
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No: AB 943 **Hearing Date:** June 12, 2019
Author: Chiu
Version: May 9, 2019
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez

Subject: Community colleges: Student Equity and Achievement Program funds

NOTE: This bill has been referred to the Committees on Education and Appropriations. A "do pass" motion should include referral to the Committee on Appropriations

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the use of funding from the California Community Colleges (CCC) the Student Equity and Achievement Program for emergency student financial assistance to help an eligible student overcome unforeseen financial challenges that would directly impact the student's ability to persist in the student's course of study.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Creates the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) in order to provide a variety of activities and services intended to ensure the success of CCC students, including, but not limited to: a) student assessment before course registration; b) counseling and other education planning services; c) advising; and, d) development of an education plan leading to a course of study. Specifies funding for SSSP shall be targeted to fully implement orientation, assessment, counseling and advising, and other education planning services needed to assist a student in making an informed decision about his or her educational goal and course of study and in the development of an education plan .(Education Code (EC) § 78212)
- 2) Requires that all Community College Districts, with the assistance of the CCC Chancellor, establish and maintain institutional research to evaluate the effectiveness of the SSSP, as specified, and of any other programs or services designed to facilitate students' completion of their educational goals and course of study. Specifies the metrics for said research shall include, but be not limited to the following: a) prior educational experience, including transcripts when appropriate, as determined by the chancellor; b) educational goals and courses of study; c) criteria for exemption from orientation, assessment, or required counseling or advisement, if applicable; d) need for financial assistance; e) disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender, disability, age, and socioeconomic status, to the extent this information is available; f) academic performance, such as the completion of specified unit thresholds, success in basic skills courses, grade point average, course completion outcomes, transfer readiness, and

degree and certificate completion; and, g) any additional information that the chancellor finds appropriate. (EC § 78214)

- 3) As a condition for receiving Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) funding, and in order to ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances, the governing board of each CCD shall maintain a student equity plan that includes, but is not limited to, the following for each community college in the Community College District (CCD): a) campus-based research as to the extent of student equity by gender and specified underrepresented groups (including, but limited to, current or former foster youth, veterans, and students with disabilities); b) goals for access to, and completion of, basic skills, career technical education and workforce training, and transfer courses for the overall student population and for each population group of high-need or disadvantaged students, and a determination of what activities are most likely to effectively meet those goals; c) where significant underrepresentation is found to exist, measures for addressing the disparities in those areas, implementation activities designed to attain the specified goals, including, but not limited to, the adoption of evidence-based models of remediation; and, d) a schedule and process for evaluation. The plan shall be adopted by the governing board of the CCD and submitted to the CCC Chancellor, as specified .(EC § 78220)
- 4) Requires the CCC Chancellor to allocate funds provided for purposes of successfully implementing the activities and goals specified in the student equity plans, consistent with all of the following: a) ensure CCDs submit a student equity plan that is consistent, as specified in EC Section 78220; b) ensure that CCDs serving greater populations of students who are high-need or disadvantaged receive greater resources to provide services to students, consistent with the goals and activities specified in their student equity plans; c) establish criteria for calculating the number of high-need and disadvantaged students in a CCD; d) establish a list of eligible and ineligible expenditures and activities to ensure that funding is used to support the implementation of student equity plan goals and the coordination of services for the targeted student populations; and, e) report to the Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst, and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, on the expenditure of student equity funds (EC Section 78221).

To note, the 2018-19 Budget Act, consolidated the Student Equity Plans, Student Success and Support Programs, and the Basic Skills Initiative, into the Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP) (EC § 78222).

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes the use of funding included in the Budget Act for the Student Equity and Achievement Program for provision of emergency student financial assistance to help an eligible student overcome unforeseen challenges that would directly impact the student's ability to persist in the student's course of

study. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the immediate need for shelter or food.

