COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Legislation for class enrollment limits introduced

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APTOS — Access to a community college education may narrow this year as legislation from the state community college chancellor’s office limiting class repeatability takes effect.

The Student Success Act, regulations designed to move students through the community college system faster, introduces new programs and rules this year. Starting this fall, students will be limited to enrolling for a class three times. Also, once students receive a grade in class, they won’t be able to repeat it.

The majority of community college students don’t transfer to a four-year college within six years, so there is some legitimacy to the new rules, said Michael Mangin, president of Cabrillo College’s Faculty Senate.

However, lifelong learners, especially in the arts, will be effectively cut out of the student population due to these limits, Mangin said.

More than 50 students, faculty and counselors gathered Tuesday night at Cabrillo College’s Sesnon House to speak about what seems to be a shifting mission in public higher education.

Lifelong learners, or people who perhaps have their degree and want to enrich their lives with continued classes, were an original part of the 1960 master plan for community colleges, Mangin said.

“In Sacramento, they think that’s (lifelong learners) the part we can cut, but they forget that those are the people who pay taxes and want to take classes at their community college, what’s wrong with that,” said John Govsky, Cabrillo College vice president of the faculty union.

Sarah Albertson, Cabrillo College theater arts program chair, said the college is obligated to maintain open access for lifelong learners.

Lifelong learners were a part of the college’s mission when the county voted for bonds to build the $20 million Visual, Applied and Performing Arts complex on campus, she said.

Joseph Carter, an English instructor at Cabrillo, said the new limits stand to disenfranchise large numbers of students. However, parts of the Student Success Act, such as increased emphasis on student orientation and educational planning, will help the college gain ground in matriculation rates, he said.

“Cabrillo realizes that the state-mandated repeatability legislation makes it difficult for lifelong learners to repeat courses, and in response to that, in early December, Cabrillo College will be hosting community forums to inform community members about that legislation as well as to further explore ideas around programs at Cabrillo designed specifically for lifelong learners,” said Cabrillo College President Laurel Jones.

The forums will be held at 5 p.m. Dec. 3 at the Aptos campus, and 5 p.m. Dec. 11 at the Solaris Green Technology Center on the Watsonville campus.

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