

# **STUDENT FEE HANDBOOK**



**Legal Affairs  
Chancellor's Office  
California Community Colleges  
Sacramento, California**

# **STUDENT FEE HANDBOOK**

(A summary of advice regarding community college student fees  
reflecting the status of the law as of June 1, 2012)

**CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES  
CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

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**STUDENT FEE HANDBOOK**  
**(A summary of advice regarding community college student fees**  
**reflecting the status of the law as of June 1, 2012)<sup>1</sup>**

**Chapter 1**

**BASIC LAW ON STUDENT FEES**

Express statutory authority is required to charge any mandatory student fee; optional student fees or charges may, under certain circumstances, be charged under the authority of the “permissive code” as set forth in section 70902(a) of the Education Code.

Under current law it is well settled that a student may only be **required** to pay a fee if a **statute requires it** (such as the enrollment fee), or if a **statute specifically authorizes a district to require it** (such as the health fee). In either instance, a student cannot be required to pay a fee in the absence of express legislative authority (see the following opinions of the California Attorney General: 60 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 353 (1977), and 61 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 75 (1978)). The Board of Governors has underscored this policy through the adoption of a minimum condition regulation (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 51012) that provides that a district may only establish such mandatory student fees as it is expressly authorized by law to establish.

The statutes establishing many of the mandatory fees provide for exemptions which must be granted to qualifying students. Districts lack the authority to charge mandatory fees to those students who are entitled to an exemption.

If a fee must be paid as a condition of admission to a college; or as a condition of registration, enrollment, or entry into classes; or as a condition to completing the required classroom objectives of a course, or of access to critical functions of the college

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<sup>1</sup> This Handbook represents the analysis of the State Chancellor's Office regarding the proper application of fees for community college students. This Handbook is in the nature of advice and includes no mandates. It does, however, interpret existing mandates affecting the imposition of student fees. Any district applying this advice may reasonably assume that the Chancellor's Office will not take legal enforcement action against it in the area of student fees.

Questions regarding financial aid procedures should be directed to Ronda Mohr [rmohr@cccco.edu](mailto:rmohr@cccco.edu), or Tim Bonnel, Student Financial Assistance Programs Coordinator, [tbonnel@cccco.edu](mailto:tbonnel@cccco.edu). Questions regarding nonresident tuition and treatment of fee revenue should be directed to Michael Yarber at [myarber@cccco.edu](mailto:myarber@cccco.edu). Other questions should be directed to Jonathan Lee at [legalaffairs@cccco.edu](mailto:legalaffairs@cccco.edu).

Because this material is lengthy and complex, we used underlining to indicate changes in the law, our interpretation of the law, or items that our reviews suggest should be emphasized. Material in boldface is pre-existing information, which we believe deserves particular emphasis.

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(such as financial aid), the fee is mandatory (required) in nature. As noted above, mandatory fees must either be required or authorized by law.

On the other hand, if the fee is for materials, services, or privileges that will assist a student, but is not otherwise required for registration, enrollment, entry into class, or completion of the required classroom objectives of a course, the fee can be classified as optional in nature. Under the authority of the permissive code, a district may charge a fee that is optional in nature, provided that the fee is not in conflict or inconsistent with existing law, and is not inconsistent with the purposes for which community college districts are established. Examples of optional fees are parking fees (which are also authorized in section 76360 of the Education Code), fees for a student body card, or a student activities fee.

The optional nature of a fee should be made clear to students. Only if students understand that the fee is truly optional can they make an informed decision about paying it. In addition, the processes by which students may claim exemptions from paying a mandatory fee or may decline to pay an optional fee should not be unduly burdensome to students.

If a fee is required for registration, enrollment, entry into class, or completion of the required classroom objectives of a course, it can be classified as a “course fee.” If a fee is for materials, services, or privileges which will assist a student, but is not otherwise required for completion of the required classroom objectives of a course, it can be classified as a “service fee.” Under this classification structure, specific legislative authority is always required to charge any course fee. A variety of service fees are specifically authorized by statute. In addition, service fees meeting the test of the permissive code may be charged under the authority of that provision.

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#### COURSE FEES

Specific statutory authority is required to charge any fee that is required for registration, enrollment, entry into class, or completion of the required objectives of a course. This chapter addresses fees that are specifically authorized by statute.

**2.1. Enrollment Fee.** The basic enrollment fee is required pursuant to Education Code section 76300. The Board of Governors has adopted regulations to implement the enrollment fee. The regulations appear as sections 58500-58509 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. The Board's regulations on enrollment fee waivers are set forth at title 5, sections 58600 et seq.

Education Code section 76300 sets an enrollment fee of \$346 per unit per semester, effective for the Summer~~Fall~~ 2012-13 term.

Unless expressly exempted, or entitled to a waiver, all students enrolling for college credit must pay the enrollment fee. Under title 5, section 58502, students must be charged the enrollment fee at the time of enrollment, but section 58502 also allows districts to defer collection of the enrollment fee.

Where a district permits deferral, a student who registers in advance may be dropped from a course if he or she does not pay the required enrollment fees prior to the beginning of instruction. However, in Legal Opinion O 04-14, we held that a district which defers payment of enrollment fees may not allow a student to enroll and then involuntarily drop him or her from classes after instruction has begun for failure to pay the enrollment fees. In that instance, the unpaid fees become a debt owed the district by the student and the district may rely on the remedies available under title 5, section 59410 to encourage payment of such a debt.

Although districts may defer the payment of enrollment fees, they are not authorized to implement deferral processes that could allow students to avoid payment altogether. For example, districts are not permitted to defer the payment of enrollment fees until such time as a student requests a copy of his/her transcript because the student may never make such a request. Districts that defer the payment of fees for extended periods may expose themselves to a claim that they are not charging enrollment fees as required by statute. Districts that fail to collect the enrollment fee are subject to a potential reduction of their apportionment of up to 10 percent. (Ed. Code § 76300(d).)

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In Legal Opinion O 93-03, we noted that a deferral policy could “provide for collection of the enrollment fee over the course of the semester or quarter (or perhaps even the academic year) for which it is charged.” Because apportionment is based on a fiscal year, and the reduction of apportionment is the remedy for failing to collect the fee, we believe that districts may, but are not required to, defer the payment of enrollment fees until the end of the fiscal year in which the debt occurred. Thus, a student who enrolled in either a fall or spring term could, at most, defer the payment of enrollment fees until the end of the corresponding fiscal year. If the student fails to fully pay the enrollment fee debt by the time set forth by the district, and no later than the end of the applicable fiscal year, that district can and should prohibit the student from enrolling in subsequent terms. A district that prohibits the enrollment of students who have not paid previously deferred enrollment fees would be able to demonstrate that it took reasonable steps to collect enrollment fees in accordance with section 76300.

Enrollment fees are to be waived through the Board Financial Assistance Program for students who meet income standards established under regulations of the Board of Governors, those who demonstrate financial need in accordance with the methodology set forth in federal financial aid regulations, and those who, at the time of enrollment, are recipients of benefits under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program, the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Program, or a general assistance program.

Generally, students must demonstrate eligibility for these Board of Governors Enrollment Fee waivers at the time of enrollment, but the Chancellor's Office takes the position that districts have the discretion to refund enrollment fees if a student later shows that he or she actually qualified for the waiver at the time of enrollment and applied for the waiver within the academic year for which the refund is sought.

Enrollment fees must also be waived for the following:

1. Dependents of certain deceased or disabled veterans and California National Guard members, and recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor or certain children of recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor upon certification of fee waiver eligibility by the California Department of Veterans Affairs or the National Guard Adjutant General. (Ed. Code, § 66025.3, and See 4.8, below.)
2. The surviving spouse or the child, natural or adopted, of a deceased person who met all the requirements of Education Code section 68120 regarding active law enforcement service or active fire suppression and prevention. (Ed. Code, §§ 68120 and 76300(i).)
3. The dependent of any individual killed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon building in



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Washington, DC, or the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 in southwestern Pennsylvania, if he or she meets the financial need requirements for the Cal Grant A Program pursuant to Education Code section 69432.7 and either the dependent was a resident of California on September 11, 2001, or the individual killed in the attacks was a resident of California on September 11, 2001. The enrollment fee waiver continues until January 1, 2013, for a surviving spouse, and for a surviving child, the waiver continues until the person reaches the age of 30. (Ed. Code, §§ 68121 and 76300(j)-(l).)

4. K-12 students admitted as special full-time or part-time students pursuant to Education Code section 76001 who are enrolled for college credit in community college courses are subject to the enrollment fee. However, section 76300(f) permits the district governing board to exempt special part-time students (but not special full-time students) from paying the fee. Special part-time students are those that enroll in up to, and including, 11 units per semester, or the equivalent thereof, at the community college. There is nothing that would preclude a K-12 student who is subject to the enrollment fee from applying for a Board of Governors Waiver. Therefore, a district that chooses to exempt only those special part-time students who do not otherwise qualify for a Board of Governors Waiver would be acting consistent with section 76300(f). Special full-time or part-time students enrolled in college courses only for high school credit are not subject to the enrollment fee, and no waiver or exemption is necessary.

5. Students enrolled in specified credit contract education courses are exempted from the enrollment fee if the entire cost of the course, including administrative costs, is paid by the public or private agency, corporation, or association with which the district is contracting, and if these students are not included in the calculation of the FTES of that district.

Districts have no authority to charge more than the pro-rated per unit fee when they offer classes for less than a full credit. Thus, a district may not offer a class for a fractional unit and then “round up” the enrollment fee to the next nearest dollar amount if such action would exceed the maximum fee allowed for a single credit unit. For example, with the current fee of \$246 per unit, a district awarding 0.4 units for a course would have to charge a student \$180.40 and could not round the charge up to \$149.

Districts may not charge a higher enrollment fee than is authorized by the Legislature, even if students do not object. In certain high demand fields, some students might be able and willing to pay for the full cost of instruction, but districts have no authority to charge or collect fees in excess of the statutorily authorized level.

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Additionally, a district may not charge interest on deferred enrollment fees. Interest is not based on the cost of providing a service, and thus cannot be regarded as the charging of an optional service fee. The charging of interest on unpaid enrollment fees is viewed as adding to the debt a student incurs when the district permits the student to defer payment of his or her enrollment fees. As a result, allowing a district to charge interest on deferred student fees would effectively permit charging some students a higher enrollment fee than others and higher than that permitted by law. (See Legal Opinion L 07-06.)

It is a fundamental rule in the community college system that districts may not charge student fees without express statutory authority. Charging students who are willing and able to pay at a rate higher than the authorized enrollment fee would violate this fundamental rule. Districts are also prohibited from contracting with third parties through contract education arrangements where the contractor pays the district for the instruction and then charges fees to members of the public who attend the classes. That is, districts cannot indirectly charge unauthorized fees when they cannot charge those fees directly. (See Legal Opinion O 06-08.)

The principle of not exceeding the authorized enrollment fee also comes into play when a fee increase is anticipated but has not yet been finalized. We have held that districts may not **require** students to pay an increased enrollment fee prior to legislative action, even if it is very likely that a fee increase will be mandated. However, districts are not precluded from asking students if they wish to **voluntarily** pay the increased fee in anticipation of the fee increase. Allowing students to pay the higher fee in advance gives students the chance to avoid a supplemental payment process which would be required if the law does change and students are then required to pay the difference in fees.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Districts that do allow students to pay anticipated fee increases on an optional basis should do all of the following:

- a. provide students a clear explanation of the circumstances related to the expected fee increase;
- b. clearly and unambiguously tell students that they may elect to pay the higher fee which the State is reasonably expected to impose when they initially register or to pay the current legally authorized amount when they register and defer payment of the remainder until after the law is changed;
- c. tell students that if they elect to pay the higher amount, any fees in excess of the amount legally authorized for the instruction provided will be refunded to them as expeditiously as possible, without any refund penalty, if the legislation does not take effect;
- d. refrain from asking students eligible for a Board of Governors fee waiver or who are otherwise exempt from the enrollment fee to pay higher fees; and

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Districts are generally not authorized to charge a lower enrollment fee than is required by statute. However, because Education Code section 76300(f) allows districts to exempt special part-time students admitted pursuant to section 76001 from the enrollment fee altogether, districts may also charge a lower enrollment fee to this category of students. Districts should be careful to treat this category of students uniformly; districts should not exempt some students in this category from all or part of the fee and require the full fee from other special part-time students.

