

California Community Colleges
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March 13, 2014

The Honorable Das Williams, Chair
Assembly Higher Education Committee
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2558 (Williams) Community Colleges: Faculty and Staff Development
Position: Sponsor/Support

Dear Assembly Member Williams:

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, the Chancellor's Office is pleased to sponsor your AB 2558, which updates current statute regarding professional development and makes it more inclusive of all community college employees.

In 2011, the California Community College System began a historic process to improve student outcomes through the Student Success Task Force (SSTF). The work of the task force resulted in specific recommendations to identify key strategies to invest in student success. Included in these strategies were recommendations to revitalize and re-envision professional development opportunities for community college faculty and staff so that a more dynamic and effective campus environment would be created for students.

A 30 member system-wide Professional Development Committee was tasked with developing a set of recommendations. Their conclusions, "The Report on the California Community Colleges Student Success Initiative Professional Development Committee Recommendations" was released in September 2013 and provided specific proposals to improve professional development.

AB 2558 embodies statutory changes recommended by the committee. Specifically, the bill updates statute in the Education Code to establish the Community College Professional Development Program. The bill also authorizes the use of state money for professional development activities if it becomes available through the state budget. Finally, the bill specifies that districts that participate in the Community College Professional Development Program must provide professional development opportunities to both faculty *and* staff.

Over the past 12 years professional development activities for community college employees have been in a state of neglect. Although a state funded program was originally established in 1988, budget reductions over the years resulted in an elimination of this funding by 2002. Consequently, few resources for professional development opportunities have existed in recent years. In addition, what little support there has been for professional development on campuses has been focused primarily on faculty and not *all* campus employees, such as classified and administrative staff, who also strive to ensure a positive environment for students.

The importance of professional development for community college employees cannot be understated. Students don't thrive in a vacuum. They need the assistance of a wide variety of effective, well-trained, and motivated personnel on campus. For example, students who receive the best assistance with

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arranging their financial aid, navigating the assessment process, developing an education plan, and finding educational resources such as tutoring etc., are more likely to be successful in their course work. In addition, community colleges serve a diverse population of students who are not always prepared for college-level work when they arrive on campus. Faculty and staff can benefit from the most up-to-date training on meeting the needs of *all* students to ensure that an inclusive and accessible environment is provided at our campuses.

Finally, the changing nature of higher education today requires employees to adapt to new technologies to better serve students. For example, professional development opportunities can assist faculty in developing an online course or use a learning management system to ensure that the use of online tools are effective. It can also enable student services and counseling staff to effectively utilize up-to-date online tools to better assist students with orientation, assessments, and education planning. Improved professional development activities for community college employees will result in an invigorated, efficient, and highly skilled campus workforce that will be better prepared to help our students become successful in reaching their educational goals.

The Board of Governors and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office thanks you for your sponsorship of this important measure which builds on the goals of the Student Success Task Force. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 445-4434.

Sincerely,



Vincent W. Stewart

Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

cc: Members of the Assembly Higher Education Committee