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Action

Legislative Committee

Legislative Proposals

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents legislative proposals for the 2020 legislative year for Commission consideration.

Recommended Action: That the Commission approve the legislative proposals presented in this agenda item for Commission sponsorship and direct staff to seek authors for the proposals.

Presenter: Sasha Horwitz, Manager, Government Relations & Public Affairs, Administrative Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

III. Communication and Engagement

- e) Advise the Governor, Legislature, and other policy makers regarding issues affecting the quality, preparation, certification, and discipline of the education workforce.

Legislative Proposals

Subject Matter Competence – Coursework and Mix-and-Match Options

Proposal

This proposal would give teaching credential candidates additional options for demonstrating that they meet the statutory subject matter competency requirement for the credential they are seeking.

Current Law

Candidates in California are required to demonstrate competency in the subject matter they will be authorized by their credential to teach. This is known as the “subject matter competency requirement.” Candidates can fulfill this requirement by completing the applicable California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET) or by completing a subject matter program in the content area of the credential offered by a Commission-approved subject matter preparation program.

Proposed Changes

Establishing additional options and clarifying how subject matter competency can be met will provide more flexibility and encourage a greater number of individuals to consider teaching as a career while still maintaining a high threshold for admittance. More specifically, this statutory change would allow for the possibility of coursework options that are equivalent to the CSETs to be completed in the content field of the intended credential to meet the applicable Subject Matter Requirements (SMRs). Within this option, candidates would be permitted to use undergraduate or graduate coursework, completed as part of a major at a regionally-accredited institution of higher education, to demonstrate competency aligned with existing SMRs. The Commission-approved teacher preparation program would be responsible, working with the arts and sciences faculty as needed, to review and affirm that the prospective teacher has completed coursework that addresses the domains of the SMRs.

In addition to the coursework option for SMRs, the Commission proposes statutory changes that would allow for candidates to meet the applicable SMRs through a combination of coursework, passage of the appropriate CSETs and/or completion of all or a portion of a subject matter preparation program. This mix and match option would provide greater flexibility than current law which only allows a candidate to meet the SMRs by passing a full CSET *or* taking a subject matter preparation program. Candidates could complete and pass a portion of the applicable CSET and address that which they did not complete in exam form through coursework completion. This option could also be flexible in that candidates whose regionally-accredited institutional coursework did not address all of the applicable SMRs could be permitted to combine that certified coursework with passing the applicable CSET subtest(s) that addressed the missing SMR content.

Statutory changes included in this proposal would reflect the Commission’s direction to provide additional options for candidates to meet the subject matter requirement that would provide equitable opportunities for all candidates. Developing multiple pathways for prospective teachers to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities, including passage of the CSET, coursework options that are equivalent to CSET, or through a subject matter preparation program will likely help to address teacher shortages.

If the proposed statutory changes were adopted into law, the Commission would work with stakeholders, preparation programs and subject matter experts to develop regulations clarifying the process for each of the approved SMR pathways.

Reason/Need for Proposal

The Legislature has not allowed completion of a degree major, in and of itself, to satisfy the subject matter requirement because the degree often does not indicate the candidate’s coursework has addressed the breadth of the SMRs. By certifying that the candidate’s coursework addresses the domains of the SMRs, this option broadens access for candidates who may have completed a degree major with appropriate coursework rather than a Commission-approved subject matter preparation program. Further, the option of allowing candidates and programs to combine subject matter program coursework with applicable subtest(s) of the CSET subject matter examination would provide flexibility to both programs and candidates, particularly in rural or other areas of the state without access to the desired subject matter program.

Results of Administrative Avenues, if Any, Attempted to Resolve the Problem

This issue is statutory and cannot be resolved through administrative action. However, if statutory changes are made, corresponding regulatory changes will be required.

Consequence if Law is Not Changed

None

Potential Education Code Section(s) Affected

EC §§44310 and 44280

Cost Analysis

Potential decrease in the amount of examination fee revenue collected by the Commission because both the degree option and the mix and match coursework/examination option could reduce the total number of CSET examinations taken by credential candidates to meet the statutory subject matter competency requirement.

Possible Support and/or Opposition

Support

CTA, ACSA

Opposition

None identified at this time

Minor/Technical Change Proposal(s)

If the Commission chooses to move forward with the following proposals, staff will work to include them in an Education Committee omnibus bill. Omnibus bills are authored by a legislative Committee and contain various uncontroversial policy changes to multiple sections of education code.

Outdated Code Clean-Up

Proposal

This proposal would delete several outdated code sections that have no bearing on current policy. The code sections are:

- EC §44259.3 - Required the Commission to review multiple subject credential requirements and suggest revisions to legislature by January 2001.
- EC §44259.5(h) and (i) - Required the Commission to provide reports to legislature related to teacher preparation in July 2001 and July 2002.
- EC §44238 - Required the Commission to issue a study into cultural competency training for teachers. Completed in 2005.

Preaccreditation

Proposal

This proposal would clarify that the Commission has statutory authority to establish regulations recognizing that a degree conferred by an institution of higher education (IHE) in preaccreditation status is valid once the IHE and program of study successfully complete the accreditation process.

Current Law

A credential candidate must complete a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution of postsecondary education. Because the accreditation process takes several years, a degree conferred before accreditation is complete is not recognized as valid.

Reason/Need for Proposal

Credentialing candidates whose baccalaureate or higher degrees were conferred by institutions in preaccreditation status cannot be recognized as valid. While the legislative intent is to exclude students with degrees from unaccredited institutions, existing language also excludes those whose institutions are in the process of being accredited, even when the process is successful. Existing laws prevent otherwise qualified candidates from earning a credential based on the timing of the accreditation process, rather than the quality of the degree granting institution.

As a result, every such candidate must petition the Commission for a waiver, which delays the credentialing process and adds to the administrative burden on the Commission.

Results of Administrative Avenues, if Any, Attempted to Resolve the Problem

The Office of Administrative Law informed the Commission that efforts to address this issue through regulations would be denied as there is no recognized statutory authority to change regulations.

Consequence if Law is Not Changed

Candidates who complete a baccalaureate degree from a preaccredited institution will not be able to receive a credential without individually petitioning the Commission for a waiver.

Potential Education Code Section(s) Affected

EC §§44203 and 44259; Title 5 §80457

Cost Analysis

Potential cost savings from reduced staff time needed to review waiver applications.

Possible Support and/or Opposition

Support

None identified at this time

Opposition

None identified at this time

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the legislative proposals presented in this agenda item for Commission sponsorship and direct staff to seek authors for the proposals.