**2.2. Noncredit Courses.** While the law appears to authorize fees for certain noncredit courses, districts actually have very little authority in this area. Education Code section 76385 authorizes governing boards to require students to pay a fee for noncredit courses that are not eligible for state apportionment. Noncredit courses that are eligible for state apportionment are listed in section 84757 of the Education Code. Before charging a fee for a noncredit course that is not eligible for state apportionment, a district should ensure that the fee is not expressly prohibited by section 76380 of the Education Code. Section 76380 prohibits fees for adults enrolled in English and citizenship for foreigners, a class in an elementary subject, a class designated by the governing board as a class for which high school credit is granted (when the person taking the class does not have a high school diploma), and any class offered pursuant to sections 8531, 8532, 8533, and 8534 of the Education Code. Because almost all noncredit courses are offered pursuant to one of the above provisions, districts have very little authority to charge fees for noncredit courses. (See Legal Opinion E 03-26.)

Finally, it should also be noted that the fact that a district is “over cap” and is not receiving apportionment for some courses it offers, does not enable the district to use the authority of section 76385 to charge students a fee for those courses.

**2.3. Community Service Classes.** Education Code section 78300 authorizes districts to charge students taking community service classes a fee not to exceed the cost of maintaining community service classes. Section 78300 lists areas appropriate for community service classes: civic, vocational, literacy, health, homemaking, technical and general education, including but not limited to, classes in the fields of visual and performing arts, handicraft, science, literature, nature study, nature contacting, aquatic sports and athletics. Community service classes are intended to be self-supporting, and districts are prohibited from using state General Fund money to establish and maintain such classes. However, districts may spend district general fund money to establish and maintain community services classes, or may provide instruction for remuneration by

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e. avoid taking any action to disadvantaged students who choose not to pay the higher fees in advance.

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contract or with contributions or donations from individuals or groups. Districts may also use a combination of these options to fund the classes.

A number of questions have arisen about the authority of districts to convert noncredit and/or credit offerings to community service classes. This practice is not prohibited by statute; however, it is not possible to award community college credit for taking such community service classes. To allow credit to be awarded within fee-based community service classes would be inconsistent with the enrollment fee statute. On the other hand, in Legal Opinion O 94-25 we concluded that a community college district may convert a noncredit course to a community service class unless the class is a direct and integral part of the credit program (e.g., the class is required as a prerequisite for a credit course).

**2.4. Fee to Audit Courses.** Education Code section 76370 authorizes districts to charge students who audit courses a fee not to exceed \$15 per unit per semester. Students auditing courses are prohibited from changing their enrollment to credit status, and the attendance of auditors is not included for purposes of state apportionment.

Please note that students enrolled for credit in ten or more semester units may audit an additional three or fewer units without paying this fee. There is no authority for districts that establish this fee to allow any other type of waiver.

There is no authority for districts to create alternate options that allow students to participate in a credit course without seeking credit and then impose a fee higher than the audit fee.

**2.5. Instructional Materials.** Education Code section 76365 allows districts to require students to provide various types of instructional materials and enables districts to sell such materials to students who wish to purchase the required materials from the district. Generally speaking, there are strict limitations on charging a required “instructional materials fee.”

Section 76365 has been implemented by regulations of the Board of Governors found in sections 59400-59408 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. The law provides that students can only be required to provide materials which are of continuing value to the student outside of the classroom setting. The Chancellor's Office has determined that such materials include, but are not limited to, textbooks, tools, equipment, clothing, and those materials which are necessary for a student's vocational training and employment. The regulations were amended in 2012 to eliminate the requirement that instructional materials must be tangible. This allows districts greater flexibility to require students to provide electronic and on-line instructional materials through use of a license or access fee. However, the regulations establish protections to protect students from inappropriate materials and fees. First, required instructional materials shall not

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include materials used or designed primarily for administrative purposes, class management, course management, or supervision. Some on-line or electronic instructional materials offer marginal assistance or benefits to the instructor or the district. Such assistance or benefits would not disqualify the product from being a valid instructional material provided the primary purpose of the instructional material is for instructional purposes. Second, the regulations ensure that materials provided through a license or access fee shall be available to students for up to two years, satisfying the requirement that instructional materials must have continuing value outside the classroom setting. Students have the option of paying a lower price for a shorter access period. These title 5 sections specifically apply to both credit and noncredit courses, and the requirements would apply to credit and noncredit courses offered through a contract education mechanism. (See Legal Opinion E 03-25.)

“Required instructional materials” are materials which the student must procure or possess as a condition of registration, enrollment, or entry into a class; or any material which is necessary to achieve the required objectives of a course.

Finally, the regulations specify that the material must not be solely or exclusively available from the district. A material will not be considered to be solely or exclusively available from the district if it is provided to the student at the district's actual cost, or there are health and safety reasons for the district being the provider, or if the district is providing the material cheaper than it is available elsewhere.

It is important to remember that these regulations only apply to materials that are required as a condition of registration, enrollment, etc. If a material is helpful to students, but is not required, then it may be sold to students under the authority of the permissive code. Material that is optional need not be personal property; it need not be of continuing value outside the classroom setting; and it can be available exclusively from the district so long as it is not needed by the student to achieve the required objectives of the course or as a condition of enrollment. Questions have arisen about the propriety of charging an instructional materials fee to students who audit courses. As a practical matter, an auditing student might not participate in a course in the same way as a regular student, but may be more of an observer. In that case, the instructional materials would not be necessary to achieve the objectives of the course. Auditing students should be advised that they must provide the required instructional materials if they wish to participate in that portion of a course for which the materials are required. Districts should not permit auditing students to use instructional materials paid for by students who are not auditing the class such that auditing students are effectively subsidized by regular students.

Education Code sections 81457 and 81458 authorize districts to sell to students those materials necessary for the making of articles by persons in the class. The materials are

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to be sold to the student at the cost to the district, and the article becomes the property of the student.

Please note that districts may not charge an across-the-board or per unit instructional materials fee (see Legal Opinion O 93-12). Where specific course objectives for independent study have not been finalized at the point students register for the course, instructional materials fees generally cannot be assessed at registration because fees must be directly related to course objectives. Students may only be required to pay for instructional materials under the circumstances described above.

The following questions should be answered any time a district wishes to require students to provide materials:

1. What personal property (material) does the student need? If a fee is charged, what does the student get for the fee?
2. How does this material relate to the required objectives of the course? The district should be able to identify a specific course objective that cannot be met but for the use of the materials at issue.
3. Does the material have continuing value outside the classroom?
4. Is the amount of materials the students must supply, or the amount that they receive in exchange for the fee that is charged, consistent with the amount of material necessary to meet the required objectives of the course?
5. If the district charges a fee rather than having students furnish the materials, why do the students have to pay a fee to the district rather than supply the materials themselves? Is the district the only source of the materials? If not, is there some health or safety reason for the district to supply the materials? If not, will the district supply the material more cheaply than the material can be obtained elsewhere AND at the district's actual cost?

Districts should periodically and systematically review the instructional materials they require students to provide, and the instructional materials fees they charge, to ensure that all the standards are met. A review of one college by the Chancellor's Office revealed fees collected from students in one small curricular area amounting to twice the college's actual costs. Such discrepancies may be attributable to fluctuating costs, but whatever the cause, they point to the need for on-going monitoring of required materials and materials fees. The 2012 amendment to the regulations specifically states that district policies and regulations concerning instructional materials "shall direct

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instructors to take reasonable steps to minimize the cost and ensure the necessity of instructional materials.”

Districts should carefully review the fees described in their catalogs, class schedules, and their websites to ensure that optional fees are clearly described as optional and cannot be mistaken for required charges. Students should be clearly advised when they have the option of providing their own materials or of purchasing those materials at the listed price from the district. When optional fees are not properly described, the appearance is that the district may be charging an impermissible mandatory fee.

When students have the option of providing necessary materials, districts should provide readily available information about what materials are required so that students can make an informed choice as to whether to provide their own materials or to purchase them from the district. Districts should establish a workable mechanism to notify students of the materials they must provide to ensure that students have a real opportunity to provide the materials themselves and are not forced to pay a fee to the district merely because they did not know what materials were needed.

Districts should also review their refund policies related to instructional materials fees. Students may have already paid instructional materials fees when they find they must withdraw from a class. Unless a district refunds an amount corresponding to the personal property that was not provided prior to an early withdrawal, or provides the material to the student, the appearance is that the district is retaining the fee as well as the materials for which the fee was paid.

Appendix A contains a detailed analysis of the kinds of materials that may and may not be required under the instructional materials regulations.

**2.6. Nonresident Tuition.** Section 76140 requires districts to charge a nonresident tuition fee in the event it chooses to admit nonresidents.<sup>3</sup> The statute provides various methods/options for computing the nonresident tuition fee.

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<sup>3</sup> For holders of a TN/TD visa created for business persons and professionals who are citizens of Canada and Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), in *Carlson v. Trustees* (1999) USDC Case No. 98-8152 R (Ex), the federal district court found that: 1) The holder of a TN/TD does not have the legal capacity to possess the requisite intent to establish domicile and thus cannot be granted residency status in California; and 2) NAFTA did not intend to allow individuals entering the U.S. under its provisions the ability to establish domicile in the U.S.A. Dismissing the plaintiff's case in its entirety, the court confirmed that opinion as a matter of law on May 24, 1999. Districts were notified shortly thereafter to follow the court's ruling in *Carlson* and deny California residency for purposes of tuition to students with NAFTA TN/TD visas as a matter of law. This ruling was later affirmed in *Carlson v. Reed* (2001) 249 F.3d 876 in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

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A special option exists for districts that are in close proximity to other states. Section 76140(h) provides that any district that has fewer than 1500 FTES and whose boundary is within 10 miles of another state that has an interstate attendance (“reciprocity”) agreement with California may exempt students from that state from paying nonresident tuition. Per section 76140(j), the attendance of such students may be claimed for apportionment, but if so, they must pay a fee of \$42 per unit two times the amount of the enrollment fee established for resident students pursuant to Education Code Section §76300. In August 2011, the Nevada Board of Regents notified our office that they were terminating all interstate attendance agreements with California. In the May 2012, Board of Governors meeting, an interstate agreement with Oregon was approved. Please refer to the agenda for that meeting for more information on this agreement. There is no state level agreement between California and Arizona because Arizona abolished its board and has no state level entity overseeing its community colleges. As a result of this pertinent law, Education Code section 66800 et seq. was changed in 2004 by AB 3063 to allow for districts to enter into local interstate attendance agreements with colleges in Arizona. Please refer to Education Code Section 66801(b) for additional guidance on direct district attendance agreements with Arizona colleges.

Section 76140(i) also provides that similarly situated districts that have more than 1,500, but less than 3,001, FTES may exempt no more than 100 FTES per year from any bordering state with which California has an interstate attendance agreement and claim the attendance of those students for state apportionment. Again, per section 76140(j), any students who are claimed for apportionment purposes must pay two times the amount of the enrollment fee established for residents pursuant to Education code §76300. This is operative through June 30, 2013 and as of January 1, 2014 is repealed. On July 1, 2013, any students who are claimed for apportionment purposes per this section must pay three times the amount of the enrollment fee established for resident students pursuant to Education code §76300. A district may, but is not required to, allow students beyond the 100 FTES limit to benefit from the interstate attendance agreement, but in no case may the district claim the attendance of those additional students for state apportionment purposes. If a district does decide to exempt students beyond the 100 FTES limit from the payment of nonresident tuition, we believe the district may, but is not required to, charge those students the lower \$42-fee established in section 76140(j).

