especially important for our veteran students. Veterans leave the United States Armed Forces with a Military Occupation Code, Rating, or Air Force Specialty code, depending on their branch. These classifications are associated with each veteran's job in the military and corresponding training. Individual colleges and universities may grant college credit for military work

experience and training, but there is not a comprehensive articulation process. This bill will reduce the amount of time veterans spend in college and significantly improve career attainment for California Veterans.”

- 2) ***Not limited to veterans.*** Despite the title of this bill, its scope is not limited to prior learning for military experience. This bill relates to *all* prior learning experiences.
- 3) ***Recognition of prior learning.*** The determination for awarding credit for prior learning is within the purview of the faculty of California Community Colleges (CCCs). As such, policies and practices for awarding credit for prior learning varies widely across CCCs. The one exception to this variation relates to policies established under SB 466 (Hill, Chapter 489, Statutes of 2015) governing nursing programs. SB 466 requires nursing programs in California to offer students credit for prior military experience or risk negative action by the Board of Registered Nursing (see existing law in the Background section of this analysis).
- 4) ***Currently underway?*** According to the Chancellor’s Office, “in Fall of 2017, the Chancellor’s Office received a \$1 million grant to develop a supportive structure for instituting credit for prior learning (CPL) throughout the CCC system. By recognizing previously acquired knowledge and experience, more students can receive an industry-valued credential or transfer to a university. Offering CPL will help both returning adults (such as returning military veterans) and students with no recognized postsecondary education by decreasing the number of units they must take to finish, thereby making completion of degrees and certificates quicker and more affordable. This bill creates a framework for this effort.
- 5) ***Local effort.*** Saddleback Community College earned an Innovation award grant to develop an online credit translator that will help military veterans identify and determine which credits they may qualify for at the college. The primary goal of the project is to increase the number of prior learning credits awarded to veteran students through existing articulation methods and by establishing systems, policies and process to recognize the types of military occupations, experiences, skills, education and training, prior certifications, and examinations that may count toward college credit. Saddleback Community College partnered with area California State University (CSU) campuses to establish a pathway from military service to community college and ultimately to a four-year-degree.
- 6) ***American Council on Education guide (ACE).*** The military issues academic transcripts for active-duty service members and veterans. The transcripts issued by the various service branches are endorsed and periodically evaluated by ACE and bear its seal. ACE also publishes the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services, which provides recommendations to colleges for evaluating these transcripts. The Guide’s credit transfer recommendations are based on reviews of military coursework by a panel of university faculty members convened by ACE. These faculty members review military coursework and occupational training descriptions pertaining to their own academic disciplines, evaluating them according to disciplinary standards and expectations. Both the University of California and the CSU have adopted the American Council and Education’s standards for evaluating the academic credit

or prior service of veterans, and in 2011 the California Community College (CCC) Academic Senate passed a resolution urging local academic senates to award credit in accordance with American Council on Education (ACE) standards.

- 7) **Fiscal impact.** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would impose minor and absorbable costs to the CCC Chancellor's Office to continue the work of expanding the use of credit for prior learning at CCC and submit a report on credit for prior learning. The majority of this work already is funded through a \$1 million grant (see Comment # 4).
- 8) **Prior legislation.** SB 1071 (Newman, 2017) requires the CCC Chancellor's Office, in collaboration with the Academic Senate, to develop a uniform policy for awarding course credit for prior military education, training and service. SB 1071 is pending in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 372 (Hernandez, 2011) required CCCs, as part of the matriculation process, to assess prior college-level learning gained by military service personnel and veterans through non-college credit means, as determined by relevant faculty, and that the related credit awarded meet the standards of the ACE, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, or other equivalent standard for awarding academic credits. AB 372 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

None received

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