- 2) Encourages each community college district and campus to consider the unique characteristics of its student body in developing specific guidelines for further defining what constitutes an unforeseen financial challenge for its students.
- 3) Requires, as a condition for emergency student financial assistance to be an allowable use of Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP) funds, the inclusion of emergency student financial assistance in the intuition's plan for interventions to students.
- 4) Defines for purposes of the bill the following terms:
 - a) "Eligible student" to mean a student who has experienced an unforeseen financial challenge, who is making satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the college the student attends, and who is at risk of not persisting in the student's course of study due to the unforeseen financial challenge.
 - b) "Emergency student financial assistance" to mean financial support to assist a student to overcome unforeseen financial challenges, including, but not limited to, direct aid in the form of emergency grants, housing and food assistance, textbook grants, and transportation assistance, so that the student can continue the student's course of study.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "This bill seeks to address the financial challenges that many California community college students face in attending school". The author states, "According to a 2017 report by The Institute for College Access and Success, 'What College Costs for Low-Income Californians,' in many regions of the state, community colleges have a higher net price of attendance than the nearest University of California or California State University campus. This reflects the limited amount of grant and loan aid available for community college students' non-tuition costs of attendance, which include essentials like housing, food, textbooks, and transportation". The author contends that, "When less financial aid is available to low-income students, those students are forced to work more hours to cover essential costs, which can lead them to reduce their course load or drop out altogether. The number one reason students leave school is the need to work and attend college at the same time".

In addition the author further states, "emergency aid is an emerging best practice to improve student retention and completion. Studies show that many students on the edge can have their entire college career derailed by just one financial emergency-like a missed utility payment, unexpected childcare need, or sudden illness. Emergency aid provides "just in time" grants to students facing these kinds of unexpected costs. These small grants of \$500 or less at the right time have a big impact on whether or not a student continues their course of student. Data from one program-the Dreamkeepers Program- shows that 95 percent of

students who received emergency aid finished out their term and 88 percent enrolled in the next semester.”

This measure authorizes the use of funding from the SEAP for the provision of providing emergency student financial assistance.

- 2) ***History of Student Equity Planning.*** In 1991, the California Legislature charged all levels of public education to provide education equity, “through an environment in which each person...has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential.” In keeping with these requirements, the California Community Colleges (CCC) Board of Governors (BOG) adopted a student equity policy in 1992, to ensure that groups historically underrepresented in higher education have an equal opportunity for access, success, and transfer; enjoining all districts to develop, implement, and evaluate a student equity plan. In 1996, the BOG amended its policy to establish the adoption of a student equity plan as a minimum standard for receipt of state funding. In 2008-09, due to the economic downturn and state budget cuts many regulatory requirements related to student equity and other initiatives were suspended.

In January 2011, in response to SB 1143 (Liu, Chapter 409, Statutes of 2010), the BOG embarked on a 12-month planning process to improve student success, creating the Student Success Task Force. The Task Force published recommendations in early 2012, many of which became part of the Student Success Task Force. The Task Force published recommendations in early 2012, many of which became part of Student Success Act of 2012 the effort to improve student success established by SB 1456 (Lowenthal, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012). Among many important changes in the Act, it reaffirmed the importance of focusing on student equity in the effort to improve student success. In 2013, the Chancellor’s Office convened a Student Equity Workgroup to review and update the student equity planning process, ensuring that each college identifies strategies to address and monitor equity issues as well as to mitigate the disproportionate impact on student access and achievement.

The 2018 Budget Act and trailer bill AB 1809 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 33, Statutes of 2018) establish the Student Equity and Achievement Program by combining the Student Success and Support Program, the Student Success for Basic Skills program, and the Student Equity Program, for a total of \$475.2 million Proposition 98 General Fund. As a condition of receiving funds, colleges must maintain student equity plans, provide student matriculation services, adopt multiple measures placement policies, and provide all eligible students with an education plan. Colleges are to annually report to the Chancellor’s office by January 1 on how funding was spent in the prior year, and to assess progress in boosting student achievement. Additionally, AB 1809 requires the Chancellor’s Office to submit a system-wide report by April 1, annually, to summarize the district reports.

- 1) ***Designated use of Student Equity funds at CCCs.*** In the 2014-15 Budget Act, the Legislature provided dedicated funding for student equity planning to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Colleges may use student equity funds to provide a broad array of services as long as these expenditures

target student groups with achievement gaps identified in a college student equity plan submitted to the CCC Chancellor's Office.

The Chancellor of the CCCs is to allocate the funds in a manner that ensures districts with a greater proportion or number of students who are high-need, as determined by the Chancellor's Office, receive greater resources to provide services. In addition, as a condition of receipt of the funds, the districts are required to include in their Student Equity Plan how they will coordinate existing student support services in a manner to better serve their high-need student populations.

2) ***How have colleges used Student Equity funds?*** In its 2016 evaluation of the Student Success Act, the Legislative Analyst's Office reports that many colleges use funds to support the following student equity activities:

- Expanding existing student support services such as tutoring and supplemental instruction.
- Implementing peer mentoring programs and learning communities for underrepresented minorities.
- Offering equity-focused professional development for faculty and staff.

