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SB-444 Community colleges: Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) programs. (2023-2024)

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Date Published: 10/16/2023 09:00 PM

Senate Bill No. 444

CHAPTER 872

An act to add Part 52.8 (commencing with Section 88680) to Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education Code, relating to community colleges.

[Approved by Governor October 13, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State October 13, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 444, Newman. Community colleges: Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) programs.

Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

This bill would encourage community college districts to establish and implement Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) programs at community colleges that are directed at identifying students affected by social, economic, and educational disadvantages, increasing the number of eligible students served under MESA programs, and increasing student success in transferring and completing baccalaureate degree programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics majors at four-year higher education institutions, as specified. The bill would require the Board of Governors to adopt regulations for the operation of MESA programs at community colleges that align with the programmatic components of MESA programs. The bill would require the operation of MESA programs and the regulations adopted by the Board of Governors to accomplish certain goals.

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

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

SECTION 1. Part 52.8 (commencing with Section 88680) is added to Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education Code, to read:

PART 52.8. Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) Program

88680. This part shall be known, and may be cited, as, the Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) Program.

88681. As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

(a) "Four-year higher education institution" means a four-year baccalaureate degree program offered at the University of California, the California State University, or an independent institution of higher education, as defined in Section 66010.

(b) "MESA programs" means Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement programs established at community colleges to help underserved and underrepresented students majoring in calculus-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics academic fields who seek to transfer to four-year higher education institutions.

(c) "STEM majors" means calculus-based science, technology, engineering, and mathematics academic fields.

88682. (a) (1) It is the intent of the Legislature that the California Community Colleges recognize the responsibility for supporting programs that enhance educational opportunities for STEM majors, and produce a diverse pool of baccalaureate degree graduates in STEM majors by preparing students for transfer to four-year higher education institutions.

(2) It is the intent of this part to encourage community college districts to establish and implement MESA programs at community colleges that are directed at identifying students affected by social, economic, and educational disadvantages, including disproportionately impacted students, increasing the number of eligible MESA program students served, and increasing student success in transferring and completing baccalaureate degree programs in STEM majors at four-year higher education institutions.

(3) The Legislature further intends that MESA programs are not viewed as the only means of providing services to socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged students pursuing STEM majors who are eligible to transfer to four-year higher education institutions, or of meeting-related student and employee diversity objectives.

(4) The Legislature further intends that the categorical funding for MESA programs provided in the annual Budget Act for community colleges be used to establish, expand, and develop MESA programs and services for the purpose of enhancing California's STEM workforce while aiding the state and nation in reducing equity and achievement gaps.

(b) The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges shall adopt regulations for the operation of MESA programs at community colleges that align with the programmatic components of MESA programs. The operation of MESA programs and the regulations adopted by the board of governors shall accomplish all of the following goals:

(1) Increasing the number of socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged students pursuing baccalaureate degrees in STEM majors who are eligible to transfer to four-year higher education institutions.

(2) Implementing efficient processes and practices and using existing college transfer centers to achieve greater MESA program student transfers to four-year higher education institutions.

(3) Implementing strategies to increase the rate at which MESA program students are deemed transfer-ready in STEM majors to four-year higher education institutions.

(4) Improving the academic performance of MESA program students.

(5) Increasing the leadership skills and raising the educational expectations of MESA program students.

(6) Strengthening relationships with educators and prospective employers in business and industry to establish student internships, scholarships, and other career opportunities for MESA program students.

(7) Establishing partnerships with University of California and California State University Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement programs and Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement College Preparatory programs, California Alliance for Minority Participation programs, or similar programs in an effort to provide optimal student support services.

(8) Implementing strategies to collaborate with campus programs, such as the Student Equity and Achievement Program established in Section 78222 and the Student Success and Support Program established in Article 1 (commencing with Section 78210) of Chapter 2 of Part 48, to leverage additional resources and opportunities for MESA program students and ensure that MESA programs are integrated into campus culture and infrastructure.

(c) MESA program support provided by a community college shall supplement, but not supplant, the regular educational programs offered by the college to encourage and support the enrollment of MESA program students who seek a baccalaureate degree in STEM majors at four-year higher education institutions.

(d) The governing board of a community college district shall not use any funds received from the state for the operation and administration of MESA programs to supplant existing college resources, programs, or services. The governing board may use MESA program funds to meet the matching requirements to receive federal funds, or funds granted by nonprofit foundations, designated for the same purposes as described in this part.