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AB 955 (Williams), As Amended on September 5, 2013 Community College Intersession Extension Pilot Program

AB 955 would create a four year pilot program to allow six specified California Community College campuses to offer extension programs for credit, during summer and winter intersessions. Colleges could only offer courses if the college has been at enrollment capacity for the preceding two years; could only offer courses leading to certificates, degrees, or transfer preparation and requires participating campuses to establish a financial aid program to provide financial assistance to low-income students.

What is the problem?

Community colleges have been reducing their class offerings due to substantial state budget cuts, hampering students' ability to access the courses they need to complete certificates, degrees, and transfer to four-year institutions. According to a March 2013 report by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), course offerings have declined from 420,000 to 334,000 since 2008—86,000 or 21% of course offerings—and most were credit courses necessary to transfer or obtain a degree or certificate. **PPIC estimates that 600,000 students have been turned away from community colleges since 2008.** Another 500,000 students were on waiting lists for Fall 2012 courses.

Moreover because many colleges reach their enrollment capacity during the Fall and Spring terms and because there has not been state funding to increase course offerings, colleges are unable to offer courses during Summer and Winter intersessions, even if there is significant student demand for these courses. PPIC notes that reductions in summer offerings may slow the completion rates for some students, as well as reduce the earnings for some faculty and staff who previously relied on summer income.

The recent *Left Out, Left Behind* report by Corinthian Colleges, Inc. shows that California's Latino community is likely to be affected disproportionately by budget cuts and overcrowding in community college classrooms. It finds that over the next ten years, almost 2.5 million Californians will be turned away from the state's community colleges, denying them the opportunity to develop the professional skills they need to qualify for high-paying jobs¹.

Additionally, the lack of courses during intersessions has had a serious impact on veterans who must be enrolled in courses to access benefits to which they are entitled through the Post 9/11 GI Bill, which includes full reimbursement for college tuition. The availability of extension courses will also help students who wish to make progress toward their goals during the intersession, particularly those students who need only a course or two to complete but have been crowded out of those courses. Finally, the lack of community college course offerings in workforce preparation fields has led many students to enroll in for-profit institutions, which are much more expensive than community colleges, are of varying quality, and often require students to incur significant loan debt.

¹ <http://mycareercounts.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Left-Out-Report-05-16-13.pdf>

How would AB 955 address this problem?

AB 955 would create a pilot program to allow six community college campuses – College of the Canyons, Crafton Hills College, Long Beach City College, Oxnard College, Pasadena City College and Solano Community College – to expand access to higher education at no cost to the state, while still allowing a cost effective option for students to obtain courses leading to a degree, certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution. AB 955 would base fees upon the community college district's approved non-resident fee level for these intersession courses. Only colleges that are at their maximum enrollment (or "at cap") for a minimum of two years would be able to offer this extension program.

Because the courses are offered at intersession, they would not compete with state-funded courses offered during the Fall and Spring academic terms.

Extension programs in Summer and Winter intersessions will give students an opportunity to take the courses they are not able to get during the state-supported regular session to accelerate the completion of their goals—be it transfer or a degree or certificate. And by providing additional opportunities for students to complete high-demand courses, this should free up space in the companion state-supported courses offered during the regular session, increasing all students' ability to complete their education in a timely manner.

This program would sunset January 1, 2018.

Who would teach these courses and would they meet the same quality standards as those offered during the regular academic year?

Colleges would use existing faculty to teach these courses consistent with local bargaining unit agreements. In addition to expanding limited access to courses, this bill provides an opportunity for faculty to earn income they may have lost when colleges reduced Summer and Winter intersession offerings.

Courses offered through an extension program would have to meet the same quality standards as state-supported courses, as specified in existing regulations (Section 55002, CCR, Title 5) and are prohibited from supplanting state-supported courses.

How much would these courses cost?

AB 955 would base fees upon the community college district's approved non-resident fee level for these intersession courses, approximately \$200 per unit. While this is significantly more than the \$46 per unit that students pay for state-supported courses, it is much less that students pay at for-profit institutions, where many students go when they cannot get into workforce training programs at community colleges.

Further, AB 955 requires participating campuses to use 1/3 of revenues collected by the extension program to provide financial assistance for low income students (defined as those who are eligible for the Board of Governors Fee Waiver). Additionally, campuses must supplement those funds with funds from campus foundations or any other nonstate funds.

This bill would benefit veterans who are using their GI Bill benefits. The GI Bill covers a student's tuition, as well as housing and other expenses. However, this benefit is available only for 36 months, and a student must be enrolled in a course to access the housing and other benefits. Thus, when veterans attend a college that does not offer courses in the Summer or Winter, they do not receive the housing stipend, upon which many veterans depend. By allowing

community colleges to offer credit-bearing courses, veterans could access the courses they need, paid for by the GI Bill, maintain their housing stipend during intersessions, and progress more quickly toward their goals. Finally, students can use remaining Pell grant funds to pay for the courses, and these fees would qualify for reimbursement under the American opportunity tax credit, which refunds up to \$2,500 in educational costs for students with modified adjusted gross incomes of \$80,000 or less (\$160,000 or less for joint filers). Also, 40% of the credit (up to \$1,000) is refundable. This means a student can get it even if he or she owes no tax.

Opposition

Opponents express concerns that this bill creates a two-tier system of education that provides access for those who can afford to pay—the beginning of privatization of the community colleges. Fees have increased 125% since 2008, and this bill will further move community colleges from their low fee, open access missions.

One can argue that a two-tier system already exists: students who can afford to wait semester after semester for the impacted classes needed to matriculate can stay in the system, but students who cannot afford to wait years for a class must drop out, enroll in more expensive private options, or take out loans. The California State University (CSU) serves as a model of an extension program that has not resulted in a two-tier system. CSU operates an extended and continuing education program that offers (usually during intersessions) courses to matriculated students on a self-support basis. These courses are also offered during the regular academic session, provided they do not supplant regular course offerings

Finally, as PPIC notes in its recent report on the impacts of budget cuts on community colleges, "In order to bridge the gap between demand for community college courses and the limits in supply, community colleges will need to develop additional revenues and will have to find more cost-effective ways of delivering higher education." PPIC outlines various options, including charging more to those who can pay more, while holding low-income students harmless.

Support

Long Beach City College (sponsor)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Legion-Department of California
AMVETS, Department of California
California Competes
California State Commanders Veterans Council
Campaign for College Opportunity
College of the Canyons
College of the Canyons Associated Student Government
Lake Tahoe Community College Associated Student Council
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund
National Guard Association of California
Riverside Community College District
Service Employees International Union
Solano Community College
VFW, Department of California

Opposition

Associated Students of Pasadena City College
California Community Colleges
Chancellor's Office
California Community College Independents
California Federation of Teachers
California School Employees Association
California Teachers Association
Citrus Community College District
Coast Community College District Student Council
College of the Canyons Faculty Association
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Los Angeles, Los Rios, San Diego, Peralta, and Yosemite Community College Districts
Oxnard College Student Senate
Pasadena City College Faculty Association
Pasadena City College Instructional Support Services Unit-CFT
San Francisco Community College District

Vietnam Veterans of America-California State Council
San Jose Evergreen Community College District
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
Tri-Counties Central Labor Council
United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610
University Professional and Technical Employees –
Communications Workers of America Local 9119
Ventura County Federation of Teachers

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