

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Jacqui Irwin, Chair

AB 1002 (Choi) – As Introduced February 18, 2021

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: course credit for prior military education, training, and service

SUMMARY: Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU) and requests the Office of the President of the University of California (UC) to develop, by September 1, 2022, a consistent policy to award military personnel and veterans course credit. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the CSU, in collaboration with the Academic Senate of the CSU, and requests the Office of the President of the UC, in collaboration with UC Academic Senate do both of the following:
 - a) By September 1, 2022, develop a consistent policy to award military personnel and veterans, who have an official Joint Services Transcript (JST) containing courses that have been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) with full descriptions and credit recommendations, course credit for California Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), CSU General Education Breadth, local community college general education requirements, as well as course credit for the CSU or the UC, as appropriate for the student's needs, in a course with subject matter similar to that of the student's military education, training, and service; and,
 - b) Periodically review and adjust the policy developed to align it with policies of other public postsecondary educational institutions.
- 2) Requires each campus of the CSU, and requests each campus of the UC, by December 31, 2023, to have a policy consistent with the policy developed by the Chancellor of the Community Colleges (CCC) for assessing JSTs for the purpose of awarding course credit.
- 3) Requires each campus of the CSU, and requests each campus of the UC, post on its internet website the most recent adopted adopted.
- 4) Makes technical, non-substantive changes, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires, by March 31, 2019, the Chancellor of the CCC to establish an initiative to expand the use of course credit at the CCC for students with prior learning. The initiative must identify best practices for the use of course credit for students with prior learning, locate and collect available resources, and provide professional development in connection with the identified best practices. The initiative shall identify the best practices for purposes of establishing potential pilot programs and shall provide recommendations for internal systemwide policy changes to expand the use of course credit at the CCC for students with prior learning.

- a) Requires, the chancellor, by January 1, 2020, to submit a report to the Legislature on the initiative including, but not limited to, activities established by the initiative. The report must include recommendations for legislative policy changes necessary to implement the best practices identified by the initiative. (Education Code (EDC) Section 66025.7)
- 2) Requires, by September 1, 2019, the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCCCO), in collaboration with the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges (ASCCC), to develop a consistent policy to award military personnel and veterans who have an official JST course credit for California IGETC, CSU General Education Breadth, or local community college general education requirements, as specified.
 - a) Also requires the office of the chancellor and the academic senate to review and adjust this uniform policy to align it with policies of other public postsecondary educational institutions; and,
 - b) Further requires, by December 31, 2020, each community college district to have a policy consistent with the policy developed by the chancellor, and requires each community college campus to post on its internet website the most recent policy adopted pursuant to this bill. (EDC Section 66025.71).
- 3) Requires the CSU and CCC to grant priority registration for enrollment to former members of the Armed Forces of the United States and the State Guard within fifteen years of leaving active military duty. (EDC Section 66025.8)

Requires the Board of Registered Nursing to adopt regulations by January 1, 2017, requiring schools to have a process to evaluate and grant credit for military education and experience. (Business and Professions Code Section 2786.1)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has not been analyzed in a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

According to the author, “California is home to roughly 1.8 million veterans and over 200,000 active and reserve members of the Armed Forces, many of whom have earned higher education course credit during their service and potentially wish to continue their educational pursuits at one of California’s world-class universities. In 2018, the Legislature approved Senate Bill (SB) 1071 which established the method by which CCCs may recognize the JST for transferable credit into degree paths. Assembly Bill (AB) 1002 seeks to build upon this important policy change and request the UC and direct the CSU systems to adopt similar systems in order to support our deserving service members seeking to further their educational pursuits in California.”

Background. In response to two pieces of legislation passed in 2018, SB 1071 (Roth) and AB 1786 (Cervantes), the CCC has begun the process of implementing a comprehensive credit for prior learning (CPL) initiative. According to information from the CCC Student Success Center’s Findings and Recommendations to Expand Credit for Prior Learning as a Vision for Success Strategy, it was noted that students who earn CPL:

- 1) Are roughly twice as likely to complete a degree as those who do not.

- 2) Accumulate more credits through coursework at the institution than their counterparts, which translates to increased enrollment for colleges.
- 3) Save an average of 6-10 months in time to degree compared to their non-CPL counterparts.

