
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Ricardo Lara, Chair
2017 - 2018 Regular Session

SB 539 (De León) - The Community College Student Achievement Program

Version: April 26, 2017

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Urgency: No

Mandate: No

Hearing Date: May 15, 2017

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

This bill meets the criteria for referral to the Suspense File.

Bill Summary: This bill establishes the California Community College (CCC) Completion Grant Program for the purpose of establishing guided pathways and a new grant award for community college students and assisting them with the completion of an associate degree, certificate program, or transfer to a four-year university in a timely manner.

Fiscal Impact: Proposition 98 General Fund costs of between \$36 million and \$58 million for the proposed grant program, depending on the number of eligible students and the amount of each grant award.

Background: Existing law establishes the mission and function of the CCCs as the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level. The CCCs are authorized to grant the associate in arts and the associate in science degrees. The CCCs are also required to offer remedial instruction, English as a Second Language instruction, adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level.

Proposed Law: This bill establishes the Completion Grant program under the administration of the Chancellor of the CCC for purposes of establishing guided pathways to accomplish all of the following objectives: assist students in completing a program of study leading to an associate degree for transfer, transfer to a four-year university, or a career technical education certificate; improve student completion rates; reduce time to degree; and increase student ability to obtain high-paying jobs. In order to be eligible for funding under the program, the governing board of a community college district must demonstrate in its application for funding that each participating community college within the district will develop a plan to implement all of the components for a guided pathway that includes all of the following elements:

- 1) A completed implementation and readiness assessment for the guided pathway, as provided by the chancellor for each participating college.
- 2) A process and timeline for developing each component of the guided pathway.
- 3) The college's detailed policies regarding the use of information from high school records and other assessment measures to determine each student's course placement and academic support needs.
- 4) A description of specified components, including how the community college district plans to work with school districts to ensure high school student are

prepared for college-level courses and how it will collaborate with the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) to develop transfer pathways to UC and CSU.

The bill requires, commencing with the 2017-18 academic year, each participating community college to provide a grant award to a student who meets the specified requirements for purposes of assisting students with additional financial aid to offset his or her total cost of attendance. In order to be eligible for a grant award, a student must meet specific requirements, including the receipt of an award under the Full-Time Success Grant program established under the Budget Act of 2015, enrollment in a program of study and has completion of an education plan identifying courses, sequences of courses, key progress milestones and other requirements the student must complete to earn an associate degree or certificate or meet transfer requirements, and a minimum grade point average of at least 2.0, as specified.

The bill specifies the grant award amount to be \$4,000 and provides that an award be based on the financial need of the applicant and shall not exceed the calculated financial need of the applicant. The bill also requires the awarding of the grant, to the extent practicable, to be at the same time as the overall financial aid package. The bill provides that the grant is a supplemental grant and prohibits it from supplanting any other grant, fee waiver, or scholarship received by the student.

Further, the bill provides that the program's requirements are not operative in a fiscal year unless funding has been provided for that purpose in the annual Budget Act or other statute.

The bill requires the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to report to the Legislature, by April 1, 2019, on information related to outcomes of award recipients.

Staff Comments: This bill outlines various eligibility criteria for students for the grant program, including receipt of an award under the Full-Time Success Grant program, the enrollment in a course of study with specific progress milestones, and the enrollment in 15 or more credit units per semester. Assuming the number of students that meet the bill's criteria is between 12,000 and 14,500, and that each student receives the full grant amount of \$4,000, this bill would result in Proposition 98 General Fund costs of between \$48 million and \$58 million. However, the bill provides that students would only be eligible to receive sufficient grant aid to cover the total cost of attendance, therefore some students will not be eligible to receive the full grant amount. Additionally, a student's unit workload may fluctuate; therefore not all students will meet the unit requirement for both semesters. Assuming an average grant amount of \$3,000, the cost of the measure would be \$36 million for 12,000 students and \$43.5 million for 14,500 students.

-- END --