



“Digest” means an item has been through internal review by the Chancellor’s Office and the review entities. The item now has form and substance and is officially “entered into Consultation.” The Council reviews the item and provides advice to the Chancellor.

Title: Policies to Encourage Competency Based Education and Online Courses
Date: November 15, 2018
Contact: Christian Osmeña, Vice Chancellor for College Finance and Facilities Planning

ISSUE

Discuss recommendations that might be made to the Board of Governors related to policies that could encourage competency-based courses and programs and online courses.

BACKGROUND

Education Code section 75012 reads as follows:

75012. (a) The chancellor’s office shall conduct a review of the process used to calculate noncredit and career development college preparation rates, and make recommendations to the board of governors on or before January 1, 2019, on how that process may be modified to encourage the use and development of competency-based courses and programs.

(b) The chancellor’s office shall conduct a review of the statewide approval process to offer online courses under a flexible calendar, and make recommendations to the board of governors on or before January 1, 2019.

Pursuant to this statute, the Chancellor’s Office will present information to the Board of Governors at the January 2019 meeting.

The Competency-Based Education Network describes competency-based education (CBE) as follows:

“Competency-based education combines an intentional and transparent approach to curricular design with an academic model in which the time it takes to demonstrate competencies varies and the expectations about learning are held constant. Students acquire and demonstrate their knowledge and skills by engaging in learning exercises, activities and experiences that align with clearly defined programmatic outcomes. Students receive proactive guidance and support from faculty and staff. Learners earn credentials by demonstrating mastery through multiple forms of assessment, often at a personalized pace.”

For some community college students, especially students who enroll in noncredit courses and programs, CBE may be a good option to help those students reach their educational goals. These

types of courses and programs are not common in the California Community Colleges. The legislation responds to concerns that districts may face barriers to developing and offering CBE because of policies around funding for noncredit courses and around course approval.

That is, although CBE could help students reach their goals more quickly and at a lower cost, this format could actually result in less funding to a district because of current policies around attendance accounting for noncredit courses. Under current policies, districts receive funding for noncredit courses based on the number of full-time equivalent students (FTES) generated in that course. Existing regulations require that, for noncredit courses, districts use the “Actual Hours of Attendance Procedure” (also called “Positive Attendance”) to calculate FTES. That method relies on actual count of enrolled students present at each class meeting. The instructor takes roll at each class meeting and keep records of the actual attendance of each student enrolled in the course.

Currently, students generally are assessed prior to entering a noncredit course. Oftentimes, a student may need only a portion of the course. For that reason, many noncredit courses are scheduled as “variable hour” or “open entry, open exit” courses, meaning the student may start the course at any point and may drop the course at any point. This type of scheduling can meet student needs, but—because noncredit courses are funded based on the hours of instruction each student receives—a district receives less funding for a student who completes quickly.

The 2018 Budget takes significant steps in furthering CBE. Significantly, it establishes the California Online Community College (with appropriations of \$100 million one-time and \$20 million ongoing). This college will allow for innovations in CBE, with lessons shared across the system. Further, the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) makes significant changes to community college finance. Under the SCFF, a district’s funding is based on (1) a base allocation, (2) a supplemental allocation, and (3) a student success allocation. Focusing on outcomes could encourage CBE, because it creates a financial incentive for districts to help students meet their educational goals in an efficient way. The SCFF, though, funds noncredit courses at current rates. The SCFF Oversight Committee created in accompanying legislation is slated to consider funding for noncredit programs.

The distribution of noncredit instruction is uneven across the system. Currently, 13 districts generate three-quarters of the total noncredit enrollment in the system, and five districts generated more than half of the enrollment. [Those five districts were San Diego (9,024 FTES), Mt. San Antonio (7,611 FTES), Los Angeles (6,304 FTES), Rancho Santiago (6,251 FTES), and San Francisco (5,872 FTES).]

FEEDBACK/QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

This item is presented to Consultation Council for discussion before formal recommendations are presented to the Board of Governors.