

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 34

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 114

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 34—Relative to public higher education.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 24, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 34, Liu. Public higher education: student compact.

This measure would declare that it is time for a compact with the students enrolled in California's public colleges and universities. The measure would express legislative recommendations with respect to this student compact, including recommendations relating to California higher education student fee and financial aid policies and funding for institutions to ensure students' access to and success in courses needed to complete their academic or vocational programs, limitation of the student loan debt, and the diversity of the student bodies and graduating classes at public colleges and universities.

WHEREAS, The California Master Plan for Higher Education sets forth the promise that higher education shall be affordable and accessible to all eligible Californians; and

WHEREAS, Over the past four decades, California's taxpayers have provided significant and consistent funding for California's public system of higher education; and

WHEREAS, While University of California (UC) student fees may be lower than at some comparable institutions, the total cost of attending UC (including housing, books, and other costs) is high. In the 2005–06 academic year, UC undergraduate students are required to pay \$6,802 in systemwide and mandatory campus-based student fees, while the total cost of their attendance is an average of \$22,150; and

WHEREAS, While California State University (CSU) student fees may be lower than at some comparable institutions, the total cost of attending CSU (including housing, books, and other costs) is much higher. In the 2005–06 academic year, CSU undergraduate students are required to pay \$3,164 in systemwide and mandatory campus-based student fees; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 30 years, higher education's share of overall state General Fund spending has declined from 16.8 percent in 1975–76, to 11.3 percent in 2005–06. General Fund support for the combination of the CSU and UC has declined even more dramatically, going from slightly less than 12 percent of state General Fund spending in 1976, to only 6 percent in 2006. Mandatory student fees have increased dramatically to replace the declining state funding for higher education; and

WHEREAS, Despite an historical commitment to Cal Grant awards and significant increases in institutional aid, need-based aid in the form of grants has failed to keep up with rapidly rising fees or to adequately address the total cost of attendance. As a result, needy students still face an increasing loan burden; and

WHEREAS, The rising total cost of attendance has forced students to take on increasing work and loan burdens. In constant dollars, the cost of attendance at UC has increased from \$12,452 in 1994–95, to \$15,179 in 2003–04. Students at CSU have experienced a similar increase in the cost of attendance; and

WHEREAS, The average UC undergraduate student graduates with \$20,000 in debt; and

WHEREAS, Increasingly unreasonable work and loan burdens inhibit students' abilities to take challenging academic courses, to participate in campus life, and to pursue public interest careers after graduation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California declares that it is time for a compact with students enrolled in California's public colleges and universities, and that the Legislature therefore recommends all of the following:

(a) California higher education student fee and financial aid policies should:

(1) Be sensitive to what families can afford, and not based solely on the cost of instruction to the state, the university, or the community college.

(2) Provide that student fees shall remain affordable even during state budget crises.

(3) Recognize the outstanding contribution of graduate and professional students to the research mission of UC and the long-term economic strength of California's economy.

(4) Include student representatives in the decisionmaking process regarding student fee levels and policies.

(b) The state, the public universities, and the community colleges should provide student grant aid so that:

(1) No student is prevented from attending UC, CSU, or the California Community Colleges for financial reasons.

(2) Financially needy students receive sufficient grant aid to cover the total cost of attendance, including fees, housing, books, and transportation.

(c) The state should provide sufficient funding to community colleges and universities to ensure that students have access to the courses needed to complete their academic or vocational programs in a timely fashion.

(d) The student fee and student affordability policies should not require:

(1) Students to work unmanageable hours to finance their education.

(2) The expected workload burden to negatively impact students' academic performance or competitiveness for graduate school or careers.

(e) The student fee and student affordability policies should limit the student loan debt so that:

(1) Students can repay the loans within 10 years of graduation at a rate that is a reasonable percentage of their income.

(2) Students are not restricted in their goals of pursuing an advanced degree or working in the public interest sector.

(f) Key public policy goals for the Legislature are access to and success in California higher education, so that the diversity of our state is reflected in the diversity of the student bodies and graduating classes of our public colleges and universities. In order to ensure access and success for low-income and educationally underserved students, the state must provide all of the following:

(1) Permanent funding of the effective Academic Preparation programs.

(2) Appropriate funding to accommodate enrollment growth anticipated in the next decade.

(3) Appropriate funding for our colleges and universities to ensure access, quality, success, and affordability for all students who decide to enroll in those institutions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit a copy of this resolution to each member of the Regents of the University of California, the Trustees of the California State University, and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.