



California Community Colleges: Evaluation of Intersession Extension Pilot Program

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Summary

In Response to Unmet Course Demand, Legislature Authorized Pilot Program. California Community College instruction is funded primarily by a combination of state General Fund monies, local property taxes, and student enrollment fees. Historically, statute has prohibited community colleges from offering fully fee-supported credit-bearing courses to the public. During the state's last fiscal downturn, however, many students were unable to access taxpayer-subsidized courses. As a response, the Legislature adopted Chapter 710 of 2013 (AB 955, Williams), which authorized a pilot program for six specified community colleges to offer fully fee-supported summer and winter (intersession) instruction through January 1, 2018. Chapter 710 requires our office to assess implementation of the legislation, including whether the pilot helped students complete high-demand courses and supported financially needy students' access to these courses.

While Limited in Scope, Pilot Furthered Key Policy Objectives. Of the six specified colleges in Chapter 710, to date only Long Beach City College (LBCC) has participated in the pilot, offering eight fully fee-supported courses in 2014. Our review finds that LBCC fully met Chapter 710's requirements and adhered to the Legislature's broader goals for the legislation. Specifically, LBCC expanded access to high-demand courses during a period of reduced state resources. Moreover, in offering its Chapter 710 extension courses, the college addressed the Legislature's major concerns about equitable access and affordability. As a result, a small but generally representative group of LBCC students was able to accelerate progress toward meeting educational goals at no additional cost to the state.

Recommend Extending Pilot. Based on the encouraging results of LBCC's pilot, we recommend the Legislature extend Chapter 710's sunset date and open up the program to any community college that meets specified criteria. We believe that with our recommended modifications, fully fee-supported intersession programs could serve as one viable means for colleges to maintain or expand access during tight budget years.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 710 of 2013 (AB 955, Williams) authorized a pilot program for six specified California Community Colleges (CCC) to maintain intersession extension programs until January 1, 2018. Under the pilot, these colleges may supplement taxpayer-supported course offerings with fully fee-supported courses during summer and winter intersession terms. To date, only one of the six colleges—Long Beach City College (LBCC)—has implemented an intersession extension program, which it offered on a limited basis for two terms in 2014. This brief satisfies a statutory requirement for our office to assess the implementation of Chapter 710. (Please see Figure 1 for the detailed reporting requirements in the legislation.) Below, we provide background on the CCC system, discuss why the Legislature adopted Chapter 710, summarize

the requirements of the legislation, and report on implementation to date. We then offer our assessment as to whether LBCC's implementation of the pilot has complied with all statutory requirements and met legislative objectives. We conclude with recommendations regarding continuation of the pilot.

Figure 1 LAO Reporting Requirements

Chapter 710 of 2013 (AB 955, Williams) directs the Legislative Analyst's Office to submit a report by January 1, 2017 that includes:

- ✓ Summary statistics relating to course offerings; student enrollment, including demographic data on the students enrolled in courses, if available; financing; student use of financial aid; funding; and course completion rates for the pilot program.
- ✓ A determination of the extent to which the pilot program complies with statutory requirements and the extent to which the pilot program results in expanded access for students.
- ✓ An assessment of the effect of the pilot program on the availability of, and enrollment in, courses that receive state apportionment funding—with particular attention to the demographic makeup and financial aid status of students enrolled in those courses.
- ✓ Recommendations as to whether the pilot program should be extended, expanded, or modified, including a consideration of alternative approaches that might achieve the goal of expanded access without increasing state funding.

BACKGROUND

Community Colleges Are the State's Open Admission Institutions. California's 113 community colleges enroll a majority of the state's undergraduates, including about two-thirds of all undergraduates and three-quarters of those attending public institutions. Whereas the University of California and California State University are selective in their admissions—requiring students to compete for admission—community colleges are required by state law to

admit all adult residents. This open-admission requirement for CCC does not guarantee all students access to courses, however, because the number of courses a college can offer depends on the college's funding.

State Law Establishes Community College Mission. The primary roles of the community colleges are to offer instruction up to the sophomore level that leads to vocational certificates, associate degrees, and university transfer, and to

advance economic and workforce development. Statute also identifies instruction in basic math and English, including English as a second language, and other adult instruction as essential CCC functions.

