
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 705 **Hearing Date:** July 12, 2017
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Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012: matriculation: assessment

SUMMARY

This bill requires community college districts to maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in math and English within a one-year timeframe through the use of multiple measures to achieve this goal.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Community Colleges (CCC), a postsecondary education system consisting of community college districts and the Board of Governors (BOG) of the CCC (Education Code (EC) § 70900).
- 2) Requires the CCC BOG to provide leadership and direction in the continuing development of the CCC as an integral and effective element in the structure of public higher education in the state. The work of the BOG shall at all times be directed to maintaining and continuing, to the maximum degree permissible, local authority and control in the administration of the CCC (EC § 70901).
- 3) Under state regulations, prohibits a community college from requiring students to take prerequisite courses unless they are highly unlikely to receive a satisfactory grade in the course (or at least one course within the program) for which the prerequisite is being established. (California Code of Regulations § 55003)
- 4) Prohibits a community college district or college from using any assessment instrument for specified purposes, without the authorization of the BOG.
- 5) Requires the BOG to review all assessment instruments to ensure that they meet all of the following requirements:
 - a) Are sensitive to cultural and language differences between students, and are adapted as necessary to accommodate students with disabilities.
 - b) Used as an advisory tool to assist students in the selection of appropriate courses.
 - c) Not used to exclude students from admission to community colleges.

- 5) Defines "assessment" as the process of gathering information about a student regarding the student's study skills, English language proficiency, computational skills, aptitudes, goals, learning skills, career aspirations, academic performance, and need for special services.
- 6) Specifies that assessment methods may include, but not necessarily be limited to, interviews, standardized tests, attitude surveys, vocational or career aptitude and interest inventories, high school or postsecondary transcripts, specialized certificates or licenses, educational histories, and other measures of performance (EC § 78213).

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires a community college district to maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and mathematics within a one-year timeframe, and use, in the placement of students into English and mathematics courses in order to achieve this goal one or more of the following measures:
 - a) High School coursework.
 - b) High School grades.
 - c) High School grade point average.
- 2) Requires the application of multiple measures in placement of all students in such a manner so that either of the following may occur:
 - a) Low performance on one measure may be offset by high performance on another measure.
 - b) The student can demonstrate preparedness and thus bypass remediation based on any one measure.
- 3) Provides that when high school transcript data is difficult to obtain, logistically problematic to use, or not available, a community college district or community college may use self-reported high school information or guided-self placement.
- 4) Authorizes the board of governors to establish regulations governing the use of these and other measures, instruments, and placement models to ensure that the measures, instruments, and placement models selected by a community college demonstrate that they guide English and mathematics placements to achieve the goal of maximizing the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and mathematics within a one-year timeframe.
- 5) Prohibits a community college district or college from requiring students to enroll in remedial coursework that lengthens their time to complete a degree unless placement research that includes consideration of high school grade point

average and coursework show that those students are highly unlikely to succeed in transfer-level coursework.

- 6) Provides that a community college district or college may require students to enroll in additional concurrent support during the same semester that they take a transfer-level English or mathematics course, but only if it is determined that the support will increase their likelihood of passing the transfer-level English or mathematics course.
- 7) Requires the Community college district or college to minimize that impact on student financial aid and unit requirements for the degree by exploring embedded support and low or noncredit support options.
- 8) Declares the Legislature's intent that the California Department of Education and the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges work collaboratively to ensure timely access to data regarding high school performance for purposes of community college student placement.
- 9) State various legislative findings and declarations relative to the overwhelming majority of students referred to remedial courses, the adverse consequences to a college incorrectly assigning a prepared student to remediation, research that supports that a student's high school performance is a much stronger predictor of success in transfer-level course than standardized placement tests and the need to improve placement practices at Community Colleges.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** Under current state regulations, community colleges are prohibited from requiring students to take a pre-requisite course unless they are highly unlikely to succeed in a higher-level course without it. According to the author, "this policy is not often followed and many colleges rely overwhelmingly on the assessment test. A different evidence-based approach calls for the use of multiple measures, beyond just traditional placement test scores, in assessment and placement policies. However, while colleges are currently being encouraged to use multiple measures of assessment, including high school grades there is still a wide variance in how colleges are using this key indicator of student success in college-level work." This bill seeks to codify the use of key student success indicators based on high school grades, coursework, and grade point average to maximize the probability that students complete transfer-level coursework in English and math within a one-year period. This measure also aims to prevent colleges from enrolling students in remedial education unless placement research proves that those students are deemed highly unlikely to succeed in transfer-level coursework.
- 2) **Remedial education.** Remedial education is intended to help students who are assessed as "unprepared" to succeed in college-level work. The term remedial education is typically used interchangeably with development education, foundational skills and known as basic skills in community colleges. Basic skills courses provide those foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language, as well as learning skills and study skills, which

