
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No: AB 829 **Hearing Date:** June 19, 2019
Author: Bloom and Gipson
Version: February 20, 2019
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: California State University: Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program.

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the California State University (CSU) to establish Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree programs that are distinguished from doctoral degree programs at the University of California.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that the primary mission of the CSU is undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree, but authorizes the CSU to offer joint doctoral degrees with the University of California (UC), or with one or more independent institutions of higher education, only as specified. (Education Code § 66010.4)
- 2) Provides, in setting forth the missions and functions of California's public and independent institutions of higher education, among other things, that UC has the sole authority in public higher education to award the doctoral degree in all fields of learning, except that it may agree with the CSU to award joint doctoral degrees in selected fields. (EC § 66010.4)
- 3) Authorizes the CSU to independently award the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree focused solely on preparing administrative leaders for California public K-14 schools. (EC § 66040, et seq.)
- 4) Authorizes the CSU to offer the Doctor of Audiology (Au.D) degree; and, specifies that the Au.D degree programs at the CSU shall be focused on preparing audiologists to provide health care services and shall be consistent with the standards for accreditation set forth by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. (EC § 66041, et seq.)
- 5) Authorizes the CSU to offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) degree, and specifies that the D.P.T. degree programs at the CSU shall be focused on preparing physical therapists to provide health care services, and be consistent with meeting the requirements of the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. (EC § 66042, et seq.)

- 6) Authorizes California State University (CSU) to offer the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree programs, and specifies that the DNP offered by the CSU shall focus on the preparation of nursing faculty to teach in postsecondary nursing education programs and may also train nurses for advanced nursing practice or nurse leadership. (EC § 89280, et seq.)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) States findings and declarations that include both of the following:
 - a) Since its adoption in 1960, the Master Plan for Higher Education has served to create the largest and most distinguished higher education system in the nation. A key component of the Master Plan for Higher Education is the differentiation of mission and function, whereby doctoral and identified professional programs are limited to the University of California (UC), with the provision that the CSU can provide doctoral education in joint doctoral programs with the University of California and independent California colleges and universities. The differentiation of function has allowed California to provide universal access to postsecondary education while preserving quality.
 - b) Because of the need to prepare and educate increased numbers of occupational therapists, the state is granting the CSU authority to offer the Occupational Therapy Doctorate degree as an exception to the differentiation of function in graduate education that assigns sole authority among the California higher education segments to the UC for awarding doctoral degrees independently. This exception to the Master Plan for Higher Education recognizes the distinctive strengths and respective missions of the CSU and the UC.
- 2) Authorizes the CSU to establish Occupational Therapy Doctorate degree programs.
- 3) Limits the authority to establish a doctorate degree program to the discipline of occupational therapy.
- 4) Requires that the Occupational Therapy Doctorate degree programs offered by the CSU be distinguished from doctoral degree programs at the UC.
- 5) Requires that the Occupational Therapy Doctorate degree programs offered by the CSU be focused on preparing occupational therapists to provide health care services and be consistent with the standards for accreditation set by the appropriate accrediting body.
- 6) Requires the CSU provide any startup and operation funding needed for the degree programs authorized by the bill from within existing budgets for academic program support, without diminishing the equality of program support offered to the CSU undergraduate programs.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Currently, there are no public university options in California that offer a doctorate degree in occupational therapy. As a result, California students who wish to pursue an occupational therapy doctorate only have the option of attending much more expensive private university programs. There is a national trend both in California and the nation for universities to transition their masters programs to doctoral programs, which addresses both the need and the demand for higher educated and trained occupational therapists. Nationally there are 96 universities that offer a masters in occupational therapy, of which, 76 are currently transitioning to offering a doctorate level degree. In California there are currently 2 private universities that offer an occupational therapy doctorate and 4 other private institutions transitioning to a doctorate. AB 829 authorizes the California State University (CSU) to award doctorate degrees in Occupational Therapy in order to comply with changing professional standards and ensure the continuation of high demand, high need programs at the CSU.”