Instruction Offered During Primary Sessions and Intersessions. Virtually all community colleges are on a semester schedule. That is, their primary academic terms are the fall and spring semesters. Colleges also may offer courses during shorter winter and summer terms, called intersessions.

Colleges Offer Taxpayer-Supported Courses and Programs. The primary sources of funding for community colleges are the state General Fund and local property tax. Together, these two sources account for 92 percent of CCC funding. State Lottery funds and other state sources provide another 3 percent. (The remaining 5 percent comes from student fees, as described next.)

Enrollment Fees Also Support Instruction. Under state law, California residents pay an enrollment fee of \$46 per semester unit for credit courses (such as transfer-level classes) and no fee for noncredit courses (typically courses in basic math and English skills, English as a second language, and short-term vocational programs that do not provide college credit). A full-time CCC student enrolling in a typical course load of 12 units per semester for two semesters would pay \$1,104 annually in enrollment fees. Nonresident students generally pay fees equal to the cost of instruction, which varies by district. In 2016-17, nonresident fees average \$225 per unit.

Fees Waived for Financially Needy Students. Resident students with financial need may receive a Board of Governors fee waiver that fully covers their enrollment fees. A student may qualify for such a waiver based on income, receipt of public assistance, or financial need under a federal means test. More than half of students receive fee waivers.

Colleges Also May Offer Fully Fee-Supported Programs. While the vast majority of CCC instruction is taxpayer-supported, colleges also may offer several types of fully fee-supported programs, as shown in Figure 2. One such program is community education (sometimes called community services or continuing education). Colleges may offer community education courses in a wide range of subjects including recreation, nature study, and handicrafts. Community education courses do not provide college credit. A second CCC program, called contract education, involves customized training provided exclusively to a company's employees in exchange for a payment that covers the full cost of the training. Unlike community education, contract education is not open to the public and may be offered for college credit. Nonresident enrollment in regular, open-access credit courses represents a third type of fully fee-supported instruction at CCC. With the exception of instruction authorized by Chapter 710 (discussed below), community colleges may not offer fully fee-supported credit courses that are open to the public.

Figure 2
CCC Instruction That Can Be Fully Fee-Supported

	College Credit	No College Credit
Open-Access	Only nonresident students and Chapter 710 pilot	Community (continuing) education
Not Open-Access	Contract education	Contract education

ADOPTION OF CHAPTER 710

In this section, we discuss the context for the Legislature's adoption of an intersession extension pilot under Chapter 710. We also review the legislation's requirements for implementation of the pilot.

Unmet Enrollment Demand

Set Context for Legislation

Recession Brought Surge of Enrollment

Demand. After a few years of modest growth during the mid-2000s, CCC enrollment in taxpayer-supported courses surged beginning in 2007-08. This was due in large part to individuals choosing to attend college during a tight job market. State and local funding, however, did not meet enrollment demand over this period. By the end of 2009-10, community colleges enrolled 95,000 full-time equivalent students beyond their funded enrollment levels. Additionally, as we discussed in *The 2010-11 Budget: Higher Education*, an unknown but likely significant number of individuals attempted to enroll in courses at CCC during this time but were unable to find an available slot.

Large Reductions in State Funding. With declining state revenues, the state reduced CCC funding substantially in 2009-10 and 2011-12—a combined reduction of \$575 million. Although community colleges initially had expanded their enrollment beyond funded levels, they eventually had to reduce course offerings to accommodate these declines in funding. Colleges reduced enrollment by 12 percent from 2009-10 to 2012-13, worsening the gap between student demand for courses and available enrollment slots.

As a Response, Legislature Adopted Chapter 710. The legislation authorizes an

intersession extension pilot program, whereby participating colleges may offer fully fee-supported *credit* courses during summer and winter intersessions. The intent of Chapter 710 was to provide students with additional access to courses in the context of surging enrollment demand and limited state funding. The Legislature noted that intersession extension programs could create additional opportunities for students to complete high-demand courses, free up space in the corresponding taxpayer-supported courses during the primary sessions, and increase all students' ability to complete their education. In addition, intersession extension programs could help the state meet its workforce needs while providing CCC students with a less expensive alternative to expensive for-profit colleges to get the courses they need.

