

Date of Hearing: March 21, 2023

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 322 (Mathis) – As Introduced January 30, 2023

**[Note: This bill is doubled referred to the Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and will be heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]**

**SUBJECT:** Veteran and California National Guard Supplemental Orientation Act of 2023

**SUMMARY:** Requires the California State University (CSU) and the California Community Colleges (CCC), and if the Regents of the University of California (UC) adopt a resolution to make it applicable, the UC to develop and include within first-year student orientation a supplemental module of services and resources available for students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and members of the California National Guard.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents of the UC; and, grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services. (Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution)
- 2) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the UC, CSU, and CCC. (Education Code (EDC) Section 66010, et seq.)
- 3) Confers upon the CSU Trustees the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, control of the CSU system and provides that the Trustees are responsible for the rule of government of their appointees and employees. (EDC Sections 66606 and 89500, et seq.)
- 4) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The CCC shall be comprised of community college districts. (EDC Section 70900)
- 5) Requires the Trustees of the CSU, and requests the Regents of the UC, to provide educational and preventive information about cyberbullying to students at all campuses of their respective segments as a part of established campus orientations. (EDC Section 66302.5)
- 6) Requires the governing board of each CCC district and the Trustees of the CSU, and requests the Regents of the UC, to provide, as part of established campus orientations, educational and preventive information about sexual violence to students at all campuses of their respective segments. For a campus with an existing on-campus orientation program, this information shall be provided, in addition to the sexual harassment information required to be provided pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 66281.5, during the regular orientation for incoming students. (EDC Section 67385.7)

- 7) Declares that:
- a) Comprehensive information about acquaintance rape and other kinds of sexual assaults should be provided at all new student orientation programs and at any campus program that students are required to attend; and,
  - b) Colleges should provide special sexual assault seminars for all athletic coaches and administrators and members of athletic teams. These seminars should take place during a student athlete orientation program or prior to the first team meeting. Seminars should use the campus media, newspapers, radio, and television to heighten awareness of campus violence and its prevention. (EDC Section 67390)
- 8) Establishes that it is the intent of the Legislature that credit card and debt education and counseling sessions become a regular part of campus orientation of new students. (EDC Section 99030)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose.* According to the author, “AB 322 will ensure that each veteran and member of the National Guard is provided with information on the available resources and services, such as counseling, that the educational institution has to offer and receive the support, information, and tools necessary to succeed.”

“Although many universities and colleges currently offer useful and potentially lifesaving veteran services, including staff, facilities and materials that assist with housing resources, disability accommodation, financial aid, peer mentoring, access to counselors and tutoring; many veterans and National Guard members are either unaware of these facilities, are not provided with practical information on how to access the available resources, or are not encouraged to use the services within student orientation. This critical oversight means that veterans and National Guard members are often required to seek out the services or ask for help themselves, which unfortunately commonly results in many veterans and National Guard members not receiving the assistance or resources available to them and struggling unnecessarily.”

*Background.* Over the past decade, the State Legislature has required that universities and colleges within California include certain information during student orientation to ensure the safety, health, well-being, and academic success of the incoming students, including information on sexual violence, cyberbullying, and CalFresh – amongst others. Similarly, the Student Equity and Achievement Program established the statewide goal to boost achievement for all students and ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances.

Servicemembers, veterans, and their dependents often qualify for numerous federal and state educational benefits. However, the benefits the individual qualifies for will vary based on when and in what capacity the person served. For example, an individual who served on active duty in the late 2010s is eligible for different benefits than someone who served as a reservist in the 1990s.

The author notes that, although many universities and colleges currently offer useful and potentially lifesaving services to veterans, including; staff, facilities, and materials that assist with housing resources, disability accommodation, financial aid, peer mentoring, access to

counselors and tutoring. The author asserts that many veterans and servicemembers are either unaware of these facilities, are not provided with practical information on how to access the available resources, or are not encouraged to use the services within the student orientation.

*Committee comments.* The Committee recommends, and the author has accepted, amendments that will instead recast the provisions of this bill to require the CSU and CCC, and request that UC, include within first-year student and transfer student orientation the location and contact information of the campus' point of contact for students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States, members of the California National Guard, the California State Guard, and their respective dependents.

Amendments would also require the CCC and CSU, and request that the UC develop a document that includes, at a minimum, information on polices, resources, and services to students in the above population, make printed versions of that document available at the location of an identified point of contact, and an electronic version of the document available on the institutions' respective internet websites.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

None on file

##### **Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Kevin J. Powers / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960