

Date of Hearing: July 2, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 391 (Laird) – As Amended June 26, 2025

Policy Committee: Higher Education

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCCCO) to implement a data request fee policy for researchers applying for access to individually identifiable data or student data, provided the policy adheres to specified requirements.

FISCAL EFFECT:

One-time General Fund costs of between approximately \$33,000 and \$53,000 for the CCCCCO to develop a data request fee policy for review and approval by the Board of Governors. However, by recovering workload costs associated with significant data compilation, extraction, and programming, this bill would result in cost savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the CCCCCO indicates it would direct to staffing capacity and efficiency. Because the bill exempts state agencies from the data fee policy, this bill would not result in additional General Fund costs.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

The California Community Colleges system is the largest higher education system in the country, and there is significant interest from research organizations in data sharing with the community college system to explore critical topics from affordability to developmental education reform to transfer and more. The Chancellor's office voluntarily fulfills these research requests, but doing so is both time and labor intensive, and has become a significant portion of the Chancellor's office workload. Mirroring the authorization to impose fees granted to the California Department of Education and Cradle to Career, Senate Bill 391 will provide the Community College Chancellor's office the ability to impose research fees on research requests to cover the actual costs incurred by the Office for fulfilling data requests. With fair compensation, this bill will ease the capacity of the Chancellor's office to provide this essential service.

2) **Background.** The CCCCCO manages between 25 and 40 data requests throughout the academic year. Each data request requires the CCCCCO's Unit of Research, Analytics, and Data (RAD) staff to investigate significant time which subsequently impacts, and often

delays, the unit's other job responsibilities. The RAD also maintains multiple data systems comprised of data elements provided by the 116 community colleges across the system, including, but not limited to student progress in degree attainment, student demographics, financial aid procurement, and financial data. According to the RAD, a team of eight staff handle all of the above responsibilities in addition to processing data requests from external parties.

According to the CCCCCO, the fee authorized by this bill provides a necessary revenue stream to assist in modernizing software systems, purchasing new technology systems, paying for additional cloud licenses and server costs, supporting staff professional development, and contracting additional staff. The CCCCCO indicates the majority of research requests are from research nonprofits or firms, who receive grants to conduct research on a specific policy topic. However, the CCCCCO and the Board of Governors require statutory authority to institute a research fee, otherwise the system will continue to absorb the cost affiliated with each data request. Current law authorizes several other state entities, such as the California Department of Education, California State University, and University of California, to charge fees for significant data compilation from non-state researchers.

This bill does not implement a fee for those seeking to access publicly available data, which includes faculty salaries, district expenditures, and student progress data. Furthermore, the measure only produces a fee for data housed at the CCCCCO. The bill does not introduce a fee for faculty, staff, or third-party researchers who wish to access campus-level or district-level data from community colleges districts and it exempts another state agency or a student researcher from the fee.

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