Requirements of Chapter 710

Chancellor's Office to Establish Voluntary Pilot Program for up to Six Colleges. Chapter 710 identifies College of the Canyons, Crafton Hills College, LBCC, Oxnard College, Pasadena City College, and Solano Community College as the eligible colleges. The governing boards of the corresponding districts could request to participate, and could implement their programs once the Chancellor's Office determined that they met the criteria for the pilot. Criteria include having served at least the number of students for which a district was funded in the two prior years and having experienced no declines in enrollment during those years. Districts also had to have certain enrollment priority policies in place. At least one (unspecified) campus was to begin implementation by January 1, 2014 and the five others by July 1, 2014.

Colleges to Offer Standard Courses in High-Priority Subjects. The legislation requires that extension courses must be open to the public and meet all other regulatory standards for state-funded courses. It also requires that the courses offered must lead to basic skills proficiency, certificates, degrees, or transfer preparation. In addition, extension programs are subject to community college district collective bargaining agreements regarding faculty assignments and compensation.

Extension Programs May Not Use State General Fund. Colleges must recover all costs associated with the extension programs, including any oversight costs for the Chancellor's Office, through fees. In addition, colleges are required to set aside one-third of extension enrollment fee revenue for student financial aid, and supplement that amount from campus foundations and other nonstate funds.

Colleges to Ensure Students With Financial Need Are Not Disadvantaged. In addition to setting aside fee revenue for financial aid, participating colleges must support access to extension courses for financially needy students by providing them with information on financial

aid programs, the federal American Opportunity Tax Credit, military benefits, scholarships, and other financial assistance that may be available. Chapter 710 also requires colleges to adopt various policies so as to ensure that students who are eligible for state financial aid programs have access to extension courses.

Other Requirements. Chapter 710 includes specific reporting requirements on student participation, demographics, and outcomes, as well as financial aid, fee levels, and funding. The legislation states the Legislature's intent that colleges (1) conduct a review by race, ethnicity, and gender of students enrolled in the pilot extension programs; (2) compare the data to data on students enrolled in the primary terms; and (3) take affirmative steps to increase participation of low-income and minority students if the review shows significant disparities in access to extension courses. Chapter 710 also prohibits colleges from reducing offerings of taxpayer-supported courses to reestablish them as part of an extension program, and requires participating colleges to give first and second priority for extension courses to continuing and new students, respectively, who are eligible for resident tuition.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 710

Below, we describe implementation of the intersession extension pilot at LBCC and present data on extension program enrollment, funding, and financial aid.

Five of Six Eligible Colleges Did Not Offer Extension Courses. These colleges offered several reasons for not implementing the pilot. One college did not meet the requirements for participation because it had experienced an enrollment decline in the last two years. Some colleges encountered local opposition from faculty members and students, who objected to what they perceived as creating

a two-tiered system for access to credit courses. Moreover, the economy began to improve soon after Chapter 710 was enacted, which contributed to reduced enrollment demand. At the same time, rising state revenues led to restoration of funding for community colleges, enabling them to accommodate more enrollment through taxpayer-supported courses and diminishing the need for additional intersession courses. Only LBCC ended up participating in the Chapter 710 pilot program. (See box on next page for information about LBCC.)

LBCC Offered Chapter 710 Extension Courses in Winter 2014 and Summer 2014. As shown in Figure 3, LBCC ran a total of eight Chapter 710 extension courses in 2014—five courses in the winter term and three in the summer term. The college also ran 43 taxpayer-supported courses in winter 2014 and 378 in summer 2014. For both Chapter 710 extension courses and taxpayer-supported intersession courses, the college selected subjects that met certificate, degree, or transfer requirements and had been in high demand during recent primary terms. All of the Chapter 710 extension courses had been filled to at least 80 percent of their maximum capacity in the primary terms, and several had been completely filled and had waiting lists. Other considerations in choosing courses for the extension program included (1) helping students complete a degree or certificate with immediate workforce value, (2) benefiting special populations (such as veterans), and (3) identifying interested faculty, as discussed next.