The position of the Chancellor's Office is that the fee specified in section 76140(j) is intended to be a fee in lieu of the enrollment fee required by section 76300. Therefore, students charged this fee should not also be required to pay the enrollment fee.

Questions have been raised about charging tuition to students enrolled in distance education courses. At this time, the law does not exempt nonresident students enrolled in distance education courses from paying nonresident tuition. Students enrolled in



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distance education courses are subject to the same residency determination requirements and exemptions as traditional students. If a student enrolling in a distance education course is deemed to be a nonresident, that student is subject to nonresident tuition. This conclusion is discussed in detail in Legal Opinion L 01-19. Another important conclusion in Legal Opinion 01-19 is that the Legislature did not include an express exemption from nonresident tuition for nonresident students enrolled in contract education courses. Thus, community college districts must charge and report nonresident tuition for students enrolled in for-credit contract education courses that have been deemed to be a nonresident.

Per section 76140(a)(1), dDistricts are authorized (but not required) to exempt all nonresidents who take six or fewer units. Per section 76140(a)(2), dDistricts are also authorized to exempt, on an individual basis, and based on demonstrated financial need, nonresidents who are both citizens and residents of foreign countries. No more than 10 percent of nonresident foreign students attending the district may be so exempted. Nonresident students that are exempted under either of these provisions cannot be claimed for state apportionment purposes.

There is no authority to charge a higher nonresident tuition fee to nonresidents who are not citizens of the United States. If the proper procedures are followed and required exemptions are provided, districts may charge students who are citizens and residents of foreign countries capital outlay fees and/or application processing fees in addition to nonresident tuition. (Please see sections 3.9 and 3.10 below.) However, higher nonresident tuition is not authorized.

Districts are required to exempt from nonresident tuition various groups of students including:<sup>4</sup>

1. Students taking noncredit classes. (Ed. Code, § 76380.)
2. Apprentices taking classes of related and supplemental instruction. (Ed. Code, § 76350 and Lab. Code § 3074.)
3. Students who are members of the armed forces of the United States stationed or domiciled in this state on active duty, except those assigned to California for educational purposes. (Ed. Code, § 68075; see also Legal Opinion 10-05.)<sup>5</sup> ~~Education Code section 68075 was amended to extend to two academic years the period during which active duty military~~

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<sup>4</sup> The listing of exemptions is not intended to be comprehensive, and districts should ensure that their exemption processes include all those students who are entitled to an exemption or waiver.

<sup>5</sup> The Chancellor's Office has determined that service in the California National Guard does not constitute being a member of the armed forces of the United States for purposes of Education Code sections 68074 and 68075.

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~~graduate students would be entitled to resident classification for the purpose of determining the amount of tuition and fees. Effective with terms or sessions starting on or after January 1, 2013, please be aware of revisions to section 68075.5 concerning military member residency classification following discharge. Specifically, the revisions allow a veteran to be exempt from paying nonresident tuition for up to two years after discharge from a military installation in California, instead of just one, if that member files an affidavit with the community college stating that he or she intends to establish residency in California as soon as possible (AB 2478, Stats. 2012).~~

4. A student who is a natural or adopted child, stepchild, or spouse who is a dependent of a member of the armed forces of the United States stationed or domiciled in this state on active duty. (Ed. Code, § 68074; see also Legal Opinion 10-05.)

Districts should ensure that they are applying the continued exemption described above, and that they have revised their catalogs or other information to conform with the revised statute. Districts should ensure that their practices and materials are both consistent with the current requirements.

The language of Education Code sections 68074, ~~68075,~~ and 68075.5 grants resident classification for affected members of the armed forces of the United States and their dependents “only for the purpose of determining the amount of tuition and fees.” ~~The Chancellor's Office considers persons who are entitled to resident classification for nonresident tuition purposes under these sections to also be eligible for BOG fee waivers.~~ However, because the resident classification is expressly provided only for the purpose of determining the amount of tuition and fees, resident classification is not provided for other purposes, such as eligibility to serve as the student member of a board of trustees, which is reserved to California residents under Education Code section 72023.5(a).

5. A parent who is a federal civil service employee and his or her natural or adopted dependent children if the parent moved to California as a result of a military realignment action that involves the relocation of at least 100 employees. (Ed. Code, § 68084.)

6. Certain job transferees. (Ed. Code, § 76143.)

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7. Nonresident minor students taking a class for high school credit only.<sup>6</sup>
8. Students who attended high school in California for three or more years and graduated from a California high school or attained the equivalent thereof. In the case of a person without lawful immigration status, the student must file an affidavit with the institution of higher education stating that the student has filed an application to legalize his or her immigration status, or will file an application as soon as he or she is eligible to do so. (Ed. Code, § 68130.5.)

Nonimmigrant alien students, as defined by federal law, are not eligible for the exemption. The law was intended to enhance access to California's colleges and universities by providing a fair tuition policy for all high school students in California. Students who are exempt from the payment of nonresident tuition under Education Code section 68130.5 may be reported for apportionment purposes by community college districts.

The Chancellor's Office has issued guidelines for the implementation of section 68130.5. The guidelines address specific issues that may arise under the section and may be useful to districts in meeting their responsibilities. The guidelines are available under the Student Services and Special Programs portion of the Chancellor's Office website at <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/Legal/Advisories/A07-01%20AB540.pdf>.

The Board of Governors adopted regulations to implement section 68130.5, and those regulations appear in title 5 as sections 54045.5 and 58003.6.

9. A dependent of any individual killed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon building in Washington, DC, or the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 in southwestern Pennsylvania, if he or she meets the financial need requirements for the Cal Grant A Program pursuant to Education Code section 69432.7 and either the dependent was a resident of California on September 11, 2001, or the individual killed in the attacks was a resident of California on September 11, 2001. If the dependent is the spouse, the exemption applies until January 1, 2013. If the dependent is a child, the exemption applies until the person reaches the age of 30. (Ed. Code, §§ 68121 and 76300(j)-(l).)

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<sup>6</sup> When the minor takes a class for college credit, the nonresident fee should be charged.

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10. Students who audit a credit course. Nonresident tuition is charged based on the number of units of credit to be awarded for courses in which the student enrolls. A student who audits a course does not receive credit, so nonresident tuition does not apply.

~~11. For the 2005-2006 academic year, students who were enrolled in an accredited institution of higher education in Alabama, Louisiana or Mississippi and who could not continue as a direct consequence of Hurricane Katrina. (Ed. Code, § 76140(a)(3).)~~

Districts are also permitted, but not required, to exempt certain students from nonresident tuition. For example police academy trainees may be exempted under certain circumstances. (Ed. Code, § 76140.5.) In Legal Opinion L 89-36, we concluded that Education Code section 76140.5 could be construed to permit all types of nonresident peace officer trainees to be classified as residents. Districts should be familiar with all the available optional exemptions.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that students who are exempted from paying nonresident tuition are still required to pay the enrollment fee unless explicitly exempted from that fee. Students charged nonresident tuition are also subject to the enrollment fee.

Effective, January 1, 2010, Education Code 68085 was added to grant resident classification for a student who currently resides in California and is 19 years of age or under at the time of enrollment, who is currently a dependent or ward of the state through California's child welfare system, or was served by California's child welfare system and is no longer being served either due to emancipation or aging out of the system.

**2.7. Athletic Insurance.** Prior to January 1, 1991, Education Code section 76470 authorized districts to make medical or hospital service available through group, blanket, or individual policies to students of the district participating in athletic activities under the jurisdiction of the district. The cost of the insurance could be paid from district funds, by participating students, or by their parents or guardians. Effective January 1, 1991, section 76470 was repealed. The repealing legislation, however, explicitly stated that even though section 76470 was being repealed, districts continued to have all of the authority of that provision under the general authority of the permissive code (see also Stats. 1990, ch. 1372, § 1). It is the position of the Chancellor's Office that districts continue to have legal authority to require a student to pay a fee for insurance as a condition of enrollment or participation in an athletic program.

**2.8. Cross Enrollment.** The cross-enrollment program permits students who are enrolled at a community college, a campus of the California State University, or a campus of the

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University of California, under certain limited circumstances, to cross-enroll in one state-supported course per term at an institution from one of the other systems on a space-available basis at the discretion of the appropriate campus authorities on both campuses.<sup>7</sup> Such students do not need to go through the formal admissions process and are exempt from required fees, except that, effective January 1, 2004, the host campus may charge participating students an administrative fee, not to exceed an amount sufficient for the campus to recover the full amount of the administrative costs it incurs under the chapter. (Ed. Code, § 66753.)

A student is qualified to participate in the cross-enrollment program if he or she is enrolled in any campus of the California Community Colleges, the California State University, or the University of California and meets the following requirements specified in section 66752:

- a. The student has completed at least one term at the home campus as a matriculated student and is taking at least six units at the home campus during the current term;
- b. The student has attained a grade point average of 2.0 for work completed;
- c. The student has paid appropriate tuition or fees, or both, required by the home campus for the academic term in which the student seeks to cross-enroll; and
- d. The student has the appropriate academic preparation, as determined by the host campus, consistent with the standard applied to currently enrolled students, to enroll in the course in which the student seeks to enroll.

Students who are cross-enrolled from another segment are not required to participate in the community college matriculation program, but such students can be required to meet any course prerequisites or corequisites which have been properly established for the course.

The Chancellor's Office worked with representatives from the California State University and the University of California to establish guidelines for this program. The guidelines were issued in June of 1995 by the Intersegmental Coordinating Council.

**2.9. Nondistrict Physical Education Facilities.** Education Code section 76395 authorizes districts to impose a fee on participating students for the additional expenses incurred

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<sup>7</sup> The original "sunset" date of January 1, 2004, was deleted by Statutes of 2003, chapter 457 (AB 1783).

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when physical education courses are required to use nondistrict facilities such as bowling alleys and golf courses. Districts are not authorized to make a profit on this fee, and they should ensure that the fee charged to participating students does not exceed the charge to the district.

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#### FEES FOR SERVICES

Some fees for services are explicitly authorized by statute. Other fees for services may be charged under the authority of the permissive code so long as they are not required as a condition of registration, enrollment or completion of a course, or as a condition of access to functions of the college which are funded by the state (such as financial aid). In other words, the student can be required to pay for a service where the service is truly optional and is not tied to registration, course enrollment, or completion and where the service is not otherwise funded by the state.

In deciding whether to charge for a particular service, we recommend that districts balance the need to cover their operating costs with the reality that even modest additional fees may effectively restrict access for students who are least able to pay. The State has exempted students receiving public benefits and those who demonstrate financial need from many mandatory fees, and districts may wish to consider extending this policy to optional service fees.

Even where fees are authorized, any exemptions from the payment of the fees should be clearly communicated to the students. Similarly, optional fees should be clearly identified as optional.

A reasonable student reviewing district information or going through the registration or enrollment process should be able to understand that he or she may be eligible for an exemption from a particular fee or that a particular fee is optional. The mechanism for claiming an exemption or for declining to pay an optional fee should not be unduly burdensome to students.

**3.1. Health Fee.** Education Code section 76355 authorizes a community college district to charge a fee not to exceed \$10 per semester, up to \$7 for summer sessions or for intersessions of at least four weeks in length, or up to \$7 per quarter for health supervision and health services. The governing board of a district may increase the health fee by the same percentage increase as the Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Purchase of Goods and Services. Whenever the calculation produces an increase of \$1 above the existing fee, the fee may be increased by \$1.

