



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

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Foster Youth and Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students Are Primary Beneficiaries of Governor's Approval of Two Community College Sponsored Bills

Sacramento, CA – The California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott today announced Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law two high priority bills sponsored by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors that increase college access for recently emancipated foster youth and deaf and hearing impaired students.

Assembly Bill 386 authored Ira Ruskin (D- Redwood City), makes California the first state in the nation to require text book publishers and/or copyright holders to provide captioned audiovisual materials for deaf and hearing impaired college students. The new law also establishes a process that grants permission to colleges and universities to caption audio visual materials, if the publisher or copyright holder cannot provide the captioning in a timely manner and establishes numerous copyright protections. Current state and federal equal access laws require publishers to provide instructional materials in Braille, but they are not required to provide captioned materials for audio visual works. This new law provides colleges the copyright protection they need to meet state and federal equal access laws for students with disabilities.

AB 422 (Steinberg) was signed by the governor in 1999 and required publishers of instructional materials in California to provide electronic versions of printed materials for use by students with disabilities at public colleges and universities. It also stated that non-printed instructional materials would be subject to the same conditions. However, AB 422 did not specify captioning or other alternations were mandatory for audiovisual works to make these materials accessible to deaf or hearing impaired students.

There are 4,100 deaf or hearing impaired students enrolled at a California community college. The academic success of these students is dependent on the college's ability to prepare instructional materials in a format they can use.

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office worked closely with advocates from within the disabled student community and representatives from the publishing industry to develop legislation that will serve as a national model for other states struggling to meet the needs of deaf and hearing impaired college students while not violating copyright laws.

“California is a leader in developing digital and audio visual works that are now increasingly a part of the college classroom experience,” said Chancellor Scott. “I’m pleased the governor, the higher education community and the publishing industry joined together to ensure that our deaf and hearing impaired students will have full access to these new and innovative course materials.”

“The enactment of this bill will benefit students with disabilities in California colleges and universities, and will continue the tradition of California leading the way in equal access for students with disabilities,” said Scott Hamilton, President of the California Association for Postsecondary Education and Disability.

Assembly Bill 669 authored by Paul Fong (D- Sunnyvale), permits the California Community Colleges, the University of California and the California State University to classify a recently emancipated foster student as an in-state resident for purposes of establishing student fees until the student establishes his or her own residency after one-year and one day. Currently, a recently emancipated foster youth would have had to establish residency based on their biological parents’ residency, which often poses a major obstacle. This new law will make a simple, but significant change to help former foster youth pursue their college education without facing the sticker shock of paying significantly higher out-of-state fees.

More than 6,000 students attending a California community college were self-identified as foster youth in 2007/08. As nonresidents, foster youth are not eligible for Board of Governor’s Fee Waivers or Cal Grants. In state fees are set at \$26 per credit unit, yet non-resident fees cost \$190 per credit unit. The lack of financial support made it virtually impossible for out of state foster youth to obtain a community college education. AB 669 will provide greater access to higher education for foster youth by entitling all current or former wards of the state to resident tuition and fees.

“It is critically important that California foster youth are provided access to a higher education, irrespective of whether their biological parents are living outside of the state,” said Chancellor Jack Scott. “It is important to realize that by the time a ward of the state actually makes the decision to enroll in a community college, he or she is fairly committed to the belief that higher education will serve as a lifeline for themselves and for future generations.”

Assemblyman Fong also received support from the California Association of Community College Registrars and Admissions Officers. “I am pleased to learn that the Governor has signed AB 669,” said Alicia Terry, Admissions Director at MiraCosta College and president of the association. “By linking a student’s residency to participation in the California child welfare system rather than an often-absent parent, these at-risk youth will have a smoother transition into higher education and thus a better chance at succeeding. It is both a practical and logical change in law will make a big difference for our former foster students.”

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