Courses Taught by Mix of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty. As required in the collective bargaining agreement for LBCC faculty, all teaching assignments for the Chapter 710 extension program were voluntary. Accordingly, college administrators identified faculty who could teach high-priority courses and were willing to teach in the intersession extension program. Full-time faculty ended up teaching three of the five winter extension courses, and part-time faculty taught all three of the summer extension courses. This is similar to the overall faculty mix at LBCC, where full-time faculty teach 55 percent of courses during the academic year but few in summer. (Under the faculty collective bargaining agreement at the time, full-time faculty teaching in summer were paid an “overload” rate that was lower than the standard course rate that part-time faculty received. As a result, full-time faculty had less incentive to teach during the summer.)

Long Beach City College (LBCC) Background and Demographics

LBCC, the only college in the Long Beach Community College District, serves the communities of Avalon, Lakewood, Long Beach, and Signal Hill. The college enrolls more than 33,000 students in more than 7,000 course sections annually, offers 223 degree and certificate programs, and employs more than 1,600 full-time and part-time faculty and staff. Compared with overall California Community College averages, LBCC has high proportions of Hispanic students and students who are the first in their families to attend college, as shown in the figure.

Long Beach City College Student Demographics			
2014-15			
33,566 Students	55%	Female	
20,409 Full-time equivalent students	45%	Male	
54.0% Hispanic	26%	Less than 20 years old	
14.6% White	37%	20 to 24	
14.0% African American	26%	25 to 39	
8.5% Asian	11%	40 or older	
4.2% Two or more races/ethnicities			
3.3% Filipino			
0.8% Pacific Islander			
0.2% American Indian/Alaska Native	62%	First generation in college (compared with 42% statewide)	
0.4% Unknown			

Figure 3**Long Beach City College's Chapter 710 Extension Courses**

Discipline	Course Title	Units	Winter 2014	Summer 2014
Allied Health	Phlebotomy	1.5	✓	✓
Anatomy	Human Anatomy	4.0		✓
Environmental Science	Energy for the Future	3.0	✓	
Geography	World Regional Geography	3.0	✓	
Health Education	Contemporary Health Problems	3.0	✓	
Philosophy	Introduction to Issues in Philosophy, Psychology and Religion	3.0	✓	✓

Students in Chapter 710 Extension***Courses Generally Mirrored Overall Student Demographics.***

A total of 190 students participated in Chapter 710 extension courses at LBCC. Figure 4 (see next page) displays demographic information about these 190 students compared with the students in taxpayer-supported primary term and intersession courses during the same period. As the figure shows, the student composition for the Chapter 710 extension program generally was similar to LBCC's overall student composition. Slightly more Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander and white non-Hispanic students, and slightly fewer Hispanic and African-American students, enrolled in intersession courses than in taxpayer-supported courses in the same year. Extension courses appeared to attract students new to LBCC and those 21 and older, while continuing students and those age 20 and younger were more likely to enroll in taxpayer-supported courses. Students participating in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program and students with disabilities also were more likely to enroll in taxpayer-supported courses than extension courses. Since these students comprise relatively small percentages of LBCC students, however, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the small sample participating in the Chapter 710 extension program.

Chapter 710 Extension Course Outcomes

Better Than Fall and Spring. As Figure 5 shows (see page 9), Chapter 710 extension courses had higher success rates—measured by the percentage of students completing the course with a grade of C or higher—than courses offered during recent primary terms. During a given intersession term, success rates for extension and taxpayer-supported courses were comparable. Likewise, Chapter 710 extension course completion rates—the percentage of students who passed a course with a grade of D or higher—were higher than in primary term courses and comparable to taxpayer-supported intersession courses.

Fees Fully Supported Chapter 710 Extension

Program Costs. LBCC's governing board approved resident enrollment fees of \$225 per unit for extension courses and a discount of \$70 per unit for financially needy students, defined as students who are eligible for a Board of Governors fee waiver. Students with financial need also received a second discount of \$65 per unit supported by the college's foundation, bringing their total price per unit to \$90—about double the \$46 per unit fee for taxpayer-supported courses. The college proposed these fee levels to provide full program cost recovery for LBCC after considering the impact of fee waivers. (Although Chapter 710 also requires that fees cover the statewide costs of administering the pilot, Chancellor's Office staff indicated to

LBCC that these costs were negligible.) Figure 6 shows the revenues and expenses for each term. According to LBCC staff, the Chapter 710 extension courses generated a surplus for both the winter and summer intersessions primarily because fewer students applied for financial aid than they had anticipated.

