

Introduced by Senator BlockFebruary 21, 2014

An act to add Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 78025) to Chapter 1 of Part 48 of Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education Code, relating to community colleges.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1425, as introduced, Block. Community colleges: retroactive awarding of degrees.

(1) Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges, under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, as one of the segments of the public postsecondary education in this state. Existing law establishes community college districts throughout the state, and authorizes those districts to provide instruction at community college campuses.

The bill would require the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to develop or identify a commercially available utility to conduct systemwide automatic degree audits that would enable community college student services staff to monitor student progress toward completion of a certificate or degree, or the credits required to meet the transfer requirements of the California State University or the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum.

The bill would require each community college campus, before the beginning of an academic year, to conduct an inquiry, using the online degree audit system that would be created under the bill, to identify the students or former students who are within 12 semester units or 18 quarter units of completing the requirements for a certificate, degree, or transfer, as prescribed. The bill would require community college

campus staff to notify those students or former students of the courses needed to complete those requirements.

The bill would require that certificates or degrees be awarded retroactively to students or former students who are found, pursuant to an audit of credits earned in the 5 academic years immediately preceding the 2015–16 academic year, to have met requirements for those certificates or degrees, if the students choose to receive them.

The bill would require the chancellor to submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor on the progress of the implementation of the retroactive degree awarding and online degree audit system on or before December 31, 2017, and on or before December 31 of each year thereafter.

This bill would not be operative until the board of governors certifies that sufficient funds have been received from state, federal, or private sources to implement the online degree audit system that would be created under the bill.

Because this bill would impose new duties on community college districts, it would constitute a state-mandated local program.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:
3 (1) California is falling behind in producing the necessary
4 postsecondary education to ensure our state's prosperity and
5 opportunities for individuals in the 21st century.
6 (2) California faces a degree and certificate gap, and is projected
7 to need one million more workers with bachelor's degrees and an
8 additional 1.3 million workers with associate degrees or certificates
9 by 2025. Today, one in every four jobs requires at least an associate
10 degree.

1 (3) In the near future, one in every three jobs will require at
2 least an associate degree. Failure to make significant improvements
3 in degree completion will result in a less productive economy,
4 lower incomes for residents, less tax revenue for the state, and
5 more dependence on social services. Awarding retroactive associate
6 degrees to the approximately 250,000 students whose records
7 qualify them for degrees but who never received those degrees,
8 and encouraging other students to return to school by making them
9 aware that they are close to completing their associate degree, will
10 mitigate this projected degree shortage.

11 (4) The California Community Colleges are the state's largest
12 workforce provider, offering associate degrees and short-term job
13 training certificates in more than 175 different fields.

14 (5) In community colleges across the country, approximately
15 16 percent of the students in each cohort have either qualified for
16 a degree but never received it, or are within 12 semester units of
17 an associate degree and have left the system. This percentage
18 represents approximately 250,000 students in the California
19 Community Colleges system.

20 (6) Meeting the current and future need for higher education
21 requires that postsecondary institutions improve their success rates
22 with current students and attract, and graduate, individuals from
23 groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in
24 postsecondary education.

25 (7) Degree audit systems efficiently support student persistence
26 and success efforts, and thereby save money for the institutions in
27 the longer term. This will be especially true of a degree audit
28 system that is centralized at the Chancellor's Office of the
29 California Community Colleges and paired with the online
30 educational planner that is being developed as part of the
31 Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012.

32 (8) In California, only about one-third of community colleges
33 have online degree audit systems that can be used to inform their
34 students about their progress, leaving the remainder of the state's
35 112 community colleges without a mechanism to identify already
36 earned degrees.

37 (9) As movement toward performance-based budgeting
38 continues, retroactive degree awarding and degree audit systems
39 better position an institution to improve student outcomes.

1 (10) Earning a certificate or degree from a community college
2 doubles an individual's chance of obtaining a job. At a time when
3 unemployment rates are nearly 9 percent, certificates and degrees
4 are all the more valuable.

5 (11) Earning a degree or certificate from a California community
6 college, on average, nearly doubles an individual's earnings within
7 three years, from \$25,600 to \$45,571.

8 (12) A national effort, Project Win-Win, is tackling this issue
9 in nine other states and is showing promising results. This project
10 introduces degree audit systems at colleges to accomplish all of
11 the following:

12 (A) Award degrees retroactively.

13 (B) Identify and bring back students who are marginally short
14 of an associate degree to complete it.

15 (C) Ensure that, moving forward, students have real-time
16 information about their progress toward obtaining a degree.

17 (b) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to do all of the
18 following:

19 (1) Build on national and local efforts to identify current or
20 former students who are eligible or nearly eligible to obtain their
21 certificate or degree, or to attain the necessary credits for transfer,
22 and notify those students, as appropriate.

