



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

DANIEL M. DOOLEY
Senior Vice President – External Relations

Office of State Governmental Relations
1130 K Street, Suite 340
Sacramento, California 95814
(916) 445-9924
Steve Juarez, Associate Vice President and Director

December 19, 2013

The Honorable Das Williams
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 4005
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 181 (Logue), as amended February 28, 2013
Scheduled for Hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee January 7, 2014
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Assembly Member Williams:

Regrettably, I am writing to inform you that the University of California (UC) opposes AB 181, as amended on February 28, 2013. AB 181 would establish a pilot program that would allow a high school student to earn a baccalaureate degree from a participating UC campus within three years of graduation from high school, at a cost to the student not to exceed \$20,000. As amended, the bill applies only to degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – collectively known as the “STEM” fields. As currently drafted, AB 181 would authorize any UC campus to partner with willing community college campuses and high schools to implement the program. The University has two major concerns with this measure: 1) it proposes a tuition freeze without recognizing the state’s role in providing stable, predictable funding for UC and 2) it infringes upon the faculty’s academic responsibilities pertaining to academic quality.

AB 181 would freeze systemwide tuition and mandatory fees for the two years that a pilot program student is enrolled at UC regardless of the state’s general fund allocation to the university. While UC’s average total cost of attendance has risen in recent years, this primarily reflects the state’s disinvestment, which has required the University to increase tuition to maintain access and preserve quality for all students. Moreover, by focusing on STEM degrees, AB 181 applies a price cap on the very degrees that are more expensive to provide due to the relative expense of lab sections and the need for specialized equipment and facilities

It is important to note that UC students, regardless of major, benefit from an extensive financial aid program that reduces their out-of-pocket costs considerably. UC’s net costs – the total cost of attendance less gift aid – has declined slightly or remained flat for low-income students in recent years, due to large increases in gift aid. In fact, 50% of all UC students have mandatory systemwide tuition and fees fully covered by financial aid, which is why we believe the University’s financial aid policies are better tailored to address student costs than the arbitrary caps proposed by AB 181.

More generally, AB 181 touches on a number of issues – admission with advanced standing, use of AP credit to satisfy general education requirements, and awarding of credit from other institutions – that are governed by faculty. For example, provisions of AB 181 mandate that UC accept “unlimited” transfer credit, whether from AP exams or community college coursework. The University puts no limits on the number of units awarded for AP tests. The number of units for each exam is a systemwide policy and is consistent across the system. However, how these units meet (or do not meet) degree requirements is determined at the campus level and reflects curricular decisions made by the faculty in individual departments. Furthermore, UC’s current practice is not to accept more than 70 units of transfer credit in total that can be earned from AP credit, community college coursework, or a combination thereof. This ensures that a UC degree is, in fact, earned primarily through rigorous coursework and study at UC, not elsewhere.

As a platform for STEM degree production, AB 181 does not take into account the specific requirements of those degrees, the instructional costs associated with them, and the difficulty in completing them even within the traditional four-year timeframe. As an instrument to promote affordability and access, the bill would not likely improve prospects for lower-income students who already benefit from gift aid or students who do not have access to extensive high-quality AP and/or community college offerings. And finally, with regard to academic policy in general, the bill constitutes an unwarranted intrusion into the development of admissions criteria and curricula that UC has long maintained belongs in the hands of University faculty, rather than the Legislature. For these reasons, we must oppose the bill.

As always, the University appreciates your consideration of our views. Should you have any questions on the University’s position on AB 181, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 445-9924.

Sincerely,



Steve Juarez
Associate Vice President and Director
State Governmental Relations

cc: Vice Chair and Members, Assembly Higher Education Committee
President Janet Napolitano
Provost and Executive Vice President Aimée Dorr
Executive Vice President Nathan Brostrom
Senior Vice President Daniel Dooley