Effective with the Summer Session of 2006, districts were authorized to raise the maximum health fees to \$15 per semester and \$12 per summer session or intersession of at least four weeks, or \$12 per quarter. The fee increase was based on calculations by the Department of Finance.

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Generally speaking, the fee may be charged to all students, whether or not they choose to use the health services. Districts may choose to charge or exempt noncredit students at their discretion. Part-time students may be exempted or required to pay a portion of the full fee. Section 76355 provides that if a district requires a fee, “the governing board of the district shall decide the amount of the fee, if any, that a part-time student is required to pay.” We believe this language indicates a legislative intent that governing boards need to specifically determine whether part-time students will be charged a health fee. Making a clear determination concerning part-time students demonstrates clear compliance with the statute and may insulate districts from potential claims from part-time students that health fees were collected from them without appropriate board approval.

Section 76355 also requires boards to adopt rules and regulations that exempt certain students from the payment of health fees. Under subsection (c), districts **must** exempt students who depend on prayer for healing, and students attending community college under an approved apprenticeship program. A 2005 amendment to section 76355 eliminated the requirement that low-income students (students eligible for a Board of Governors Enrollment Fee Waiver) be exempted from the health fee. Districts are now free to charge the health fee to low income students or to continue to exempt them if the district so chooses.<sup>8</sup> Districts should ensure that they have appropriate rules and regulations that recognize both of the applicable required exemptions. Districts should also ensure that the existence of the two statutory exemptions is communicated effectively to the students so that they will be aware of potential applicable exemptions.

Questions have arisen about the authority of districts to exempt additional categories of students such as special admit students and students taking only distance education courses. Because the language of the statute is permissive, designating additional categories of students as exempt from the health fee is not prohibited under section 76355 so long as the designation of additional categories does not otherwise violate nondiscrimination laws.

On the other side of the coin, we believe that the health fee may be charged to students who take only online classes or who attend classes at sites away from where the health services center is physically located. The health fee is not designated as a “use” fee, and it appears that so long as the statutory exemptions are offered to all affected students, the fact that their classes may not be physically proximate to a student health center does not remove the fee obligation. Additionally, even though students may take online classes or be enrolled in classes that are offered at sites away from the student health

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<sup>8</sup> However, districts which choose to continue exempting low-income students after the requirement to do so has been eliminated should be aware that this is likely to result in a reduction in the dollar amount recoverable from any mandate claim.



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center, that does not necessarily mean that such students will not travel to the health center or otherwise receive student health services.

The Chancellor's Office has been asked whether a district that has previously provided health services may terminate its health services program if it also stops charging students a health services fee. In Legal Opinion 06-06, we concluded that the maintenance of effort requirement contained in Education Code section 76355 applies to any district that provided health services in the 1986-87 fiscal year, and that it applies even if the district chooses not to charge the authorized health fee. Therefore, any district that provided health services in fiscal year 1986-87 must continue to offer those services, regardless of whether it charges the health fee.

Title 5, section 54708(g) allows for the salaries of student health personnel directly involved in the delivery of student services to be paid for with student fees. The delivery of student services may include any activity listed in title 5, section 54702.

When a student health program is supported by a general fee, the programs and services must be available to the general student body. In one case, it was determined that the health fee could be used to fund a mobility cart on campus that was primarily used by students utilizing DSPS services. The mobility cart was open for use to all members of the student body and was not restricted to DSPS students only.

Regulations that address accounting procedures for, and proper uses of, health fee funds appear in title 5, beginning with section 54700.

**3.2. Parking Fee.** Section 76360(a) authorizes districts to require students and employees to pay a fee of up to \$50 per semester (\$25 per intersession) for parking services.<sup>9</sup> “Parking services” means “the purchase, construction, and operation and maintenance of parking facilities.” (Ed. Code, § 76360(g).) For students who are ridesharing or carpooling, as defined, section 76360 reduces the maximum fee to \$35 per semester and \$15 per intersession. The governing board of each community college district annually may increase the parking and transportation service fee limits by the same percentage increase as the Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Purchases of Goods and Services published by the United States Department of Commerce.

Districts may charge a discounted parking fee to students who voluntarily purchase an Associated Student Body card, provided that students who do not choose to purchase the Associated Student Body card are not charged more than the statutory maximum specified in Education Code section 76360.

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<sup>9</sup> Title 5, section 54100 provides that districts may charge the regular parking fee to disabled students, but no additional fee may be imposed on students with disabilities for use of designated disabled parking.

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Districts may charge parking fees above these limits under specific circumstances as follows:

“(b) The governing board may require payment of a parking fee at a campus in excess of the limits set forth in subdivision (a) for the purpose of funding the construction of on-campus parking facilities if both of the following conditions exist at the campus:

(1) The full-time equivalent (FTES) per parking space on the campus exceeds the statewide average FTES per parking space on community college campuses.

(2) The market price per square foot of land adjacent to the campus exceeds the statewide average market price per square foot of land adjacent to community college campuses.

If the governing board requires payment of a parking fee in excess of the limits set forth in subdivision (a), the fee may not exceed the actual cost of constructing a parking structure.”

Under section 76360, low income students are exempt from parking fees over \$20 per semester. Low income students are described in section 76300(g) as those who demonstrate financial need under federal standards or income standards established by the Board of Governors and students receiving benefits under the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children), the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment Program, or a general assistance program. (See Legal Opinion L 94-12.)

Parking fees may not exceed the actual cost of providing parking and may only be charged to those who use the parking services. Parking fees may only be expended for parking services or for reducing costs to students and employees using public transportation to and from school. Finally, section 76360(d) allows governing boards to require persons other than students and employees to pay fees for using the parking services. (However, Ed. Code, § 67301(b) requires the Board of Governors to adopt regulations requiring the governing board of each community college district to provide visitor parking at each campus at no charge for disabled persons or veterans and for persons providing transportation services to individuals with disabilities. Regulations in conformance with this requirement are contained in the California Code of Regulations, title 5, § 59306(a).)

The Chancellor's Office has determined that while Education Code section 76360 provides that parking fees collected by a community college “shall be expended only for

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parking services . . . “the law does not assign any particular priority to the various types of parking service expenses. (Ed. Code, § 76360(e).) As such, districts may use their discretion when allocating parking fees for various parking services such as parking security, repair, and maintenance.

The Chancellor's Office has also determined that alternative authority to charge a fee for the use of a parking facility exists under limited circumstances. Where a parking facility was constructed with the proceeds from revenue bonds under Education Code section 81901, fees may be charged for the use of that facility without regard to section 76360. Section 81901 independently authorizes a charge for the use of such a facility.

**3.3. Transportation Fee.** Districts may require students and employees to pay a fee for the purpose of reducing fares for services provided to these students and employees by common carriers or municipally-owned transit systems, or to partially or fully recover transportation costs incurred by the district. Only those students and employees who use the transportation services may be required to pay the fees.

If the foregoing option is the basis for a transportation fee, students who take only online classes and do not use the services may not be charged a use fee.

However, in two situations, a district may charge transportation fees regardless of actual usage:

1. All students and employees at a campus may be required to pay a transportation fee if a majority of the students and a majority of the employees at that campus vote for such a proposition; or
2. All students at a campus may be required to pay a transportation fee if a majority of the students at that campus vote that all students will pay. In this instance, the employees are not entitled to use the services.

Elections may be held on a campus-by-campus basis. Fees authorized by election remain valid for “a period of time to be determined by the governing board of the district.” (Ed. Code, §§ 76361(b)(1) and 76361(b)(2).)

A review of the legislative history of section 76361 suggests that the phrase “a majority of all students/employees on a campus” means a majority of those students/employees voting in the election held for the purpose of authorizing the fee. If the transportation fee results from an election described above, students who take only online classes may be charged the fee, because the assessment does not depend on actual use of the services.

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The maximum amount of transportation fees may not exceed the amount needed to reimburse the district for transportation service. The combined amount of transportation fees under section 76361 and parking fees levied by a district under section 76360 may not exceed \$60 per semester or \$30 per intersession, or a proportionate equivalent for part-time students.

Low income students (as reasonably defined by a district) must be exempted only when a district is itself providing transportation services. There is no requirement for exempting low-income students where a district establishes a fee pursuant to section 76361 for the purpose of “reducing fares for services provided by common carriers or municipally owned transit systems.” (See Legal Opinion L 05-10.)

Education Code section 76361.1, initially applied to Los Rios Community College District and Rio Hondo Community College District. This section allowed these two districts to charge a fee to students or employees who use transportation services or to hold an election to determine who will be required to pay fees. Fees for part-time students must be prorated, and the affected governing boards may adopt rules and regulations to exempt low-income students from all or part of the fee. The statute also restricts contracting for transportation services that are funded with transportation fees without a student vote for the fee. AB 774 (Cook), effective January 1, 2010, amended Education Code section 76361.1 to allow all districts to implement this fee. The intent of this legislation was merely to expand the scope of usage for this fee, and does not change any requirements set forth in Education 76361 where there may be conflict in language.

Finally, the governing board may require payment of a fee, to be set by the governing board, for the use of transportation services by persons other than students and employees.

Additional authority for transportation fees is set forth in Education Code section 82305.6. This section provides that when the district provides for the transportation of students to and from the colleges, the governing board may require the “parents and guardians of all or some of the students transported, to pay a portion of the cost of such transportation. . . .” The amount charged can be no greater than that paid for transportation on a common carrier. Parents and guardians who are indigent are exempt, and no charge can be made for transporting students with disabilities.

It is the opinion of the Chancellor's Office that, under the authority of the permissive code, a district can provide for transportation of students to and from the colleges, and that students who wish to avail themselves of this district service can be required to pay a fee. As long as students are not required to take this transportation, but rather have it available as an option, this is a service that may be provided for a fee under the authority of the permissive code. This authority does not extend to “on-campus shuttles or other transportation services operated on a campus or between the campus and

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parking facilities owned by the district.” Education Code section 76361(g) expressly prohibits such fees.

**3.4. Student Representation Fee.** Education Code section 76060.5 provides that a mandatory student representation fee of \$1 per semester may be charged of all students, upon a favorable vote of two-thirds of students voting in an election on the matter (provided that the number of students who vote equals or exceeds the average of the number of students who voted in the previous three student body elections). Students may refuse to pay the fee for religious, political, financial, or moral reasons. Districts should ensure that students are advised of the options for not paying the fee, and should provide reasonable mechanisms for declining to pay. The statute has been implemented by regulations of the Board of Governors, set forth in title 5, sections 54801-54805.

In Legal Opinion L 98-09, we concluded that a newly formed student government organization cannot order an election for the purpose of having the student body vote to establish a student representation fee without having held three prior student body elections. In specifically requiring three previous student body elections prior to raising the student fee issue, the intent of the Legislature was to ensure meaningful participation in the student body election process. However, under certain circumstances, voting results from student body elections held under a previous and related student government structure may satisfy this requirement.

Although the language of section 76060.5 may be somewhat ambiguous, in our view, the statement that the fee shall be collected at or before registration does not require every student to pay the fee subject to a refund process. The section clearly allows students to “refuse to pay the student representation fee” if they assert any of the statutory bases for nonpayment (i.e., religious, political, financial, or moral reasons). We believe the language concerning collecting the fee at or before registration largely reflects a temporal consideration while the language regarding who must pay is fundamental to collection of the fee. Thus, we believe that students may refuse to pay the fee in the first place and should not be required to pay the fee and then secure a refund.

It is the opinion of the Chancellor's Office that revenues from the student representation fee can be used for any purpose related to representing the views of students with governmental bodies. Such revenue can be used to travel to and from conferences sponsored by student organizations where legislative matters will be discussed, to purchase computer equipment needed to conduct legislative research, to subscribe to legislative publications, and/or to pay for any other expense reasonably necessary to effectuate student representation activities. (See Legal Opinion O 95-24.)

