

## ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2341 (McCarty)

As Amended June 4, 2020

Majority vote

**SUMMARY:**

Authorizes the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to establish a program, named the Rising Scholars Network, as part of the Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP), to enter into agreements with up to 50 community colleges to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for justice-involved students.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Authorizes the Office of the Chancellor of the CCC to establish a program, named the Rising Scholars Network, as part of the SEAP, to enter into agreements with up to 50 community colleges to provide additional funds for services in support of postsecondary education for justice-involved students, as specified.
- 2) Requires a community college district that wishes to participate in the Rising Scholars Network to apply for funding by including justice-involved students as part of a student equity plan under the SEAP, as provided, and would require the board of governors to adopt regulations for the Rising Scholars Network that fulfill certain goals and guidance.
- 3) Require the board of governors, on or before December 31, 2022, and every two years thereafter, to submit a report to the Governor describing its efforts to serve justice-involved students, and including recommendations on whether and how the Rising Scholars Network can be expanded to all community college districts and campuses

**COMMENTS:**

*Background.* SB 1391 (Hancock), Chapter 695, Statutes of 2014, expanded access to face-to-face community college courses for incarcerated students through collaboration between the California Community Colleges and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Under the initial policy and funding framework of SB 1391, four pilot colleges were selected to offer instruction inside prisons.

Subsequently, other colleges were able to leverage resources to provide courses inside state prisons in their local areas. In total, 19 colleges piloted credit bearing, face-to-face, degree building education programs at 34 of the 35 CDCR state prisons. Over 5,000 students are enrolled each semester in these courses. The 2018-19 budget also provided new resources (\$5 million one-time) to the California Community Colleges to support the creation and expansion of reentry programs for formerly incarcerated persons.

*SEAP.* In 2018, SEAP was established and merged funding for three initiatives: the Student Success and Support Program; the Basic Skills Initiative; and Student Equity. SEAP requires colleges to implement the Guided Pathways framework offering a clear path to a stated goal, to provide all students with an education plan based on that goal, and to revise placement policies to ensure that students complete prerequisite courses of study in a math or English in a timely fashion. Colleges must also maintain a student equity plan.

Equity plans are focused on boosting achievement as measured by specific success indicators and require each college to develop detailed goals and measures addressing disparities that are discovered.

**According to the Author:**

According to the author, "In the past decade, California's criminal justice system has refocused its efforts toward rehabilitation services for incarcerated individuals and those coming home under community supervision. Education is considered a rehabilitation tool that is crucial in reducing recidivism.

"In general, incarcerated individuals have less educational attainment than the general public; in 2004, approximately 36% of individuals in state prisons had attained less than a high school education compared with 19% of the general [United States U.S.])population. Many of those currently incarcerated report they were unable to receive a high school diploma because of incarceration and facing academic or behavioral problems

"Justice-involved students face unique challenges as they strive to reintegrate into their communities and navigate the higher education system. 29% of the U.S. population in 2008, compared to less than 4% of formerly incarcerated people, held a college degree. This is, in part, due to a lack of support services and the absence of a sense of community for justice-involved students on college campuses. Many of these students are still under community supervision, needing to follow strict guidelines that may interfere with their schooling. Having a program on campus which understands and addresses the unique challenges justice-involved students face is essential to their success...through the Rising Scholars Network, we will be able to provide services to California Community College justice-involved students and help them achieve the academic success and financial stability a higher education provides."

**Arguments in Support:**

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges writes that "...justice-involved students are those who were incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and detained people. This population is a major one within the community college system, but consistently is ignored at all levels of decision making. AB 2341 would help create additional pathways for this underserved student community to best be able to continue their education and would increase the enrollment, retention, and success of these students.

"At all levels, community college students struggle with how to navigate the higher education system and access the support services they need. However, this need is exacerbated by the marginalization that students face once they're thrust within the criminal justice system. This marginalization worsens across socioeconomic and racial lines, impacting the neediest students the most. The community college system prides itself on providing education to the top 100% of students, and has been extraordinarily successful at giving students of all backgrounds the opportunity to craft a better life through education. The creation of the Rising Scholars Network would allow the community college system to continue that mission and provide opportunities to a student population that is far too often forgotten.

"Now more than ever, too many student groups are being forgotten amidst the current COVID-19 epidemic. Our justice-involved students are a population that can far too easily fall to the wayside if not proactively protected. Providing the guarantee of a Rising Scholars Network that can be extended and made system-wide would provide one such protection."

**Arguments in Opposition:**

There is no opposition on file.

**FISCAL COMMENTS:**

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Minor and absorbable General Fund costs to the CCC Chancellor's Office to administer the requirements of the program as specified in the bill.
- 2) Potential cost pressures to SEAP for a CCC to use funding towards this program if they choose to do so. (Several CCCs already provide some programs for justice-involved students with moneys from SEAP.)

**VOTES****ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 12-0-0**

**YES:** Medina, Arambula, Bloom, Voepel, Gabriel, Irwin, Kiley, Levine, Low, Patterson, Santiago, Weber

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 18-0-0**

**YES:** Gonzalez, Bigelow, Bauer-Kahan, Bloom, Bonta, Calderon, Carrillo, Chau, Megan Dahle, Diep, Eggman, Fong, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Petrie-Norris, McCarty, Robert Rivas, Voepel

**UPDATED:**

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