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April 8, 2019

The Honorable Henry Stern
California State Capitol
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: SB462 (Stern) Community colleges: Forestland Restoration Workforce Program
(as of 02/21/19)

Position: Oppose unless amended

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) is writing to express its reluctant opposition to SB462 unless the bill is amended to address specific concerns. SB462 would require the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, working in collaboration with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, to establish a model curriculum for a forestland restoration workforce program that could be offered at campuses of the California Community Colleges.

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recognizes that many of our communities have suffered devastating losses due to the wildfires that have plagued our state over the last several years, and we express sincere empathy for the victims and our admiration to Senator Stern for his efforts to identify an amelioration plan for California. We also appreciate that SB462 recognizes the role of the Academic Senate in the development of model curriculum.

However, we are concerned that curriculum, particularly curriculum for career technical fields, should be inherently driven by local economies and workforce needs expressed by employers of the region. Much of the curriculum that may be suited for career education needs must also align with potential transfer programs in environmental studies, forestry, ecology, biology, and earth sciences. Programs such as Feather River College's forestry tech, which is housed in their environmental studies department, as well as associate degree programs in fire technology, such as the one at Moorpark College, already exist in the state to train future workers in these areas. In fact, 60 California community colleges currently offer active Fire Technology programs.

The possible curricular content identified in the bill can vary widely, depending on whether it is intended to be appropriate for noncredit community education services, for career technical education associate degrees, or for transfer programs that actually specialize at the upper division or graduate level. Each college and the community it serves must be allowed to assess local needs, including individualized instruction, employment potential at the associate degree level, and the transfer opportunities at surrounding universities.

The curriculum process required by statute and regulation requires the review and updating of career education curriculum every two years to ensure programs remain relevant to industry standards and current in the use of technology required for employability. The ASCCC is very concerned that by writing elements of curriculum into statute as mandated by SB462, the ability of colleges to adapt to industry expectations and the needs of individual communities or regions will be hindered. The ASCCC and all faculty teaching in systems of higher education emphatically maintain that curricular

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design is and should be the responsibility and purview of faculty who are experts in their specific disciplines.

The ASCCC would be willing and happy to bring related discipline faculty together through the Course Identification Numbering System, C-ID, to dialog about curriculum for fire and forestry technology and about what commonality exists. We hesitate to ensure any specific pre-determined outcome to that curricular dialog, such as a model curriculum that could be used to develop certificates or degrees as expressed in SB462, given the variance of community needs across the state. As such, we request that the author consider the following amendment:

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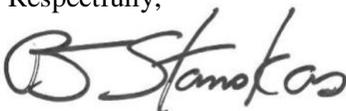
(a) The chancellor's office, working in collaboration with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, shall ~~establish a~~ investigate the potential for model curriculum for a forestland restoration workforce program that could be offered at campuses of the California Community Colleges. This program shall provide may include professional training in implementing prescribed fire projects, including using the tools and operating the equipment necessary for broad scale surface and ladder fuel treatments within the wildland-urban interface and wildlands where appropriate. Students shall learn to operate forest landscape restoration machinery, to work with tools such as chainsaws, pole saws, chippers, smaller biomass masticators, and small wood processors, and shall learn relevant forestland practices with a particular focus on the economics and operations of small-medium scale restoration businesses in California. The workforce program shall also train students in the retrofitting of houses with materials approved by the California State Fire Marshal, and with implementation of community defense techniques approved by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

(b) The model curriculum established under this section shall include guidelines for the presentation of a forestland restoration workforce course at community college campuses that opt to offer this course. These guidelines shall include, but not be limited to, recommendations for appropriate instructional materials and supplies and the qualifications to be required of course instructors. The chancellor's office shall distribute the model curriculum to community college districts no later than January 1, 2021, with the goal of enabling interested community college districts to offer the course to students beginning with the 2021-22 academic year.

(c) Certified graduates of the forestland restoration workforce course shall be eligible to matriculate into the prescribed fire teams of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection or into work with other compatible state and federal forest restoration efforts and related apprenticeship programs.

If the author may be amenable to this suggested revision, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges would gladly remove its opposition to SB462. Until such an amendment is accepted, we must reluctantly maintain our position of **oppose unless amended**. The insertion of curriculum into statute does not appropriately address the very laudable goals of the author, goals which we appreciate and share. If the mandate of specific curricular details and outcomes were removed, we would willingly pledge our assistance in implementing the bill. We would also welcome the opportunity to engage in further dialog with the author regarding the wording of the SB462. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,



John Stankas, President

Cc: Ian Johnson, Principal Consultant, Senate Education Committee
Laura Metune, Vice Chancellor of Governmental Relations
Olgalilia Ramirez, Consultant, Senate Education Committee