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However, it is our view that revenues from the student representation fee may not, consistent with Education Code section 76060.5, be used to support or oppose ballot measures or candidates.

Section 76060.5 describes a fee for students enrolled in a college where a student body association has been established. If a district has multiple colleges and the same student attends more than one college in the district, that student may be responsible for a student representation fee at each college where a fee under section 76060.5 has been properly established.

**3.5. Student Center Fee.** Education Code section 76375 authorizes districts to establish an annual building and operating fee, for the purpose of financing, constructing, enlarging, remodeling, refurbishing, and operating a student body center. The fee may be required of all students attending the community college where the center is located. The fee can only be imposed if at least 20 percent of the students who were enrolled in credit classes as of October 1 of the school year during which the election is held actually vote, and only if at least two-thirds of the students voting in an election held for that purpose vote in favor of the fee. The fee cannot exceed \$1 per credit hour, up to a maximum of \$10 per student per fiscal year. Noncredit enrollees cannot be required to pay the fee, nor can recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, SSI/SSP, or general assistance. The Board of Governors has adopted section 58510 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations to implement this provision.<sup>10</sup>

The governing board needs to be involved at two stages of the process. Title 5, section 58510 requires the governing board to “establish procedures for an election conducted for the purpose of collecting a student body center building and operating fee, and call an election for such purpose.” At the conclusion of the election, “the fee shall be imposed by the governing board, at its option, only after a favorable vote of two-thirds of the students voting in an election held for that purpose . . . .” (Ed. Code, § 76375.) (See Legal Opinion L 03-27.) It is important to note that section 58510(d) requires that the ballot specify both the intended duration and the intended use of the fee. In Legal Opinion L 06-01, we determined that a student center fee established pursuant to an election could not be utilized to pay operating expenses where the ballot measure failed to specify the intended use. Districts are cautioned that collection of a student center fee imposed pursuant to an invalid election may require a refund of those fees.

Section 76375 describes fees for students attending the college where the student body center is to be located. If a district has multiple colleges and the same student attends

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<sup>10</sup> In Legal Opinion E 01-30, we confirmed that section 58510 of title 5 permits a district to hold an election for a student center fee over a period of several consecutive days, not to exceed a maximum of five days.

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more than one college in the district, that student may be responsible for fees at each college where a fee under section 76375 has been properly established.

When a student center is financed by the issuance of revenue bonds, a student **use** fee may be appropriate. See item 3.11 below for a summary of applicable requirements.

**3.6. Student Records Fee.** Education Code section 76223 authorizes districts to make a reasonable charge in an amount not to exceed the actual cost of furnishing copies of any student record, provided that no charge can be made for furnishing up to two transcripts or up to two verifications of various types of student records. Districts should have clear policies and practices that provide for two transcripts and two verifications free of charge. No charge may be made for the cost to search for or retrieve any student record. It should be noted that federal law and regulation prohibit the charging of fees for any documentation required for a student's receipt of Title IV student financial aid.

Flat fees for transcripts and verifications should be approached cautiously because districts must be able to demonstrate that the actual cost of providing transcripts and verifications exceeds the flat fee amount charged in every instance.

In Legal Opinion L 99-02 we concluded that while Education Code section 76223 does not allow a district to charge a fee for verifying enrollment status for purposes of determining eligibility for district programs and activities, the district may offer the student the right to purchase a card providing quick and convenient verification of enrollment, provided the purchase of such a card is completely optional. We also noted that a district may charge a fee for a student identification card that serves as a verification of enrollment when required by outside entities, provided the fee for the card is not a condition of enrollment, is only levied once the student has requested three or more enrollment verifications, and the price of the card does not exceed the cost of making two copies of a verification of enrollment documents the student would otherwise be required to obtain. (See also 4.4, Mandatory Student Identification Card Fees, below.)

Districts may offer expedited copying for an additional fee, when a student requests the transcript or enrollment verification copy without having to wait the usual waiting period. The expedited service fee is an optional fee so long as students are otherwise able to receive records without an enhanced charge for expedited service.

In Legal Opinion O 09-02, we determined that districts can charge a per-transcript fee for transcripts ordered through CCCTran, an electronic transcript system. Schools that choose to use the CCCTran service may also charge an expedited service fee for transcripts generated and transmitted electronically, if a student chooses to use this service over other nonexpedited transcript retrieval services. The current practices

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governing fees and standard transcript requests apply to electronic transcript requests as well.

**3.7. Dormitory Fee.** Education Code section 81670 authorizes districts to construct and maintain dormitories, and to fix the rates that will be charged to students for quarters in the dormitories.

**3.8. Child Care Fees.** Section 79121 et seq. and section 66060 authorize the operation of child development programs. Section 79121(c) requires fees for student families. Additionally, it is the opinion of the Chancellor's Office that districts have the authority to charge student parents a fee for child care services for their children in programs that are not specifically established as child development programs under sections 66060 and 79120 et seq. The fees are being charged to parents who voluntarily choose to use this service. However, a district cannot charge a student a fee other than the enrollment fee to enroll in child development classes.

**3.9. Foreign Citizen/Resident Capital Outlay Fee.** Education Code section 76141 authorizes community college districts to charge nonresident students who are both citizens and residents of a foreign country a capital outlay fee. The amount of the fee cannot exceed the amount that was expended for capital outlay in the preceding fiscal year divided by the total full-time equivalent students in the preceding fiscal year. Additionally, the fee cannot be more than 50 percent of the nonresident tuition fee charged under section 76140.

Governing boards of districts that choose to charge this fee must adopt a definition of "economic hardship" as defined in section 76141, and they must then exempt from payment of the fee each student who demonstrates either economic hardship or that he/she is a victim of persecution or discrimination in his/her home country.

In addition, the Chancellor's Office has concluded that students who are exempt from nonresident tuition fees under Education Code section 68130.5 cannot be charged the capital outlay fee. (See Legal Opinion M 04-15.)

In January 1, 2010, Education Code section 76141 was amended to authorize a community college district to charge the additional fee to any nonresident student. This was accomplished by deleting the condition that the nonresident had to be a citizen and resident of a foreign country. In Legal Opinion 09-05, we held that this amendment does not affect students who are exempt from nonresident fees under Education Code section 68130.5. These students still cannot be charged a capital outlay fee.

These mandatory exemptions should be clearly communicated to students.



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**3.10. Foreign Citizen/Resident Application Processing Fee.** Education Code section 76142 authorizes community college districts to charge nonresident applicants who are both citizens and residents of a foreign country a processing fee not to exceed the lesser of (1) the actual cost of processing an application and other documentation required by the federal government, or (2) \$100, which may be deducted from the tuition fee at the time of enrollment. No processing fee can be charged to an applicant who would be eligible for an exemption from nonresident tuition pursuant to Education Code section 76140, or who can demonstrate economic hardship (as defined by the district in accordance with certain parameters specified in section 76142).

**3.11. Use Fee for Facilities Financed by Revenue Bonds.** When the construction of a facility is financed by the issuance of revenue bonds, Education Code section 81901(b)(3) authorizes the governing board of a community college district to “fix rates, rents, or other charges for the *use* of any project acquired, constructed, equipped, furnished, operated, or maintained by the board, or for services rendered in connection therewith. . . .” In Legal Opinion L 97-17 we held that section 81901(b)(3) allows districts to charge students a fee for the use of such facilities. In particular, where a student center is constructed using revenue bonds, this allows the district to charge a fee that exceeds the maximum \$10 student center fee provided for in Education Code section 76375. However, Opinion L 97-17 also notes that section 81901(b)(3) authorizes a use fee, and thus does not authorize districts to charge a blanket fee to all students.

It would be justifiable for all students attending classes where the facility is located to be assessed a fee for use of such a facility. It would be reasonable to charge a use fee to students attending classes at other nearby locations, if those students occasionally come to the main campus to use the facility. However, in our view, it is not permissible to charge such use fees to students attending classes at remote locations, especially sites outside of the district, unless there is evidence that students in those classes use the facility on at least an occasional basis. One possible approach would be to give students attending classes at remote locations the option to decline to pay the fee, with the understanding that they then lose any right to use the facility.

Even when use fees are authorized by section 81901, the amount of the fees must fall within the parameters of Education Code section 81956. That section authorizes districts to charge rents, charges, and fees to cover annual operating and maintenance expenses, and to make bond payments. Fees that exceed the amount of these expenditures are not authorized. Districts that charge fees under these provisions should undertake an annual calculation of the fee necessary to cover annual costs, and charge use fees that are reasonably designed to raise that amount.

**3.12. Credit by Examination Fee.** Fees charged for credit by examination offered pursuant to title 5, section 55050 have been determined to be optional fees for service.

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A reasonable fee for credit by examination is the per unit enrollment fee established by Education Code section 76300.

Districts that incur additional verifiable expenses in connection with offering credit by examination may be able to demonstrate reasonable fees beyond the fee established by Education Code section 76300.

**3.13. Refund Processing Fee.** Section 58508 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations permits districts to retain a maximum \$10 from enrollment fees as a refund processing fee. Section 58508 is not general authority to retain portions of other mandatory fees or to charge a processing fee to refund other mandatory fees.

However, we believe that districts may charge a refund processing fee for optional fees that students voluntarily pay, if certain conditions are satisfied. Fees that are fully optional are those which a student may freely elect to pay or not pay; payment of the fee is not a condition of registration, enrollment, or attendance in any course; the choice not to pay the fee will not adversely affect the student in any essential district program or activity; and the fee is not charged in areas for which the district receives state funding. If the student chooses to pay the fee and then later withdraws or decides to discontinue use of the optional service, districts may charge a reasonable refund processing fee (that does not exceed the district's actual processing costs) if certain preconditions are met.

In particular, districts would have to advise students specifically, in writing and in advance of their payment of the optional fee, that if they choose to pay that optional fee and then seek a refund, a processing fee in a specified amount will be withheld. A statement to this effect would need to be clear and unambiguous so that students are fully informed when they are considering whether to pay an optional fee, that they will not be able to secure a full refund of that optional fee. If a district meets these conditions, it may then charge a reasonable processing fee to those students who choose to pay the optional fee and who then seek a refund or credit.

**3.14. Telephone/Internet Registration Fee.** Districts that provide the optional service of telephone or Internet registration may charge students who choose to use this service a nominal use fee under the authority of Education Code section 70902(a). However, students must be advised as to the amount of the telephone or internet registration fee in advance of registration and further advised that they may register in person (or by other applicable means) at no charge.

**3.15. Physical Fitness Test Fee.** Districts that offer optional physical fitness or wellness testing that may involve computerized analyses of various body conditions may charge a reasonable optional fee for the service.

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**3.16. Instructional Video Leases/Deposits.** Video tapes or DVDs provide instructional content for many programs. Charging a “leasing fee” or a “nonrefundable deposit” to students to allow them to take these videos home to view may be allowable depending on the circumstances. In general, students must be provided access to instruction without additional unauthorized charges beyond the enrollment fee. If all students have ample opportunities to access the instructional materials free of charge, an optional lease or deposit fee may be charged to students who want more convenience.

However, a key issue will be the nature of the free access. Thus, where 12 monitors were available in the library for viewing instructional tapes and 1187 students were enrolled in the class, there was no real opportunity for all the students to access the tapes free of charge. No optional leasing/deposit fee is appropriate under these circumstances.

By contrast, if a district shows instructional videos necessary for a class at numerous and varied times in a campus auditorium during each week of instruction such that all enrolled students have ample opportunities to access the instruction without charge, a district may charge a reasonable optional leasing/deposit fee to students who would prefer to take the video home for their viewing convenience.

**3.17. Credit Card Use or Noncash Fee.** Students should have a reasonable mechanism for paying their fees without incurring additional charges.

