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SB-1281 Law schools: unaccredited law school disclosures. (2015-2016)

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Senate Bill No. 1281

CHAPTER 87

An act to add Section 6061.7 to the Business and Professions Code, relating to law schools.

[Approved by Governor July 22, 2016. Filed with Secretary of State July 22, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1281, Block. Law schools: unaccredited law school disclosures.

Existing law requires any law school that is not accredited by the examining committee of the State Bar of California (State Bar) to provide every student with a disclosure statement, subsequent to the payment of any application fee but prior to the payment of any registration fee, that contains, among other things, a statement that the law school is not accredited and the number and percentage of students who have taken and who have passed the first-year law student's examination and the final bar examination in the previous 5 years, or since the establishment of the school, whichever time is less, as specified.

This bill would additionally require a law school that is not accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) to publicly disclose on its Internet Web site, specified information, including tuition costs, class sizes, number of faculty, bar passage data, and employment outcomes for graduates. The bill would define terms for these purposes. The bill would also authorize the State Bar to develop a standard information reporting template. The bill would require specific disclosure information be distributed by the school to all applicants being offered conditional scholarships at the time the scholarship offer is extended.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 6061.7 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:

6061.7. (a) Any law school that is not approved by the American Bar Association shall publicly disclose on its Internet Web site, with a link from the Internet home page under "Admissions," all of the following information:

- (1) Admissions data.
- (2) Tuition, fees, and financial aid.
- (3) Conditional scholarships.
- (4) Enrollment data.
- (5) Number of full-time and part-time faculty, technically trained librarians, and administrators.

(6) Average class size of each required course and the number of clinical offerings.

(7) Employment outcomes for graduates.

(8) Bar passage data.

(b) (1) The information in subdivision (a) shall be disclosed in a standardized information report that is readily accessible to current and prospective students in a manner that is complete, accurate, and not misleading to a reasonable student or applicant.

(2) The State Bar may create a standardized information report template.

(3) Any law school that is not approved by the American Bar Association shall include the standardized information report as part of the annual compliance report required to be submitted to the State Bar by all law schools that are not approved by the American Bar Association and are regulated by the examining committee of the State Bar.

(4) A law school may use the information report template to comply with the information disclosure required under subdivision (a).

(c) Any law school that is not approved by the American Bar Association shall publicly disclose on its Internet Web site, in a readable and comprehensive manner, all of the following information on a current basis:

(1) Refund policy.

(2) Curricular offerings, academic calendar, and academic requirements.

(3) Policy regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

(d) The law school's transfer of credit policy shall include, at a minimum, both of the following:

(1) A statement of the criteria established by the law school regarding the acceptance of credit earned for coursework completed at another institution.

(2) A list of institutions, if any, with which the law school has established an articulation agreement and the terms of any such agreement. If the law school has not entered into a transfer or articulation agreement with any other college or university, the institution shall disclose that fact.

(e) All information that a law school reports, publicizes, or distributes pursuant to this section shall be complete, accurate, and not misleading to a reasonable law school student or applicant. A law school shall use due diligence in obtaining and verifying such information.

(f) A law school that is not approved by the American Bar Association shall distribute the data required under paragraph (3) of subdivision (a) to all applicants being offered conditional scholarships at the time the scholarship offer is made.

(g) For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Admissions data" means information from the most recently enrolled fall semester class including the total number of applications, the total number of accepted students, and the 75th, 50th, and 25th percentile scores for the undergraduate grade point averages and law school admission test scores of admitted students.

(2) "Bar passage data" means the most current cumulative bar pass rates defined and reported by the examining committee of the State Bar.

(3) "Conditional scholarship" means any financial aid award, the retention of which is dependent upon the student maintaining a minimum grade point average or class standing other than that ordinarily required to remain in good academic standing.

(4) "Curricular offering" means only those courses offered in the current and past two academic years.

(5) "Employment outcomes for graduates" means the results of a survey by the law school, taken three years after graduation, that breaks down the employment rate of graduates in each of the first three years after graduation, including the rate of employment of graduates in jobs where a Juris Doctor degree is required by the employer and the rate of employment of graduates in jobs where a Juris Doctor degree is an advantage in employment.

(6) "Enrollment data" means information about the number of students who are admitted to the school per class per year for the past three years, the number of students who transfer to and from the school per class per year for the past three years, and the number of students who do not continue to attend the school each year for the past three years on either a voluntary or involuntary basis.

(7) "Transfer or articulation agreement" means an agreement between the law school and any other college or university that provides for the transfer of credits earned in the program of instruction.