

# Senate Bill 520 (Steinberg)—as proposed to be amended

## An online student access platform

### SUMMARY

Creates a faculty-led, quality-first framework allowing online course providers to have strategically selected courses approved and placed in a state-level clearinghouse through which students may access the courses and receive credit at the UC, CSU, and California Community Colleges.

### BACKGROUND

California's Higher Education Master Plan created a national model that sought to ensure high quality postsecondary education would be available to all. It ignited California's economic engine, created pathways to the middle class and, arguably, is responsible for California's prominent place in the world today in areas such as high technology.

Yet today, the great California systems are at a cross-road. California's public colleges and universities face skyrocketing demand at a time when they lack capacity to provide students with access to courses necessary for program completion and success. The obstacles to course access and completion threaten the foundational principles upon which the state's public higher education systems were built.

In the 2012-13 academic year, 85% of California Community Colleges reported wait lists for courses in fall 2012, with a statewide average of more than 7,000 students on wait lists per college. Similarly, impacted courses have contributed significantly to difficulties within the UC and CSU systems, with figures showing that only 60% and 16% of students, respectively, are able to earn a degree within four years, with lack of access to key courses a factor in increased time-to-degree.

A thoughtful and strategic harnessing of Silicon Valley's innovations in online education can help California protect the Master Plan's foundations of access, quality, and affordability while addressing bottlenecks that hold many students back.

Today, California needs a statutory framework that provides students with sorely needed access to strategically selected courses, helps faculty put quality first, and allows innovators to help California

public colleges and universities meet demand in key areas.

### THIS BILL

Establishes an online student access platform administered by the California Open Education Resources Council and requires:

- Development of a list of the 50 most over-subscribed lower division courses at the UC, CSU, and the California Community Colleges that are deemed necessary for program completion, fulfilling transfer requirements, or meeting general education requirements.
- Creation of a standardized review and approval process for courses provided by online education providers in those 50 courses. Students would be able to enroll in such courses for credit only if they were unable to enroll in the same course offered in a traditional classroom format.
- Placement of approved courses in a state-level pool, through which students could access courses and be awarded full academic credit for the comparable course at the UC, CSU, or California Community Colleges.
- When reviewing online courses for potential approval, the Council is to consider the extent to which the course:
  - ✓ Provides students an opportunity to assess his or her suitability for online learning prior to enrolling.
  - ✓ Provides students with instructional support and related services to promote retention and success.
  - ✓ Provides interaction between instructors and students.
  - ✓ Contains a proctored assessment and exam that ensures academic integrity and measures student learning.

- ✓ Utilizes, as the primary course text or as a wholly acceptable alternative, content, from the California Digital Open Source Library.
- ✓ Includes adaptive learning technology systems or comparable technologies that can significantly improve student learning.
- ✓ Includes content that has been reviewed and recommended by the American Council on Education.
- Collection, review, and publication of student success data for courses taken through the platform.
- Regular solicitation and consideration of input from students on implementation of the platform.
- Utilization of the state's common course numbering system for approved courses to simplify identification and articulation of comparable courses.

The legislation also reauthorizes the California Virtual Campus until January 1, 2017.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

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