



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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Kieran Flaherty, Associate Vice President and Director

August 13, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: *Assembly Bill 928 (Berman), as amended on July 15, 2021*
Scheduled for hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 16, 2021
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Portantino:

The University of California (UC) respectfully opposes Assembly Bill 928 by Assemblymember Marc Berman. The bill seeks to create a singular lower divisional general educational pathway for transferring to UC and California State University (CSU), and establishes the “Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) Intersegmental Implementation Committee,” which would undermine the governance structure of the University, and potentially erode the role of faculty and students in developing policy and upholding the academic mission of the UC.

UC is proud that nearly one third of our students started at a community college. California community college students add to the fabric of our UC community and arrive at our campuses with the intellectual passion to graduate and succeed in our state’s economy. Working closely with the other segments, UC has developed new and innovative transfer programs and taken several major policy actions to advance shared student transfer goals over the past decade. These include partnering with the California Community Colleges (CCC) Chancellor’s Office to increase transfer to UC from community colleges with historically low transfer rates and initiating the CCC-UC Transfer MOU, launching the UC Transfer Pathways Guide, and creating the UC Pathways+ program. These actions and others have resulted in a more simplified transfer process from the CCC to the UC.

As a result of the segments working together to develop diverse and varied student-centric offerings to support an array of transfer goals, there have been important advances in meeting the needs of transfer students across California. In the fall of 2020, UC enrolled its largest and most diverse CCC transfer class of more than 20,400 students, an increase of more than 30 percent from a decade ago. Over the last five years, UC has added more transfers than freshmen to the incoming undergraduate classes, and transfer students are retained and persist to graduation at rates comparable or better than students who enter as freshmen. We are also pleased that the diversity of our enrolled transfer students tracks closely with the diversity of our overall class of admitted students, which in turn tracks very closely with the diversity of our transfer applicants.

While well intentioned, UC is concerned that the one-size-fits-all approach proposed in AB 928 prioritizes alignment with the ADT at the expense of the richness of opportunities available to students. Though there are many similarities between the UC and CSU undergraduate programs, there are also important differences. Where differences exist, they reflect important areas of emphasis within major disciplines students may pursue at UC, and differences in the missions and values of our institutions, as well as the curricular imperatives set by their respective faculty.

UC believes the proposed “Associate Degree for Transfer Intersegmental Implementation Committee” would be duplicative of the existing shared governance model at the University, and the significant work on transfer policy undertaken by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS), as well as the faculty Senates of the three public higher education segments. While AB 928 conflicts with academic shared governance, as well as the policy approach on transfer developed over the last ten years, it would also have significant cost implications for the University. UC estimates salary and benefits costs for an additional FTE to participate in the ADT Intersegmental Implementation Committee of \$150K (ongoing), in addition to implementation costs that are likely in the millions of dollars.

Implementing a singular general education pathway would require significant resources for UC’s nine undergraduate campuses to overhaul degree audits systems; make necessary changes to the ASSIST system that serves as the State’s central repository of transfer articulation information; and, would increase costs for counseling services and articulation-related work. As it stands, the three public higher education segments contribute equally to ASSIST. Any expectations of expanding or upgrading ASSIST to accommodate the shift to a singular general education path would come with an increased cost to UC and others who financially support ASSIST. The baseline cost of a minimum four-member technical team to address additional development of ASSIST is estimated at approximately \$1.5 million, as a one-time project cost. UC’s portion of this amount would be approximately \$500,000. Individual campus cost pressures for degree audit system updates would be separate from this estimate and are unknown at this time.

Most importantly, a bill that imposes additional barriers to transfer by specifying a single inflexible set of general education coursework, likely including courses beyond what UC currently requires, would have negative effects on transfer and transfer equity. In particular, California community college students from low-income and/or underrepresented backgrounds should have the full range of options available to them as do their more advantaged peers, not a narrower path.

We appreciate the author’s attention to student transfer issues, as well as emphasizing the need to make further improvements to the student transfer process. We share this important goal of improving transfer access. As drafted, however, AB 928 would completely upend the current approach to achieving our student-centered transfer goals, which have been carefully developed with input from key stakeholders.

For these reasons, the University must respectfully oppose AB 928 (Berman). Thank you for your consideration of our views on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 445-9924 if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,



Kieran Flaherty
Associate Vice President and Director

cc: Vice Chair and Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Assemblymember Marc Berman
President Michael Drake