There is no statutory authority for a fee for using a credit card to pay student financial obligations. Students may be charged an optional service fee for the convenience of being able to use a credit card. However, students must always be given the option of paying by cash, check, or other means that do not involve paying the service charge. Additionally, students must be notified in advance what the fee will be and of the alternative free payment methods available to them.

Districts are encouraged to exercise caution in establishing credit card payment systems to avoid the proliferation of credit card debt by students. As educational options become more expensive for our students, more students will be unable to accumulate all the funds necessary at the beginning of a term to pay their full expenses and may be forced to use credit cards as a means of deferring some of the expense. Districts may wish to consider the deferral mechanism described in section 58502 of title 5. That section provides in pertinent part: “The district governing board may establish a policy authorizing the collection of the [enrollment] fee to be deferred under conditions determined by the governing board.” In establishing the conditions of a deferral process, districts are authorized to withhold grades, transcripts, diplomas and registration privileges from any student who fails to pay a proper financial obligation to the district. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 59410.) If a district permits deferral, a student who registers in advance may be dropped from a course if he or she does not pay the

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required enrollment fees **prior to the beginning of instruction**. However, a district which permits deferral **may not** allow a student to enroll and then involuntarily drop him or her from classes **after instruction has begun** for failure to pay the enrollment fees. (See Legal Opinion O 04-14.)

There is no authority for charging a fee to students who wish to participate in a process for deferring the payment of their enrollment fees. Such a fee would be a prohibited late payment fee. (See 4.16, below.) For a further discussion of deferring enrollment fees, see 2.1 above.

It has also been suggested that students may be charged a fee each time they make a payment to the district except when they pay by cash. That is, all credit card, check, money order, or other transactions would carry a fee. In order to justify this approach, a district would need to demonstrate that cash payments are truly a reasonable and viable free option. Districts might be able to do so by demonstrating that most students recently paid their fees with cash. Districts should also be able to demonstrate the ability to accommodate larger numbers of students paying fees in person because they are using cash. Absent such proof, it appears that cash payments do not provide a reasonable free option. Absent a reasonable free option, the proposed noncash fees would be improper. Districts might also consider any potential consequences, such as greater security issues, that might be associated with the increased use of cash.

**3.18. International Student Medical Insurance Fee.** To the extent that federal requirements mandate that international students have medical insurance, districts may offer students the option to demonstrate that they have their own appropriate insurance or may offer the student the option of paying for a medical plan provided through the district.

**3.19. Fees for Criminal Background Checks.** There is no statute or regulation authorizing a district to charge a fee to conduct a criminal background check on a student. Thus, as a general matter, a district may not impose a mandatory fee for this function. However, where a district has properly established a criminal background clearance as a prerequisite or enrollment limitation for enrollment in a clinical course, it may offer to process the request on the student's behalf in exchange for a fee to cover the costs it incurs. It is important to note that this approach is only permissible provided that the district allows a student to obtain his or her own criminal background clearance from other appropriate sources.<sup>11</sup> (See Advisory 05-02 for a detailed Q&A regarding criminal background clearances.)

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<sup>11</sup> Individuals are authorized to obtain their own criminal history information from the Department of Justice pursuant to Penal Code section 11105(b)(11) and Penal Code sections 11120 et seq.

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**3.20. Fees for Providing Special Certificates.** Students sometimes ask for special documentation to verify that they completed coursework. For example, students may request certificates to document to the California Board of Registered Nursing that they completed continuing education contact hours.

If a district offers special certificates or other verifications that contain specialized information that would not normally be included in standard district records (e.g., a registered nurse number or a printed statement that the certificate must be retained by the licensee for a period of years after the course ends), the district may charge an optional fee to cover the cost of producing the certificate.

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**PROHIBITED PRACTICES**

As noted at the outset of this Handbook, only fees that are specifically required or authorized by law may be imposed as mandatory fees. Under certain circumstances, districts may charge students optional fees. This chapter considers kinds of fees that may not be charged under current law.

**4.1. Late Application Fee.** There is no statutory authority for a late application fee, and the Chancellor's Office has determined that a late application fee cannot be charged under the authority of the permissive code.

**4.2. Add/Drop Fee.** Statutory authority for a fee for the cost of making program changes initiated by a student no longer exists, and the Chancellor's Office has determined that an add/drop fee cannot be charged under the authority of the permissive code.

**4.3. Mandatory Student Activities Fee.** There is no statutory authority for charging a mandatory student activities fee. However, an optional or voluntary student activities fee is permissible. It is imperative that the optional nature of the fee be communicated to students and that students have an effective means of declining to pay the fee.

Questions have been raised regarding the legality of the “negative check-off” approach to collecting a student activities fee. Under this approach the student, when registering or enrolling, is given the option of checking a box indicating that he or she does not choose to pay a student activities fee. If the student checks the box, he or she will not be charged the fee. If the student does not check the box, the fee will be assessed. Because this negative check-off approach preserves a student's option to pay or not pay the fee, it is both legal and appropriate. The test to be applied in implementing a negative check-off approach is that a reasonable student going through the enrollment process and reading the forms must understand that he or she has the option of paying or not paying the student activities fee.

Questions have also been raised about the legality of a system of student activity fee collection that requires the student to obtain a signature of a district official to waive the fee. Because the student's option to pay is preserved, the method is technically legal. However, because additional tasks are required of both the student and the district to process a student's desire to reject an optional fee, this method is fraught with potential problems. To implement a sign-off system, the district should take every precaution to ensure that officials authorized to sign off the fee for students are on-site and **easily accessible** during the registration period. The test to be applied here is whether opting not to pay the fee is unduly burdensome. For obvious reasons, mail, on-line, or telephone registration processes will require even more careful assessment.

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In Legal Opinion L 01-03, we assessed a telephone registration system that automatically calculates all mandatory and optional fees and then allows the student seven working days to pay the fees and secure waivers for optional fees they do not wish to pay. Although the Chancellor's Office does not recommend such a process, we analyzed whether the fee waiver process was unduly burdensome to the students. We concluded that requiring a student to secure and sign one form that was simple to complete to waive optional fees that are automatically assessed during phone registration was not unduly burdensome. Conversely, if students were required to secure and sign multiple forms from multiple sources, that process would be unduly burdensome and would be unacceptable.

**4.4. Mandatory Student Identification Card Fees.** In Legal Opinion L 97-11, we concluded that a district cannot charge a mandatory fee for a student identification card, even if the card also has other purposes, such as use as a debit card for purchase of instructional materials. Education Code section 76365, and the implementing regulations contained in title 5, section 59400 et seq., permit districts to require students to provide certain instructional materials at the students' own expense. However, Legal Opinion L 97-11 specifically concluded that student ID cards do not fall under the definition of "instructional materials" contained in title 5, section 59402(b), and thus, charging a fee for a student ID card cannot be justified. Similarly, because there is no statutory authority for such a fee, a district may not charge a fee to replace a student ID card that was initially issued at no charge. (See also 2.5, Instructional Materials, above.) Districts should review their practices regarding replacement ID cards to ensure that replacement cards do not carry a mandatory charge, regardless of the amount of times the card needs to be replaced. An expedited fee may be charged to students for the processing of cards on a "rush basis," however.

The prohibition to mandatory fees for student identification cards does not mean that a district cannot offer students the option to purchase such a card in order to obtain certain optional benefits such as faster registration, ease of purchasing at the bookstore, etc. We also find no reason to believe that a district may not provide students, at district expense, with a card which students are then required to use for certain identification purposes. In Legal Opinion L 99-02 we concluded that while Education Code section 76223 does not allow a district to charge a fee for verifying enrollment status for purposes of determining eligibility for district programs and activities, the district may offer the student the right to purchase a card allowing quick and convenient verification of enrollment, provided it is completely optional. We also noted that a district may charge a fee for a student identification card that serves as a verification of enrollment when required by outside entities, provided the fee for the card is not a condition of enrollment, is only levied after the student has requested three or more enrollment verifications, and the price of the card does not exceed the cost of making one copy of a

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verification of enrollment document the student would otherwise be required to obtain. (See also 3.6, Student Records Fee, above.)

Districts should ensure that all of their materials describing optional student ID card fees clearly describe the optional nature of the fees.

**4.5. Fees Charged Through Student Body Organizations.** Unless expressly authorized by statute, a student body organization cannot charge a fee that a district governing board does not have authority to levy. It should be noted, however, that student body organizations may charge students a student activity fee or sell them a student body card so long as the fee or charge is optional as discussed under 4.3, Mandatory Student Activities Fee, above.

**4.6. Nonresident Application Fee.** The Chancellor's Office has determined that a nonresident application fee cannot be imposed on residents of other states under the authority of the permissive code. Because payment of the fee would be a condition of enrollment in or attendance in classes, it cannot be imposed without specific legislative authorization. However, as discussed in 3.10 above, such a fee is authorized with respect to citizens and residents of foreign countries under Education Code section 76142. Districts should note that students exempt from nonresident tuition under AB 540 should not be charged a nonresident application fee pursuant to Education Code section 76142.

**4.7. Field Trips.** The provisions on field trips are found in sections 55220 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. We interpret section 55220(d) to prohibit districts from charging students a fee for planning and organizing a field trip, for participating in a field trip, and for the use of district equipment and supplies such as gasoline during the field trip. Section 55220 permits districts to charge students who participate in field trips for the costs of their meals, lodging, and other "incidental expenses." However, section 55220(d) provides that no student may be prevented from participating in a field trip due to lack of funds. Essentially, districts may not charge a mandatory fee for a field trip unless it exempts students who do not have sufficient funds to pay the fee. This means that students can be asked, but not forced, to pay the costs of their meals, lodging, and other incidental expenses associated with an instructionally related field trip. This is true for both optional and required field trips. Also, while a district is authorized to arrange a meals and lodging package, a student has the option of purchasing the district's package or securing his or her own meal and lodging accommodations. Similarly, as we held in Legal Opinion L 05-12, a district can charge an optional fee for transportation associated with a field trip, so long as the student has the option of paying the fee or securing his or her own transportation.

Questions have been raised regarding districts charging students "entrance fees" for field trips to concerts, museums, plays, etc. In Legal Opinion M 96-17 we held that



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entrance fees should be considered “incidental expenses” which students can be asked to pay. However, as with other types of field trips, a student cannot be excluded from the event due to lack of funds.

**4.8. Fees for Dependents of Certain Veterans.** Education Code section 66025.3 provides that community college districts are prohibited from charging “any mandatory systemwide tuition or fees, including enrollment fees, registration fees, differential fees, or incidental fees” to any of the following who are determined to be California residents:

1. Any dependent eligible to receive assistance under Article 2 (commencing with § 890) of chapter 4 of division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code.
2. Any child of any veteran of the United States military who has a service-connected disability, has been killed in service, or has died of a service-connected disability, where the Department of Veterans Affairs determines the child eligible on the basis that the annual income of the child, including the value of any support received from a parent, does not exceed the national poverty level for one person as most recently calculated by the Bureau of the Census of the United States Department of Commerce.
3. Any dependent, or surviving spouse who has not remarried, of any member of the California National Guard who, in the line of duty, and while in the active service of the state, was killed, died of a disability resulting from an event that occurred while in the active service of the state, or is permanently disabled as a result of an event that occurred while in the active service of the state.
4. Any undergraduate student who is a recipient of a Medal of Honor, commonly known as a Congressional Medal of Honor, or any student who is the child of a recipient of a Medal of Honor and who is under 27 years old, provided that his or her income, including parental support, does not exceed the national poverty level and the parental recipient of the Medal of Honor was a California resident at the time of his or her death.

Section 66025.3 (formerly § 32320) excludes a dependent of a veteran who is declared missing in action or a prisoner of war as provided in paragraph (4) of subdivision (a) of section 890 of the Military and Veterans Code. Thus, these students may continue to be charged such fees.

