Online Community College Proposal

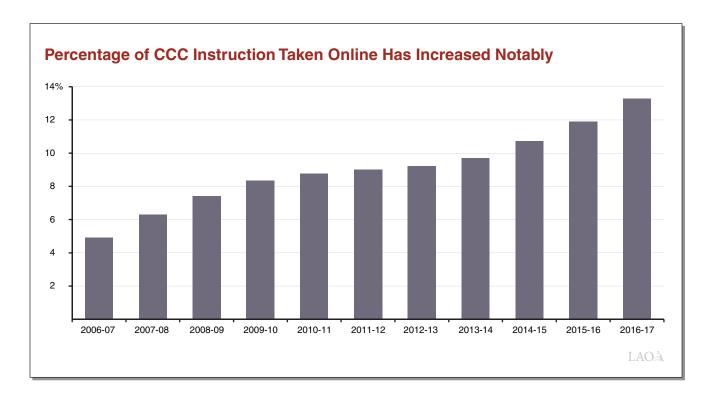**L E G I S L A T I V E   A N A L Y S T ' S   O F F I C E**

Presented to:
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Education Finance
Hon. Kevin McCarty, Chair

Background

☑ **Community Colleges Systemwide Provide 13 Percent of Instruction Online**

Percentage of CCC Instruction Taken Online Has Increased Notably

- Although some colleges run fully online degree or certificate programs (48 colleges report offering at least one fully online program), community college students typically take the bulk of their courses in person and a minority of courses online.

☑ **Decisions Regarding Online Course Offerings Are Made by Districts**

- Online offerings vary by district, with some districts offering only a few online courses and 12 districts reporting more than 20 percent of their instruction is online.

Background

☑ **Online Education Initiative (OEI) Launched in 2013 to Enhance Online Instruction**

- Makes a common course management system available to all community colleges. This allows faculty to post information about a course and allows students to submit assignments, take tests, and participate in online discussions.

- Provides training and resources for faculty interested in developing online courses and online tutoring for students.

- Runs a course exchange, which creates a more streamlined process for students at participating colleges to take online classes from other participating colleges. Currently six colleges participate in the course exchange.

☑ **To Date, Notable Shortcomings With Systemwide Efforts to Increase Online Offerings**

- Enrolling in online courses outside of home district is difficult. Students must apply separately for admission to each college and register for each class separately.

- Campuses are reluctant to participate in course exchange. One of the main reasons appears to be concern with losing enrollment funding to other campuses in the exchange.

- Because decisions are made by individual districts, no systemwide coordination of course offerings exists.

Governor's Proposal

☑ **Creates New Online Community College Within California Community College (CCC) System**

- Initially to be run by CCC Board of Governors. By July 2025, would have its own board consisting of five voting members (three appointed by the Governor, two appointed by the Legislature) and two non-voting members (appointed by the Governor).

☑ **Provides $100 Million for Startup Costs and $20 Million for Ongoing Operations**

- Also would receive apportionment funding similar to other community college districts.

☑ **Initial Program Offerings Would Target Working Adults, Focus on Short-Term Pathways**

- Over the next three years, the college would be required to develop at least three short-term program pathways linked with industry needs.

- College is intended to focus on developing programs that reduce student cost and time-to-completion. To that end, the college would use existing industry certifications, competency-based learning, and prior learning assessments.

☑ **Proposal Sets Several Milestones and Reporting Requirements for College**

- Must begin enrolling students by the last quarter of 2019, with at least 13 program pathways designed and validated by July 1, 2023.

- Must develop an accreditation plan by July 1, 2020.

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Governor's Proposal *(Continued)*

☑ **College Exempt From Some Requirements**

- Initially exempt from collective bargaining requirements, with no specific deadline for when exemption would end.

- Flexibility with regard to setting its academic calendar.

- Can establish an alternative student fee structure, such as a subscription-based fee model.

Assessment

☑ **Governor's Proposed Solution Not Tied to Root Issues**

- The administration does not identify specific root causes responsible for low educational attainment among some groups. As a result, it is unclear if an online college would address these root issues.

- The administration also has not provided evidence that working adults who are interested in more education cannot access it through existing online or in-person community college programs.

☑ **Unclear How Statewide Industry Partnerships Would Be Developed**

- Proposal lacks detail regarding how the new college will develop statewide industry partnerships. This is especially problematic given the regional nature of many industries. Without partnerships in all areas of the state, students may not have access to hands-on experiences critical to program completion.

☑ **Creating New College Has Significant Drawbacks Compared to Working Within Existing System**

- Compared to making changes within the existing CCC system, creating a new college requires greater upfront spending and takes longer for programs to get started.

- By starting a new college, initial programs also would not be accredited. Students enrolled in the college's programs prior to accreditation would be unable to receive federal financial aid and would not be able to transfer credits to other colleges.

Issues for Consideration

☑ **Elements of Proposal Could Have Benefits for Some Students**

- Greater access to online education potentially could speed up students' time to graduation and reduce total cost of attendance. Also, by aggregating geographically separated students into online courses, programs could run more efficiently.

- Creating competency-based programs and recognizing prior learning also could help students complete programs more quickly with a lower cost of attendance.

☑ **Explore Changes to Make Systemwide Improvements**

- These changes would be based on root problems. For example, the Legislature could encourage competency-based education by modifying the existing apportionment funding model.

☑ **No Urgency if Interested in Creating an Online Community College**

- We encourage the Legislature to gather more information about what underlying problems exist, what are the root causes of those problems, how a new online college could be designed to respond to those issues, how a new college could be funded and held accountable for meeting its objectives, and how a new college could be more cost-effective than other feasible alternatives.