23 (2) Award degrees and certificates retroactively to those students
24 who have completed degree or certificate requirements.

25 (3) Establish a central auditing system at the California
26 Community Colleges that enables individual community colleges
27 to audit student records, identify the students who are eligible or
28 nearly eligible for a certificate or degree, and notify these students
29 of this valuable information.

30 SEC. 2. Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 78025) is added
31 to Chapter 1 of Part 48 of Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education
32 Code, to read:

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34 Article 1.7. Retroactive Awarding of Degrees

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36 78025. (a) The board of governors shall require all community
37 colleges to award degrees retroactively in accordance with this
38 article.

39 (b) Prior to the beginning of the spring term of the 2015–16
40 academic year, each community college shall perform an inquiry

1 to identify the students who have completed the semester or quarter
2 required units to receive a degree, certificate, or the California
3 State University (CSU) or the Intersegmental General Education
4 Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) transfer requirements during the
5 previous five academic years.

6 (c) A community college campus shall notify those students
7 identified pursuant to subdivision (b) that they are eligible to
8 receive a degree or certificate. Those students shall have the choice
9 to opt out or to receive the degree or certificate.

10 78026. (a) The Chancellor of the California Community
11 Colleges shall develop or identify a commercially available utility
12 to conduct systemwide automatic degree audits for these purposes.
13 The system shall satisfy all of the following conditions:

14 (1) It shall comply with all pertinent privacy and security
15 considerations and requirements.

16 (2) It shall be centrally housed at the Chancellor's Office of the
17 California Community Colleges.

18 (3) It shall enable community college counselors, advisors, and
19 other student services staff to monitor student progress toward
20 completing a degree or certificate program, or achieving the
21 minimum requirements for CSU or IGETC transfer.

22 (4) It shall be accessible to community college personnel and
23 students through an Internet Web portal that provides a degree
24 progress profile, generated for each student upon request, that
25 includes all information regarding credits earned that is available
26 in the community college's data.

27 (b) Prior to the beginning of each spring term, each community
28 college shall perform an inquiry to identify students who are within
29 12 semester units or 18 quarter units of completing a degree or
30 certificate, or achieving the minimum requirements for CSU or
31 IGETC transfer.

32 (c) A community college shall notify those students or former
33 students identified pursuant to subdivision (b) of the courses needed
34 to complete a degree, a certification, or transfer requirements.

35 78027. (a) Each community college district, with the assistance
36 of the chancellor, shall study and to evaluate the effectiveness of
37 the retroactive degree awarding and audit program established by
38 this article and of any other programs or services designed to
39 facilitate students' completion of their educational goals and
40 courses of study. Notwithstanding Section 10231.5 of the

1 Government Code, the chancellor shall submit a report to the
2 Legislature and the Governor on the progress of the implementation
3 of the retroactive degree awarding and online degree audit system
4 on or before December 31, 2017, and on or before December 31
5 of each year thereafter.

6 (b) The report required by this section shall be submitted in
7 compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

8 78028. (a) The metrics to be determined and reported pursuant
9 to Section 78027 shall include, but not necessarily be limited to,
10 all of the following:

11 (1) The number and percentage of community college students
12 who were identified, reenrolled, and were awarded associate
13 degrees or certificates, or who completed the CSU or IGETC
14 transfer requirements because of the degree audit system.

15 (2) The average amount of time spent and number of units
16 earned by community college students in order to complete their
17 associate degree, certificate, or transfer requirements, after being
18 notified that they were within the 12 semester units or 18 quarter
19 units of completion.

20 (3) The estimated economic benefits for the college and labor
21 market.

22 (4) Other relevant indicators of student success.

23 (b) Information specified in subdivision (a) shall be
24 disaggregated data, classified by ethnicity, gender, disability, age,
25 and socioeconomic status, to the extent this information is
26 available.

27 (c) The evaluation required by Section 78027 shall include an
28 assessment of the effectiveness of the programs and services in
29 attaining at least the following objectives:

30 (1) Identifying students within 12 semester units or 18 quarter
31 units of meeting the requirements for a degree or certificate or
32 completing the CSU or IGETC transfer requirements.

33 (2) Assisting institutions in reenrolling these students, assessing
34 these students' educational needs, and identifying appropriate
35 course placement for these students.

36 (3) Helping support students' successful completion of associate
37 degree, certificate, or transfer requirements.

38 (4) Matching institutional resources with students' educational
39 needs.

1 79029. This article shall not be operative until the board of
2 governors certifies that sufficient funds have been received from
3 state, federal, or private sources to implement the online degree
4 audit system that would be created under this section. The board
5 of governors shall prominently post this certification promptly on
6 its Internet Web site.

7 SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that
8 this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to
9 local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made
10 pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division
11 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

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