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A person who is eligible for the waiver of tuition or fees under these provisions may receive a waiver for each academic year during which he or she applies for that waiver, but an eligible person may not receive a waiver of tuition or fees for a prior academic year. The waiver of tuition and fees under section 66025.3 applies only to persons who are determined to be California residents.

Because the waiver applies to “any mandatory systemwide tuition or fees, including enrollment fees, registration fees, differential fees, or incidental fees,” the first step in applying this waiver is to exclude enrollment fees because they are explicitly covered. Nonresident tuition is not an issue because the waiver only applies to California residents who do not pay nonresident tuition in any case. Because the Legislature has authorized very few “mandatory” or “systemwide” fees for community college students, the application of this section is limited in the community college system. Certainly, the many optional fees that are authorized would not be covered. Should future fees be set by the Legislature, a review of whether those fees are “mandatory” and “systemwide” will be required.

**4.9. Fees for Required or Funded Services.** It is the opinion of the Chancellor's Office that community college districts may not charge students a fee for the use of a service that the district is required to provide by state law or that the district is already funded to provide. For example, in Legal Opinion L 95-23 we concluded that a district may not charge students a fee for counseling services that the district is required to provide under Education Code section 72620 or title 5, section 51018.

Services such as graduation evaluation and general education evaluation are often performed as a counseling function, and we have determined that charges may not be made for counseling services. The Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) evaluation is another example of an activity that districts are funded to perform and/or that is part of the counseling function. As such, fees for these services are not appropriate. Similarly, a district may not charge students an additional fee for use of health services which are already funded from student health fees collected pursuant to Education Code section 76355, or for the use of computers, computer maintenance or Internet service which were paid for by state funds which the district was either required or specifically permitted to use for these purposes.

Additionally, districts are required to graduate those students who meet applicable graduation standards, and they may not charge a graduation application fee as a condition to being able to graduate or a fee to petition for an earned degree. For the same reason, districts may not charge students for their diplomas, nor may districts charge students a mandatory fee for a diploma cover or require students to purchase a cover from the bookstore or elsewhere.

No authority exists for a general mandatory “student services fee.”

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There is no authority to charge a fee to students for assessment tests that are a part of the matriculation process. The matriculation allocation pays the colleges for their testing programs, so levying a charge for testing would be charging for a program that is already state supported. Similarly, it is impermissible to charge for assessments conducted as part of counseling services which are either funded through the matriculation program or required under title 5, section 51018.

A question has been raised as to whether districts may charge when students take assessment tests multiple times. If the tests are part of the matriculation or counseling programs, retesting does not change the fact that these programs are already funded or required by the state. If a test is to determine whether a student has met a course prerequisite, no fee may be charged because mandatory charges are not permissible for anything that is a condition of enrollment in a course, unless the charge is specifically required or authorized by law.

Although districts may offer retesting within their matriculation programs, they are not required to do so. A district might have a policy which provides students the option to go through initial assessment and then be tested again if they withdraw and are not enrolled for a long period of time. Retesting may also be indicated if a student can show extenuating circumstances that might have adversely affected the initial testing results (e.g., student illness, death in the student's family, etc.). Beyond such circumstances that may indicate a high potential for significant differences in the testing results, districts should consider whether multiple retesting constitutes an unnecessary expenditure of matriculation funding.

We have been advised that students from districts that do not permit multiple retesting may seek retesting from neighboring districts that offer multiple retesting options. In our view, testing and retesting services should be offered to persons who are at least admitted and preparing to enroll in the district where the testing is performed. Additionally, districts may wish to encourage student focus on assessment scores rather than test scores alone.

**4.10. Refundable Deposits.** In Legal Opinion L 95-23 we held that a “refundable deposit” amounts to a fee if it is required as a condition of registration, enrollment, or entry into classes, or as a condition of completing the required classroom objectives of a course. Therefore, statutory authority is required in order to impose such a charge on a student regardless of whether it is characterized as a “refundable deposit” or as an ordinary nonrefundable fee.

**4.11. Fees for Distance Education (Internet Access).** In Legal Opinion L 95-33 we held that a district may not charge an additional mandatory fee for a credit course delivered via Internet where the additional fee is intended to cover the cost of Internet access. If

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instruction is offered as a community service class without credit, a district could charge students for the cost of Internet access necessary to participate in the class. Such a fee could also be charged for a credit course if the fee is truly optional (the student can participate effectively without paying the additional fee), but, there is no statutory authority for charging such a fee for a credit course if the fee is mandatory.

The recent revision to title 5, section 59402, which permits charging instructional materials fees for access to certain electronic materials, does not alter the above analysis with respect to Internet access. As amended, section 59402 defines the term “tangible personal property” to include “electronic data that the student may access during the class and store for personal use after the class in a manner comparable to the use available during the class.” While this would permit charging for access to an online textbook or other specific instructional material, it does not justify charging for Internet access because the student cannot store every document available on the Internet and cannot conduct research after the course for which access is purchased has ended. (See also Appendix A.)

**4.12. Mandatory Mailing Fees.** There is no express authority for requiring students, as a condition of enrollment, to pay a fee to cover the costs of mailing grade reports, registration packets, and other student documents. As discussed in 3.6, above, Education Code section 76223 authorizes charging students for “the actual cost” of providing copies of student records. Except as discussed below, districts should absorb the costs of their basic required communications with their students. In Legal Opinion M 96-17, we explained that districts may charge a flat fee for mailing costs only if all the following conditions are met:

1. Students are not charged for mailing documents other than individual student records (e.g., published class schedules or registration packets that do not relate specifically to a particular student);
2. Each student is not charged an amount in excess of the actual cost of furnishing the records he or she receives;
3. Students are advised that they will not be barred from registering or enrolling in any course if they decline to pay the fee; and
4. Students are advised that if they do not wish to be charged for mailing costs they may come to campus to obtain and pay for copies of student records.

**4.13. Mandatory Fee for Use of Practice Rooms.** In Legal Opinion M 96-17 we considered a situation where a college charged music students a mandatory fee for the use of practice rooms which they were required to use as a part of their class

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assignments. We held that this could not be justified as an instructional materials fee and that there was no other statutory authority for the practice. However, it would be permissible for a college to make practice rooms available for students who are willing to pay an optional service fee for their use.

**4.14. Apprenticeship Course Fees.** Education Code section 76350 prohibits community colleges from imposing resident or nonresident charges or fees for apprenticeship courses offered pursuant to Labor Code section 3074. On the other hand, in Legal Opinion E 00-22 we concluded that enrollment fees may be charged to apprentices enrolled in courses which are not counted toward satisfying the related and supplemental instruction required under the apprenticeship agreement described in Labor Code section 3074.

**4.15. Technology Fee.** The Chancellor's Office has also considered the viability of a fee that gave students access to computer labs and computers, the Internet, and e-mail. About 98 percent of available computers were covered by the fee; the remaining 2 percent of the computers (approximately 30 out of 1500) were available without charge to any student.

It was concluded that the fee would be a permissible optional fee with respect to students who were not in courses where such technology was required. However, as noted in 4.9 above, even an optional fee would be prohibited if the district received state funds for this purpose. Costs associated with the purchase of the computers, maintenance of such computers or other related costs, may be recovered through an optional fee only to the extent that such state funds were not used to support those expenses. That is, a district may not use funds that are required or expressly authorized for a specific purpose and also charge students a fee to cover the same costs, even if the fee is optional.

**4.16. Late Payment Fee.** It is not permissible to charge a late payment fee to students who are allowed to start attending classes before they have paid their enrollment fees.

Title 5, section 58502 requires the enrollment fee to be charged at the time of enrollment. However, the section also permits deferral of the collection of the fee under conditions established by the governing board. Therefore, assuming a governing board has authorized a deferral process, students may pay their enrollment fees at some point after enrollment. Section 59410 of title 5 permits districts to withhold grades, transcripts, diplomas, and registration privileges from those students who fail to pay outstanding financial obligations, such as outstanding fees. Section 59410 establishes the mechanism for addressing unpaid fee obligations, and an additional late payment charge is not authorized. For those students who ultimately fail to pay their enrollment fees, districts may also pursue recovery through the Chancellor's Office Tax Offset Program (COTOP) system.

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**4.17. Nursing/Healing Arts Student Liability/Malpractice Insurance.** Section 55304 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations provides in pertinent part that districts that offer nursing programs, or related programs in the healing arts, may maintain classes at hospitals. The same section provides, “The governing board may purchase liability insurance for the students with district funds.” Thus, districts are authorized to pay for student liability insurance for these programs. .

Where a district has properly established Student Liability/Malpractice Insurance as a prerequisite or enrollment limitation for enrollment in a clinical course, it may offer to process the request on the student's behalf in exchange for a fee to cover the costs it incurs. It is important to note that this approach is only permissible provided that the district allows a student to obtain his or her own Student Liability/Malpractice Insurance from other appropriate sources.

**4.18. Cleaning Fees.** In Legal Opinion L 02-13, we analyzed a flat fee that was charged to students who failed to clean out their chemistry class lockers at the end of the term. The district required students to use the lockers and it provided the locks. The fee was charged if the lock had to be cut off and the contents of the locker removed, cleaned, and inventoried.

There is no statutory authority that mandates or permits a fee to remove the lock and to clean and inventory the contents of a locker. The flat fee had no direct relationship to the work required because the fee was the same whether there was little or no cleanup or a lot of cleanup work. The fee cannot be justified as an instructional materials fee because no tangible personal property is involved. The fee cannot be justified as a service to students because the student receives no service. Instead, the fee merely permits a district to offset some of the cost of cleaning its own equipment or supplies. Even if there were a discernible service to the students, the fee would have to be optional, not mandatory. Based on the foregoing, we concluded that such a fee is not allowed.

**4.19. Breakage Fees.** In Legal Opinion L 02-13, we assessed a breakage fee charged to chemistry students. The fee covered breakage that occurred during student laboratory work. We noted that breakage fees are neither mandated nor authorized by statute, nor are they “instructional materials” fees. Instead, the fee appeared to be designed to reimburse the district for the cost of replacing district equipment or materials that students break. A certain amount of breakage must be absorbed by districts in their normal operations, and insurance may be secured against breakage in appropriate cases.

If students intentionally destroy district property, districts may wish to pursue disciplinary action under their rules of student conduct.

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In September 2005, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed AB 1070 that would have allowed community college districts to charge students for the cost of replacing or repairing instructional equipment that was lost or damaged. The veto reflected the Governor's concern that it could deter students of limited means from pursuing courses of study that require the use of costly equipment, particularly in areas such as science, medicine, or nursing.

**4.20. Test Proctoring Fees.** There is no authority that permits a district to charge students a fee to cover the costs of having someone present while students are taking tests to ensure that the students do not cheat on the tests.

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS  
REGULATIONS TO SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

Chapter 2, item 2.5, sets forth a series of questions which are designed to help districts determine whether they have the authority to require students to provide materials or to charge students a fee for materials provided by the district. Those questions should assist districts in analyzing the application of Education Code section 76365 and title 5 regulations on instructional materials (§§ 59400-59408) in specific instances.

Over the years, a number of specific items have been considered under the instructional materials standards.

**Ammunition** - Ammunition that is used in connection with police science courses (shooting at the practice range) is a material that students can be required to provide. To the extent that shell casings can be reloaded, they can be taken from the course setting, and they are not wholly consumed, used up or rendered valueless as they are applied in achieving the required objectives of a course.

**Bluebooks** - Used bluebooks if returned to students, are materials of continuing value to the student outside of the classroom setting. If the district is the sole provider of bluebooks, they must be provided to students at the district's actual cost. If used bluebooks are not returned they are not of continuing value to the student and thus should be provided by the district.

