COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Cabrillo students, faculty protest new repeatability regulations

Rules would limit access for arts students

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APTOS » Cabrillo College students and faculty seeing the ripple effects of new state regulations limiting class repeatability are starting to take action.

Since Fall 2013, students are given three chances to pass a class, and once successful, they can no longer repeat. Now, courses are grouped into disciplines such as theater production, and students are limited to four courses per discipline.

The regulations most severely impact arts students, who will have difficulty preparing a portfolio or audition to transfer, said Maya Bendotoff, director of Cabrillo College Federation of Teachers, a union.

“The maximum we’re allowing is the minimum required to transfer to a state university,” Bendotoff said. “If someone’s really good they can do the minimum, but someone else who needs more performance time, practice and repetition will no longer be able to take the number of classes.”

Bendotoff was one of dozens who spoke at Thursday’s forum protesting the regulations, hosted by the teacher’s union, attended by about 65 students and faculty.

According to a survey by the Arts Council of Santa Cruz County, art nonprofits and audiences spent $38.4 million in 2012, said Michelle Williams, the council’s executive director.

“When we invest in our arts, we’re not just investing in our souls,” said Williams. “We’re investing in a cornerstone of our economy.”

What drove the regulations, said Debora Bone, president of Cabrillo’s teacher’s union, was the state’s narrowing definition of community college education to teaching basic skills.

“Broad participation has always been a goal of the community college system and it feels like we’re having to remind the legislature and the governing board,” Bone said.

Cabrillo student Jessamine DeLancey has taken three dance classes and said her favorite part is participating in professional productions each semester. A 2008 UCSC graduate, DeLancey works for Fitness For Life, a Pajaro Valley after-school dance program.

“Education trickles down,” DeLancey said. “The more I have access to and the more enrichment I get, the more my students get.”

Max Lopez, Cabrillo journalism student and former Sentinel intern, said he can only take the course to write for the student newspaper once. To continue writing for the paper, he said he’ll need to take independent study and special projects courses, which he can also only take once.

He said he understands the need to streamline pathways to careers, but there’s no one-size-fits-all education.

“I think we need to focus on getting students through, but with the skills necessary to be competent.”

Ed Rhinegold, who retired from technical writing in 2012 with dreams of a career in fiction writing, said he no longer can re-take the writing classes he needs to become proficient.

“All that’s left for students like me is to game the system,” said Rhinegold. “The restrictive policy cheats students from becoming proficient in their craft and eventually earning a living, especially in the arts.”