Most Chapter 710 Extension Students Received Financial Aid.

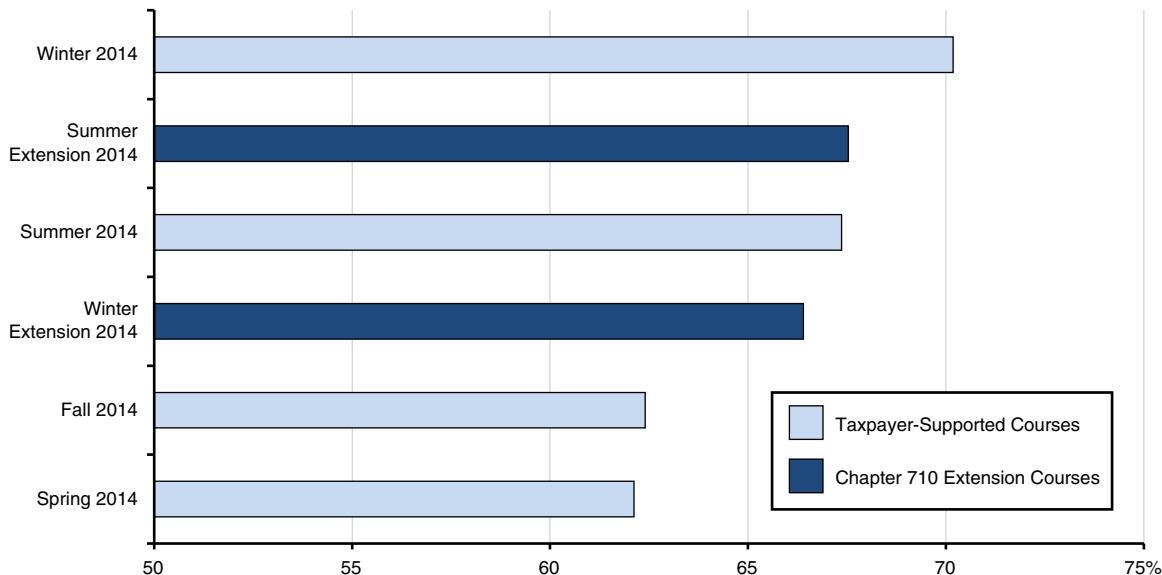
More than three-quarters of winter 2014 extension students and two-thirds of summer 2014 extension students received fee discounts. These proportions are similar to the overall share of LBCC students who receive fee waivers for taxpayer-supported courses, which was

Figure 4

Demographic Information for Long Beach City College Students by Academic Session

	Taxpayer-Supported Fall 2013	Taxpayer-Supported Winter 2014	Chapter 710 Extension Winter 2014	Taxpayer-Supported Spring 2014	Taxpayer-Supported Summer 2014	Chapter 710 Extension Summer 2014
Number of Students Enrolled	24,282	1,652	113	23,856	8,026	77
Hispanic	52%	51%	46%	51%	52%	47%
Asian, Filipino, Pacific Islander	13%	15%	19%	15%	16%	19%
White Non-Hispanic	15%	15%	16%	16%	14%	18%
African American	14%	15%	12%	14%	15%	13%
Female	55%	56%	58%	55%	57%	75%
Male	45%	44%	42%	45%	43%	25%
First Time at LBCC	28%	5%	16%	14%	21%	43%
Previously Enrolled	72%	95%	84%	86%	79%	57%
20 and Younger	41%	42%	30%	37%	39%	27%
21-25	28%	31%	35%	31%	29%	35%
26-30	11%	11%	18%	12%	12%	22%
31 and Older	20%	15%	17%	21%	20%	16%
BOG Fee Waiver Recipients ^a	70%	70%	74%	70%	70%	67%

^a Represents estimated share of students eligible for a BOG fee waiver, though students did not receive BOG fee waivers for extension courses.
BOG = Board of Governors.

Figure 5**Long Beach City College Course Success Rates***Percent of Students Receiving Grade of C or Higher, by Academic Term*

about 70 percent in the same academic year. As noted earlier, financially needy students received two discounts amounting to 60 percent of their Chapter 710 extension course fees. Students who did not meet the definition of financially needy could apply for scholarships from the LBCC Foundation to help offset fees. Altogether, allocations to the college from the foundation were the largest source of financial aid, exceeding the college's fee set-aside.