**Chemicals** - see **Welding Rods (and other transformed materials)** below.

**Clay** - Clay is an example of a “transformed” material that, under most circumstances, can retain continuing value outside of the classroom setting. For instance, a district could require that a student provide 20 pounds of a given type of clay in order to take a course. The clay can be sold through the college bookstore if the student wishes to purchase it there. The clay, when converted into objects and fired in a kiln, can be taken from the classroom by the student. The clay is not wholly consumed, used up or rendered valueless in the process of becoming an object.

A critical distinction to apply with respect to transformed materials is whether the transformed material becomes part of something that a student will take from a class, or part of something that is just used for practice, and will not become the property of a student. Materials used in practice--objects that don't become the property of the student--should be provided by the district; whereas if the material is part of an object that becomes the property of the student, it can be required.



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Another method to handle transformed materials such as clay is to provide the material for free, but to charge the student for any transformed material that he or she wishes to take from the classroom. Under this method, the material doesn't become the permanent property of the student until he or she chooses to buy it. In any case, if students are required to provide clay, the transformed objects must become their property.

Other examples of transformed materials which can have value to the student outside of the classroom setting include wood, metal, film, photographic paper, oil paints, canvas, cloth, food and paper generally.

**Clothing** - see **Uniforms and Clothing**, below.

**Computer Paper** - Computer paper is a material which can be used by many students, but which can have continuing value to students based on the information preserved on the paper during the course. For instance, a district could require that each student provide a specified quantity and brand of computer paper in order to enroll in a course. A student wouldn't necessarily be using the box of computer paper he or she bought, but as long as he or she was entitled to keep all printouts, and as long as the student would generate roughly the quantity of paper he or she provided, a student could be required to provide computer paper.

**CD-ROMS** - see **Recording Tape, Video Tape, Floppy Discs, CD-ROMS**, below.

**Diesel Fuel** - see **Welding Rods (and other transformed materials)** below.

**Equipment** - Education Code section 76365 specifically mentions equipment as a material that has continuing value to the student outside of the classroom setting. Thus, students can be required to provide their own equipment for classes.

**Equipment Use Charge** - In lieu of requiring students to provide certain expensive equipment, one suggestion is that students be given the option to "rent" the equipment from the district for the duration of the course. The instructional materials regulations do not address rental of equipment that is required by a district. Rather, the regulations only address the authority of districts to require the equipment.

Generally speaking, rental of equipment should be classified as an "optional fee," and thus would be authorized within the parameters of the permissive code. Districts should not subsidize their equipment budgets by renting equipment which students should not be expected to own. For instance, it would be improper to require students to provide a certain \$5,000 television camera and then offer them the "option" of renting one for use during the class for \$20 per semester.

**Floppy Discs** - See **Recording Tape, Video Tape, Floppy Discs, CD-ROMS**, below.

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**Flowers and Food** - Flowers for a flower arrangement class are an example of a material which can be required, with the student having the option to purchase them from the district. The district can specify the required flowers which the student needs and then provide the student with an option to purchase all necessary flowers from the district for a specified price. The same is true of food for a cooking class. It is contemplated that students in culinary programs will be able to consume and/or to take food items purchased with their instructional materials fees. For example, students may consume or take away pastries they prepare in class. It would not be appropriate, however, for students to be required to supply all of the food for a culinary class unless those food materials have continuing value to the students outside the class. It would not be appropriate for students to pay for food that they prepare for non-students, such as through a dining room or food service program. Similarly, an instructional materials fee would be appropriate in a wine-making class if students are able to keep the wine that they bottle.

**Gasoline** - see **Welding Rods (and other transformed materials)** below.

**Gym Towels** - If having a towel is mandatory to the class, districts may require students to provide their own towels, or the district may provide them. However, the towels cannot be solely or exclusively available from the district based on the health and safety definition of section 59402(c)(1) because district-only towels do not fulfill a health and safety requirement.

**Instructional Tapes/Videos** - Instructional tapes or videos that must be returned to the district cannot be the basis for an instructional materials fee. Students retain no tangible personal property when the materials must be returned. (See section 3.16 above.)

**Instructor-created Materials** - Instructor-created textbooks, syllabi and other instructional materials are generally prepared for specific courses offered by a college or district, and are often solely or exclusively provided by a district. Such materials, in most instances, have continuing value outside of the classroom setting. The district is required to provide these materials unless the exception to title 5, section 59402(c) can be applied. Specifically, the instructor-prepared instructional materials must be provided at the district's actual cost, in lieu of other generally available but more expensive material which would otherwise be required.

By way of example, a textbook, syllabus, or instructor-prepared material costing a district \$15.00 to provide to a student could be required in lieu of requiring the students to secure a nationally published textbook on the same subject which retailed for \$30.00. A district's "actual cost" of producing materials which it solely or exclusively provides can include a small markup necessary for selling the item through the college bookstore. The overall premise is that neither a district nor its employees ought to be making a profit on materials which the district solely or exclusively provides.

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Instructor-prepared material can be classified as “optional” if it is not required by the district, or is not required to complete the required objectives of a course to be accomplished under the direction of an instructor during class hours. In this regard, a syllabus or other material could be “highly recommended” without being required. Also a material could be designated for “required reading” without it actually being a required material.

In Legal Opinion L 02-29 we addressed several issues concerning faculty authors, subsidy publishers, and the payment of royalties. We concluded that under current law a faculty author may require his or her students to purchase mandatory instructional materials the faculty member created and paid a subsidy publisher to produce even if the price of said materials includes a royalty payment provided the materials are not exclusively available from the district and provided that local employment agreements or local conflict of interest rules do not prohibit the practice.

In Legal Opinion L 04-11, we addressed whether a student could be required to present proof of “recently purchased lecture notes” as a condition of enrollment. We determined that requiring a proof of purchase was inappropriate, and also determined that payment of a royalty for the instructor's lecture notes was problematic. Requiring “recently purchased lecture notes” raises the question of why a “purchase” is necessary, as opposed to other means of securing materials, such as using a library copy or copies already purchased by other students. Regardless of how they are acquired, unless materials are reasonably related to the achievement of the course objectives, they cannot be established as “required instructional materials” and students cannot be required to provide (or purchase) them. If the lecture notes **do not qualify** as required instructional materials, they can still be offered to students on a purely optional basis and students could be charged a reasonable optional fee.

If a district determines that lecture notes **do qualify** as a required instructional material, and the lecture notes are solely available through the college bookstore, a fee in the form of the bookstore purchase price may be appropriate, but the price may not include a faculty royalty.

**Lab Books, Workbooks, and Sheet Music** - Lab books and workbooks are distinguished from texts and instructor-produced materials in that they are written in extensively or have various exercises which result in pages being torn out. Generally speaking, even though such materials are altered, they retain some value to the student outside of the classroom setting, and therefore can be required of students. Sheet music is another example of workbook-type material which can be required.

**Laboratory Animals** - Under most conditions, required laboratory animals must be provided by the district because they have no continuing value to the student outside of the classroom setting. This general rule, however, does not require a district to provide an unlimited supply of laboratory animals. Laboratory animals in addition to those reasonably needed for completion of course objectives can be sold as “optional” materials.

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Decomposable materials used in dissection are not instructional materials because students cannot reasonably retain the materials for future use outside of the classroom.

**Medical Supplies (such as Band-Aids, sterile syringes, and catheters) - see Welding Rods (and other transformed materials) below.**

**Models for Art Classes** - Models for art classes have no continuing value to the student outside of the classroom setting. They are not owned or primarily controlled by individual students. Therefore, students cannot be required to pay for models in art classes.

**Performances** - Requiring a student to see a play, film, concert, or other performance is not an instructional or other material, and is not covered by the regulations. A district may require a student to see a specified play, film, concert or performance, but in order to generate FTES for the student's attendance at the performance, the district must provide for attendance free of charge to the student. If seeing a performance is accomplished through a field trip, students may be asked to pay for incidental expenses, including entrance fees to the performance, but no student can be denied the right to participate in the field trip due to lack of funds. (See Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, §§ 55220-55222.)

**Photographic Chemicals** - Photographic chemicals are a material which can be used by many students, but which usually will have no continuing value to students outside of the classroom setting. Unlike computer paper, photographic chemicals can be tainted through misuse and tend to become used up in the classroom setting. If photographic chemicals are kept separate for each student and are given to students upon completion of the class, students can be required to provide them.

**Recording Tape, Video Tape, Floppy Discs, CD-ROMs** - Recording tape, video tape, floppy discs and other such reusable recording materials generally have continuing value to students outside of the classroom setting. They are generally available, tangible personal property of continuing value that is owned or controlled by the student.

**Scantrons** – A scantron is a prepared form used for multiple-choice and true-or-false testing. A district may not charge a fee for scantrons as they do not have continuing value outside of the classroom.

**Sheet Music** - See **Lab Books, Workbooks, and Sheet Music**, above.

**Student Catalogs and Course Schedules** – Student catalogs and course schedules should be available in hard copy to students in order to meet open access requirements. However, a college is not required to provide unlimited numbers of paper versions of those course catalogs and schedules. A college may charge for additional versions of its catalog, so long as the critical information contained within it is sufficiently available for free through alternative means. Each individual college is responsible for demonstrating that it meets this burden.

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**Syllabi** - See **Instructor-created Materials**, above, and **Textbooks**, below.

**Tests (Required)** - Required tests are instructional materials, and have continuing value to the student, if they are returned. However, in instances where districts are the sole or exclusive provider of tests and neither of the exceptions in title 5, section 59402(c) apply, tests should be provided free.

Under the authority of the “permissive code” (Ed. Code, § 70902(a)) a district may charge for optional tests not required for entry or enrollment into a class.

Please note that this item describes tests that are used to evaluate classroom performance, as opposed to placement tests or assessments. See 4.9 of the Handbook for a discussion of fees for placement tests.

**Textbooks** - Education Code section 76365 specifically mentions textbooks as materials which have continuing value outside of the classroom. As such, the general rule is that districts may require students to provide their own textbooks. However, these textbooks can't be solely or exclusively available from the district unless the exception of title 5, section 59402(c) applies. If a district is the sole publisher of a textbook, placing copies of the text in local bookstores will not automatically make it generally available.

Until recently, it was not permissible to charge for online access to an electronic version of a textbook. However, title 5, section 59402 was amended in January 2006 to permit this, provided that the student can store and print the textbook for use after the course is over. Of course, as with any other type of instructional material, the district cannot charge for access to an online textbook if this access is solely or exclusively available from the district, unless one of the exceptions to the “solely and exclusively available” rule are applicable.

**Uniforms and Clothing** - Education Code section 76365 specifically itemizes clothing as a material which is of continuing value to a student outside of the classroom setting. Students can be required to provide their own uniforms and clothing.

**Video Tape** - see **Recording Tape, Video Tape, Floppy Discs, CD-ROMS**, above.

**Welding Rods (and other transformed materials)** - Welding rods are an example of a “transformed” material which, under most circumstances, have no continuing value outside of the classroom setting after being used. A welding rod is rendered valueless in the process of being used for practice welds. Hence, a district must provide those rods necessary to complete those required objectives of a course which are to be accomplished under the supervision of an instructor during class hours. Extra welding rods for practice or in addition to those needed to complete required objectives may be sold to the student as optional material.

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Welding rods and other transformed materials can have continuing value under limited circumstances, however. If welding rods are used to make a project or material that a student will take from the class, the student can be required to provide the rods that will be used for the project. For instance, if the welding rods are used to make an art object and the art object becomes the property of the student, welding rods may be required.

Other examples of transformed materials that are usually rendered valueless after use include chemicals, gasoline, diesel fuel, and medical supplies such as Band-Aids, sterile syringes, and catheters.

**Workbooks** - See **Lab Book, Workbooks, and Sheet Music**, above