

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2012

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Paul J. Cook, Chair

AB 2462 (Block) – As Amended: April 9, 2012

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: academic credit for prior military academic experience

SUMMARY: This bill would require the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to implement a process for awarding credit for prior military academic experience, to be completed no later than July 1, 2013, that meets the pertinent standards of the American Council on Education (ACE). Specifically, this bill:

1. Requires the CCC to implement a process for awarding credit for prior military academic experience, to be completed no later than July 1, 2013, that meets the pertinent standards of the ACE.
2. Makes the following legislative findings and declarations:
 - a. CCC are encouraged to facilitate the acceptance of credits earned at other community colleges.
 - b. In addition to accepting credits from other community colleges, CCC are also encouraged to recognize the learning acquired by military personnel during their service and to award credit for that learning where appropriate. The American Council on Education or another appropriate entity may offer a consistent and reasonable method of recognizing that learning. The Academic Senate for CCC is also encouraged to develop recommendations regarding approaches to the use of systems, including, but not limited to, the ACE system, that provide guidance for awarding college credit for academic instruction and experience in a military setting.
 - c. CCC are encouraged to consider military education or experience for credit for career technical education instruction and to develop ways to evaluate progress to, or completion of, a professional or occupational certificate for persons with military education or experience.
 - d. Community colleges are also encouraged to consider awarding credit by examination process for experience or instruction gained in a military setting.
3. Creates a reimbursable state mandate if so determined by the Commission on State Mandates.

EXISTING LAW

- 1) Establishes a matriculation process at CCCs with the purpose of realizing a student's educational objectives. Matriculation services to be made available by the colleges include, but are not limited to (a) processing of admission applications, (b) orientation and pre-

orientation services concerning academic expectations and financial assistance, and (c) assessment and counseling upon enrollment, as specified. (Education Code § 78212)

- 2) Requires the California State University (CSU) and CCC to grant priority registration for enrollment to former members of the Armed Forces of the United States within four years of leaving active military duty. (EC § 66025.8)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown at this time.

COMMENTS:

According to the author, CCC do not uniformly evaluate prior military service for academic credit. Some prior service students are unable to obtain course credit for their military service that would be honored at another CCC campus. AB 2462 will require the Chancellor of the CCC to implement a process for awarding credit for prior military academic experience, to be completed no later than July 1, 2013, that meets the pertinent standards of the American Council on Education. This requirement will ensure uniformity among campuses throughout the CCC and set a unified standard.

According to the Assembly Higher Education Committee:

Background. In California, an approximate 30,000 troops annually are leaving service, and many are pursuing education. Student veteran enrollment has increased at the University of California (UC), CSU, and CCC in recent years: CCC enrolls 44,000 students who utilize some form of veteran tuition/fee benefit, while CSU enrolls 6,540 and UC enrolls 949 students who are using GI benefits. Approximately 90% of UC and CSU student veterans transferred from a CCC campus.

ACE Guide. The military issues academic transcripts 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 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.

UC and CSU have recently adopted the ACE standards for evaluating prior military academic credit. In spring 2011, the CCC statewide Academic Senate passed a resolution urging local senates to apply credit for educational experiences during military service toward the associate degree in accordance with the recommendations listed in the ACE Guide.

CCC recognition of prior learning. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent prior learning experiences receive academic credit at CCC, since the determinations are made at each campus, but it appears that the application of prior learning credit is uneven. At present, 46 CCCs are members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Consortium, which require member institutions to, among other things, provide credit for military training

and experience, including use of the ACE Guide in evaluating and awarding academic credit for military training and experience.

Transferability of credit for prior learning experiences. While faculty at a CCC may grant academic credit for prior learning experiences, this does not ensure that these courses will transfer to a four-year institution. Faculty at the receiving institution determines whether prior learning credits are accepted by that institution. This issue could be considered by the CCC and CSU faculty who are implementing SB 1440 (Padilla), Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010, which statutorily prescribes the content of a community college degree that meets transfer eligibility requirements.

In "Promising Practices in Veterans' Education: Outcomes and Recommendations from the Success for Veterans Award Grants," (2010, ACE) the report notes:

Overwhelmingly, institutions believed that identifying an effective method for awarding transfer credit based on ACE credit recommendations for evaluated military training will enhance success. Colleges and universities have heard from veterans who believe their military training has not been accepted in full capacity. Veterans have voiced frustration with repeating coursework they feel they received in the military, increased time to graduation (when their financial aid benefits have an expiration date), and perceived lack of recognition of their service and accomplishments. [Emphasis added.]

Furthermore, In "Service Members in School," (November, 2010, ACE), the report states:

In the focus groups, participants said that whether their military training counted toward specific degree requirements was often left to departmental discretion. This practice sometimes resulted in large inconsistencies within the same institution.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

The American Legion-Department of California
AMVETS- Department of California
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
California State Commanders Veterans Council
Vietnam Veterans of America-California State Council
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

Opposition

None on file.

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