are necessary for students to succeed in college-level work. The traditional approach to remedial education is based on placement test scores. Colleges place a student who underperforms on placement tests into a sequence of developmental/college-prep courses prior to that student enrolling in college-level English and math courses. Concerns have been raised that this approach results in college-ready students being misplaced into remedial courses and extends time in school. According to the Campaign for College Opportunity, a growing body of research is finding that students are not nearly as “unprepared” for college-level work as believed and that the reliance solely on placement tests is a weak predictor of student success. A better way to assess college readiness is to use multiple measures, where student placement is determined by high school grades and other measures — not just a single test score.

- 3) **Basic skills reforms.** In an effort to transform the delivery of basic skills instruction and help improve student outcomes, Senate Bill 81 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 22, Statutes of 2015) established the Community College Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation program. As a condition of receipt of funding, community college districts are required to adopt or expand the use of evidence-based models for basic skills assessment, placement, instruction, and student support that may include multiple measures of student performance, including grades in high school courses, especially overall grade point average, results from the common assessment system, and input from counselors. SB 81 also established the Basic Skills Partnership Pilot program to promote collaboration in basic skills instruction between high schools, community colleges, and California State University campuses.
- 4) **CCC students assessed as underprepared.** On March 1, 2017, the Senate Education Committee convened an oversight hearing on remedial education in California. The background paper provided by the Legislative Analyst’s Office for the hearing noted that 75 percent of first-time California Community College (CCC) students are assessed as unprepared. The paper also stated that unprepared students are less likely to graduate with a 30 percentage point difference in graduation rates between incoming students assessed as college-ready versus not college-ready. Additionally, representatives from the Campaign for College Opportunity and the Acceleration Project presented research that highlighted the benefits to using other readiness indicators beyond a high stakes assessment test and ensuring students reach transfer-level math or English within three semesters.
- 5) **Multiple measures.** Under current regulations, CCCs are required to use multiple measures in their assessment processes. Despite the requirement implementation of multiple measures by colleges faces challenges. The Public Policy Institute of California suggests that colleges should be more consistent in the use of multiple measures. Community colleges are to use measures in addition to assessment tests to inform placement. Research shows that measures such as high school achievement data do a comparable or better job at predicting college success than just utilizing an assessment exam.

Some colleges use multiple measures in a systematic way, while others only use multiple measures if students request it or challenge their placement. With

multiple measures not being implemented evenly across the 72 districts, inequities may continue to grow, if students with cultural and social capital are more likely to take advantage of multiple measures. This bill seeks to ensure the use of multiple measures in the placement of students into English and Math courses in order to achieve the goal that a student will enter and complete transfer level coursework within one year. The bill further requires colleges to use at least one of these measures, high school coursework, high school grades or high school grade point averages in the placement of students.

- 6) ***What if high school data is not available?*** In the event that high school data is not available as may be the case for many adult learners, under the provisions of this bill a community college district or community may use self-reported high school information or guided self-placement.
- 7) ***English Language Learner and Certificated program.*** Concerns have been raised that the one-year goal of the attainment of “transfer-level” coursework does not recognize the needs of a student who may not wish to transfer but instead seek a certificate or associate degree. Additionally, others contend that the bill as currently drafted does not recognize the unique needs of English Language Learners and should not have the same timelines for academic progress.

In response to those concerns and consistent with the author’s request, staff recommends the bill be amended to distinguish the unique needs of ESL and require colleges to maximize the probability that an ESL will complete degree and transfer requirements in English within 3 years and authorize the board of governors to establish regulations for this purpose.

Consistent with the author’s request, staff also recommends the bill be amended to authorize the board of governors to establish regulations to ensure that, for students who seek a goal other than transfer and who are in certificate or degree programs with specific requirements that are not met with transfer-level coursework a community college district or college maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete the required college-level coursework in English and mathematics within a one-year timeframe.

SUPPORT

A Place Called Home
 Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice
 AVID Center
 California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley
 California Edge Coalition
 California EDGE Coalition
 Campaign for College Opportunity
 Central Valley Higher Education Consortium
 College for All Coalition
 Community College League of California
 Contra Costa College

Cuyamaca College
Institute for College Access & Success
Irvine Valley College
Los Angeles Regional Coalition for Linked Learning
Los Angeles Urban League
Parent Institute for Quality Education
Riverside County Superintendent of Schools
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
The Education Trust-West
United Way of Greater Los Angeles
Women's Foundation of California
Youth Policy Institute

OPPOSITION

None received

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