- 2) ***Master Plan for Higher Education.*** As outlined in the Master Plan for Higher Education and by state statute, the primary mission of the CSU is undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master’s degree. The University of California (UC) was granted the sole authority to offer doctoral degrees. Notably, this bill specifies that the Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree offered by the CSU is to be distinguished from the doctor of philosophy degrees in nursing offered at, or in conjunction with, the UC.

Notwithstanding the differentiation of mission envisioned by the Master Plan and outlined in statute, the Legislature has authorized the CSU to go beyond its original mission to offer four professional doctoral degrees which include the Doctor of Audiology, Doctor of Education, Doctor of Physical Therapy and Doctor of Nursing Practice. Fees were capped at the rate charged at the UC, no additional funding was provided by the state, and these programs were to be implemented without diminishing or reducing enrollment in undergraduate programs. Additionally, the CSU programs offer applied doctorates and are generally not duplicative of degrees offered by UC.

- 3) ***What is Occupational Therapy?*** According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, occupational therapy is the only profession that helps people across the lifespan to do the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of daily activities (occupations). Occupational therapy practitioners enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote both physical and mental health, and prevent—or live better with— injury, illness, or disability. Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes.

- 4) ***Doctor of Occupational Therapy programs.*** In California, only two public universities, both at the CSU, offer accredited master’s programs in occupational

therapy. These programs, offered by San Jose State University and California State University (CSU) Dominguez Hills, have existed since 1960 and 2004, respectively, and currently provide the entry-level master's degree requirement for the occupational therapy professional certification exam and for careers in the field.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) – the accrediting body for these programs – has recently established the educational standards for universities to offer a doctorate-level occupational therapy degree. Currently, there are no public university options in California that offer a doctorate degree in occupational therapy. As a result, California students who wish to pursue an occupational therapy doctorate only have the option of attending private university programs could be more costly for students.

The CSU offers a more affordable path to a career in occupational therapy in California than its private counterparts and enrolls students who reflect the state's diverse population. Currently, the total tuition for these master's-level programs is \$19,014. Seven private accredited institutions in California offer a master's or doctorate in occupational therapy total tuition range from \$85,000 to \$135,000.

- 5) ***Changing professional standards.*** The driver for CSU doctorate degree programs authorized by the legislature have been in response to changes in professional standards necessary to become a professional on those fields. There is a national trend both in California and the nation for universities to transition their master's programs to doctoral programs, which addresses both the need and the demand for more highly educated and trained occupational therapists. Nationally there are 96 universities that offer a master's in occupational therapy, of which, 76 are currently transitioning to offering a doctorate level degree. In California there are currently two private universities that offer an occupational therapy doctorate and four other private institutions transitioning to a doctorate.
- 6) ***Workforce trends.*** According to the CSU, California currently has relatively low levels of access to occupational therapists. The National Board of Certification in Occupational Therapy notes that California has 12 percent of the U.S. population, but just 8 percent of the occupational therapists, which means that the state is relatively underserved. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, California ranks 44th in the nation in access to occupational therapists.

With an aging population, expanded roles for occupational therapists in the healthcare field, and documented efficacy and cost-effectiveness of occupational therapy services, many reports have concluded that there will be an increased need for these skilled professionals. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 24 percent growth in employment of occupational therapists between 2016 and 2026, making it one of the 30 fastest growing occupations in the country. Additionally, a 2015 study in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation forecasts growing shortages of occupational therapists in all 50 states, with California projected to be one of the states with the largest shortages.

For those in or entering the workforce, employment opportunities are strong. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a national average wage of \$83,200 in 2017, and \$89,870 in California. U.S. News and World Report notes the unemployment rate for occupational therapists is just 0.3 percent, again reflective of high demand for professionals in this field. In its 2018 ranking of the 50 best jobs in America, Glassdoor ranked occupational therapy fourth, citing the number of job openings, salary, and overall job satisfaction. CSU, Dominguez Hills reports their Occupational Therapy graduates typically have in excess of four employment offers at graduation and are frequently offered a sign-on bonus.

SUPPORT

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Torrance Memorial Medical Center

OPPOSITION

None received

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