Some Students, However, Paid Full Fees. Although a majority of Chapter 710 extension students received discounts, more than one-quarter (53 students over the two terms) paid the full fees ranging from \$338 for a 1.5-unit course to \$900 for a four-unit

course. These students either did not apply for or did not qualify for discounts or scholarships. Students typically pay for such costs from personal or family savings, current earnings from employment, borrowing, or a combination of these sources.

Need for Chapter 710 Extension Courses Diminished After Two Terms. Following summer 2014, CCC received enrollment growth funding

Figure 6**LBCC Chapter 710 Extension Program Funding Summary**

	Winter 2014	Summer 2014
Revenues		
Fees paid by students ^a	\$27,495	\$29,550
Fees paid from LBCC Foundation	31,193	9,363
Total Revenues	\$58,688	\$38,913
Expenses		
Operating expenses	\$28,052	\$25,545
Surplus	\$30,636	\$13,368

^a After discounts totaling \$17,849 in winter 2014 and \$9,695 in summer 2014.

LBCC = Long Beach City College.

from the state that allowed colleges, including LBCC, to better meet enrollment demand. As a

result, LBCC has offered no additional Chapter 710 extension terms.

LAO ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION

Because only LBCC participated in the intersession extension pilot—and the college participated for just two intersessions—our review is based on very limited data. We assessed, in effect, a single-campus case study rather than a multicampus pilot as envisioned in the legislation. Nevertheless, based on our findings to date, we can make a number of observations.

Implementation Met Requirements of Chapter 710. As regards compliance, we find that LBCC fully met Chapter 710's administrative and programmatic requirements. Specifically, the college met the criteria for participation in the pilot, offered high-demand courses, recovered program costs through fees and nonstate funds, provided substantial financial aid to a majority of participating students, and submitted required reports.

Chapter 710 Extension Program Furthered Key Legislative Policy Objectives. In addition to complying with Chapter 710's requirements, LBCC's extension program adhered to the broader goals of the legislation. Specifically, LBCC provided additional opportunities for students to access high-demand courses in a difficult fiscal environment, thereby increasing nearly 200 students' ability to achieve their educational goals in a more timely manner—a primary objective of Chapter 710. To the extent students enrolling in intersession extension courses otherwise would have enrolled in the same courses during a primary term, the pilot also freed up *taxpayer-supported* enrollment slots for other students in courses that were oversubscribed. Moreover, in offering its

Chapter 710 extension courses, the college appears to have addressed the Legislature's major concerns about access and affordability, as discussed more below.

Program Did Not Appear to Disadvantage Underserved Groups. As shown in the previous section, the demographic differences between the students enrolling in LBCC's Chapter 710 extension courses and those enrolling in taxpayer-supported courses were relatively minor—with the possible exception of EOPS participants and students with disabilities, whose numbers in the pilot were too small to evaluate. Moreover, the high proportion of financially needy students participating in Chapter 710 extension courses—a proportion that generally mirrors the share of financially needy students at the college overall—suggests that the college's financial aid policies reduced enrollment barriers for low-income students. As a result, the program did not appear to disproportionately benefit students who could afford to pay the full fee.

Intersession Extension Programs Could Mitigate Effects of Future Budget Shortfalls. LBCC's Chapter 710 pilot suggests that a fully fee-supported intersession extension program can be a viable, albeit relatively limited-scale, option for colleges seeking to expand student access to high-priority courses when state enrollment funding falls short of demand. Moreover, LBCC's Chapter 710 pilot suggests that with adequate safeguards in place, an extension program can provide this access without adversely affecting taxpayer-supported course offerings or low-income and other historically underserved students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend Extending Authority to Offer Fully Fee-Supported Intersession Extension Programs. Based on the encouraging results of LBCC's pilot, we recommend the Legislature amend Chapter 710 to (1) extend the legislation's January 1, 2018 sunset date to January 1, 2028; (2) permit any community college that meets specified criteria to offer fully fee-supported intersession extension programs, with adequate notification to the Legislature; and (3) codify the legislation's equity-focused requirements regarding disadvantaged students. Below, we discuss each of these recommendations.