3) ***Is this the appropriate remedy?*** Student equity planning focuses on increasing access to, and completion of, English as Second Language and basic skills, degree, certificate and transfer courses for the overall student population and for each population group of high-need or disadvantaged students. Each college develops specific goals/outcomes and actions to address disparities that are discovered, disaggregating data for indicators by student demographics. College plans must describe the implementation of each indicator, as well as policies, activities, and procedures as they relate to student equity at college. Student equity plans are prepared with three-to-five year time frames in terms of planned activities and improvements, to align with the Student Success and Support Program plan.

As noted in staff comment #2, the state has exerted extensive effort and allocated funding to better coordinate delivery of existing student support services to reduce equity gaps through the Student Equity Program. This bill authorizes the use of Student Equity and Achievement Program Student funds for the provision of emergency student financial assistance.

- *Should this Committee authorize the use of Student Equity and Achievement funds for purposes unrelated to the effort to implement strategies close access and achievement gaps among demographic groups?*
- *Would this bill set a precedent that dilutes Student equity funds intended for critical academic support services for the provision of nonacademic financial assistance?*

- *The current emergency aid programs at Pasadena City College and Grossmont College were funded from external sources, such as district foundations and other fundraising efforts. Are these more appropriate funding sources?*
- *If state funds are to be used for this purpose, would it be more appropriate to expand the resources available through state financial aid programs?*

4) ***Recent efforts to address community college students' financial and basic needs.*** This bill proposes a direct aid program to be used by students for emergency purposes to cover the cost of housing and food, textbooks, and transportation. Some community colleges are addressing these needs through campus or district initiated strategies such as offering free bus passes to address transportation needs, however, systemwide assistance programs vary wildly. The assistance programs funded by the state offer some consistency in funding to cover living expenses and other costs incurred while attending college. These programs include the following:

- a) Cal Grant B access award provides students who meet the income and GPA (at least 2.0) requirements an annual allowance of \$1,670.
- c) Community College Student Success Completion Grant provides eligible community college students with an additional \$649 per semester for enrolling in 12-14 units, and provides \$2,000 for students enrolled in 15 or more units.
- d) The Hunger Free Campus program, established by the 2017 budget trailer bill SB 85 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 23, Statutes of 201) provided one-time funding for colleges willing to deliver services that address the food security of their students. In order to receive the funds colleges must designate campus employees to help ensure that students have the information they need to enroll in CalFresh as well as host a food pantry accessible to students.

5) ***Related and Prior legislation.***

SB 291 (Leyva, 2019) establishes the California Community College Student Financial Aid Program to be administered by the Board of Governors of the California Community College and implemented by eligible community colleges to assist CCC students cover the total cost of attendance, which includes non-tuition costs. SB 291 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

SB 568 (Portantino, 2019) establishes, contingent upon an appropriation, the College-Focused Rapid Rehousing Program to provide housing options for homeless college and university students and to ensure that policies are in place at California's public postsecondary education systems to support students experiencing homelessness in transitioning into stable housing and remaining enrolled in college. SB 568 was held on the Assembly floor.

AB 1468 (Chiu, 2017) which was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee Suspend File, was similar in nature to this measure.

SB 307 (Nguyen, 2017) Requests the Regents of the University of California (UC) to convene a task force, consisting of three representatives from the UC, California State University (CSU) and California Community Colleges (CCC), selected by the governing boards of each segment for the purpose of conducting a study to determine the extent, causes, and effects of housing insecurity and homelessness of current and future students. SB 307 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 543 (Limon, 2017) requires the CSU Trustees, the CCC Board of Governors, and encourages the University of California (UC) Regents, to designate as a "hunger free campus" each of its respective campuses. The provisions in AB 543 were adopted into SB 85 budget trailer bill.

AB 2822 (Chiu, 2016) would have required the CCC Chancellor's Office to provide guidelines for community college districts or campuses that seek to establish student emergency aid programs among the services they provide. AB 2822 authorized the solicitation and receipt of funding from private sources to cover the cost of the emergency aid program. AB 2822 was ordered to inactive file at the request of the author and subsequently died.

SUPPORT

California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office
California Federation of Teachers (Sponsor)
California Tribal Business Alliance
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (Sponsor)
Los Rios Community College District
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Scholarship America (Sponsor)
Social Compassion in Legislation
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

OPPOSITION

None received

-- END --