April 14, 2015

The Honorable Jose Medina, Chair
Assembly Higher Education Committee
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: AB 770 (Irwin), as of 4/06/15
Position: Support if amended

Dear Assemblymember Medina:

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges wishes to express our conditional support for AB 770 (Irwin, as of April 6, 2015), which would establish a financial grant and professional development funding program directed toward expanding the use of evidence-based models of academic assessment, placement, remediation, and student support.

The Academic Senate has long supported many of the concepts promoted by this bill, including innovation in basic skills, use of multiple measures in assessment, and provision for increased support services for students needing remediation. We welcome funding for professional development in these areas. We also appreciate the flexible language in the bill, which would allow colleges to develop the programs and resources most appropriate for their student populations.

Our primary concern stems from the fact that grant application and approval processes are very inconsistent across our colleges. While the bill as currently written might serve some of our institutions perfectly well, in other cases colleges would be inclined to apply for these grants without first consulting the faculty who would be primarily responsible for implementing the projects and programs developed through the grant. Matters concerning assessment and placement, remediation and instruction, and student support services fall directly under the purview of academic senates according to Title 5 §53200. Consultation with faculty regarding the creation and implementation of such programs is therefore crucial.

We request that AB 770 be amended to require agreement with the local academic senate of a college applying for the grant as an aspect of the grant application. We believe that this amendment would in no way alter the intent of the bill but would ensure collegial consultation on a local level before a college commits itself to application for the grant.
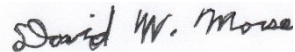
In addition, we wish to express our willingness to work with Assemblymember Irwin in the development of future versions of this bill. Because the practices that the bill seeks to promote are a primary focus of the work of the Academic Senate for

California Community Colleges and fall directly under our purview, we would be able to provide a faculty voice and assist in further developing the bill language in ways that best serve students.

For these reasons, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges supports Assembly Bill 770 (Irwin) as amended April 6, 2015, if the bill is further amended to require consultation with the local academic senate as an aspect of the grant application process. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

David W. Morse
President, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

pc: Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin
     Members, Assembly Higher Education Committee