In furtherance of their CPL initiative, the CCCCO submitted language to change Title 5, Section 55050 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) which became operative in 2020. Per the CCCCO, these changes sought to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Expand types of prior learning assessments available to students beyond credit by exam.
- 2) Create a consistent process to automatically refer eligible students to faculty for prior learning assessment, which will shift the burden from students to institutions and create more equity in process and opportunity.
- 3) Prioritize CPL for General Education or program courses first, and electives only as a last resort, as necessary to support the student's goals.
- 4) Require that policies and procedures be accessible to all stakeholders.
- 5) Give students an opportunity to accept or deny credit awards, to protect their financial aid or GI Bill benefits.
- 6) Condense all district policies related to credit for prior learning into one comprehensive policy.

Existing UC and CSU policies. Both the CSU and UC have existing system-wide policies regarding the evaluation of JSTs and the granting of CPL. CSU's policy is dictated in Executive Order 1036, while the UC's policy is detailed in their Statement of Transfer Credit Practices.

Both UC and CSU policies broadly permit the evaluation of JSTs, and authorize the award of academic credit following a review of ACE recommendations, however the UC policy specifically notes that, "UC may award lower-division (freshman/sophomore level) units for military courses completed..." whereas the CSU policy authorizes the awarding of credit for lower, upper, and graduate-level coursework, when appropriate.

As noted by the author, the UC and CSU policies exist absent of any requirement in state law.

The Committee on Higher Education has helpfully provided a helpful analysis of the attempts by the services to provide transferrable credit to service members for training and education.

ACE. The military issues academic transcripts (JSTs) for active-duty service members and veterans. The transcripts issued by the various service branches are endorsed and periodically evaluated by ACE and bear its seal. ACE also publishes the *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*, which provides recommendations to colleges for evaluating these transcripts. The Guide's credit transfer recommendations are based on reviews of military coursework by a panel of university faculty members convened by ACE. These faculty members review military coursework and occupational training descriptions pertaining to

their own academic disciplines, evaluating them according to disciplinary standards and expectations.

Community College of the Air Force. The U.S. Air Force is the sole branch of the armed forces that has fully integrated their military occupational specialty job training with an accredited, degree-granting institution. The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) is a federally-chartered degree-granting institution that serves the United States Air Force's enlisted force. CCAF partners with over 108 affiliated Air Force schools, 82 Education Service Offices located worldwide, and more than 1,500 civilian academic institutions to serve approximately 300,000 active, guard, and reserve enlisted personnel. The college annually awards over 22,000 associate in applied science degrees from 68 distinct programs.

CCAF gained regional accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, has awarded more than 490,000 associate in applied science degree since issuing its first degree in 1977.

While Air Force Servicemembers have access to CCAF transcripts, members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard rely on the Joint Service Transcript when having their prior military learning assessed.

United States Naval Community College. In February of 2020 the Department of the Navy published *Education for Seapower Strategy 2020*, a joint Navy-Marine Corps strategy intended to boost the intellectual and technological capabilities of the sea services. A central component of this strategy was the creation of the United States Naval Community College (USNCC). Clearly inspired by the CCAF, the USNCC is currently running a pilot program with several partner institutions. The intent of the first pilot program, which began in January of 2021 with 550 Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Servicemembers, is to collect data to evaluate the impact of the online learning environment as well as overall student experiences and academic success.

USNCC plans to expand to an initial operational capacity to enroll up to 7,500 students and offer associate of science degrees in over a dozen areas.

Committee comment. It is commendable that state legislators, educators and state agencies have expended so much effort on providing college credit to military service members for their training and education, but the uncomfortable truth is that the services are ideally positioned to do so, as the Community College of the Air Force demonstrates, but have been less than assiduous about doing so. It is, after all, not their primary mission, and service branch leaders may even view doing so as detrimental to retention and readiness. The lessons of the Air Force and Navy efforts may prove instructive.

Prior legislation. AB 2492 (Choi, 2020), was substantively identical to this bill, and was held in the Senate Education Committee.

AB 1786 (Cervantes) Chapter 530, Statutes of 2018 required the CCCCCO to establish an initiative to expand the use of credit for students with prior learning.

SB 1071 (Roth) Chapter 560, Statutes of 2018, required, by September 1, 2019, the CCCCCO in collaboration with the ASCCC to develop a consistent policy for awarding course credit for prior

military education, training and service. This bill also required each community college district to have a policy consistent with the policy developed by the CCCCCO.

SB 466 (Hill) Chapter 489, Statutes of 2015, mandated that nursing programs in California offer students credit for prior military experience or risk negative action by the Board of Registered Nursing.

AB 2462 (Block) Chapter 404, Statutes of 2012, required the CCCCCO to determine how much course credit should be awarded for prior military experience by July 1, 2015.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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