Extend Sunset Date. We recommend extending the program's sunset date to January 1, 2028 (ten years beyond Chapter 710's current sunset date). Given economic cycles, the state is likely to experience additional periods of unmet enrollment demand during this period. Accordingly, the Legislature likely would have the opportunity to evaluate implementation at additional colleges before deciding whether to reauthorize the program beyond 2028. Moreover, the prospect of continued legislative review in advance of a new sunset date would further encourage careful implementation at colleges.

Permit Any Community College to Offer

Chapter 710 Intersession Extension Programs.

We recommend the Legislature expand beyond the six colleges currently specified in the legislation and open the Chapter 710 extension program to any community college. Given that CCC funding is based primarily on enrollment in taxpayer-supported courses—and students do not want to pay more for courses than they have to—colleges already have a strong incentive to offer extension courses only in areas with excess demand. To further ensure that extension course offerings align

with state priorities, we recommend maintaining Chapter 710's requirements regarding participating colleges and course offerings. Specifically, we recommend the Legislature continue to require that colleges (1) offer extension programs only if they served at least the number of students for which they were funded in the prior two years, and had no declines in enrollment during that time; (2) do not supplant taxpayer-supported courses with extension courses; and (3) offer only high-priority courses leading to basic skills proficiency, certificates, degrees, or transfer preparation in their intersession extension programs. We also recommend the Legislature require that colleges implementing an intersession extension program for the first time notify the Legislature and Governor at least 90 days before students register for extension courses. Taken together, these statutory requirements would help ensure that colleges use the intersession extension authority as the Legislature intended, while giving the Legislature an opportunity to review new extension programs.

Strengthen Chapter 710's Equity-Focused Requirements for Participating Colleges.

Chapter 710 includes uncodified legislative intent language encouraging colleges to keep records on their intersession extension programs measuring student participation, demographics, and outcomes. Colleges are to compare these data to data on students enrolled in the primary terms and take affirmative steps to increase participation of low-income and minority students if the review shows significant disparities in access to extension courses. We recommend the Legislature codify this requirement. Similarly, we recommend keeping Chapter 710's requirement that colleges make every effort to encourage broad participation in extension

programs, such as by supporting access for financially needy students and providing students with information about financial aid programs.

Other Alternatives for Expanding Access

During Budget Shortfalls. In addition to extending the sunset date for Chapter 710 and expanding the program's scope, the Legislature has other options to maintain students' access to courses during periods of budget reductions. For example, it could revisit the current CCC fee policy, which charges nonneedy students the lowest community college fees in the nation. As we have described in previous publications (see, for example, our *2011-12 Analysis of the Governor's Budget*), maintaining very low fees is an inefficient strategy for preserving affordability. While needy students already are shielded from fees through the Board of Governors fee waiver program, low fees deliver high subsidies

to nonneedy students—most of whom are eligible for substantial, if not full, reimbursement from the federal government through education tax credit programs. To increase the overall level of resources for the system, the Legislature could increase enrollment fees for nonneedy students in taxpayer-supported courses, while maintaining the Board of Governors fee waiver program. Alternatively, the Legislature could adopt a different fee model, such as a sliding scale based on income or financial need. Another option during budget downturns would be to raise the threshold to qualify for a Board of Governors fee waiver, thereby reducing the number of students receiving fee waivers. By limiting waivers to students with the greatest need, colleges potentially could collect more fee revenue to support access.

CONCLUSION

The results of LBCC's implementation of Chapter 710 are encouraging. The college expanded access to high-demand, high-priority courses during two intersessions and provided robust financial aid to eligible students. As a result, nearly 200 students—who generally mirror the broader LBCC student population—were able to accelerate progress toward meeting their educational goals at no additional cost to the state. LBCC's experience

suggests that extension programs could somewhat improve course access at other colleges during tight budget years while addressing concerns about equitable access and affordability. We believe that, with the modifications described above, expanded authority for colleges to offer intersession extension programs could serve as one viable means for colleges to maintain or expand access without additional state funding.

LAO Publications

This brief was prepared by Judy Heiman and reviewed by Paul Steenhausen. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) is a nonpartisan office that provides fiscal and policy information and advice to the Legislature.

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