

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE
SAN JOSE, CA 95192**

SS-S11-5, Sense of the Senate Resolution, “Resolution to Urge the Board of Trustees to Delay Consideration of Waivers to the Existing Title 5 ‘American Institutions’ Requirement”

Legislative History: At its meeting of April 18, 2011, the Academic Senate approved the following Sense of the Senate Resolution presented by Senator Peter.

**SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION
“RESOLUTION TO URGE THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO DELAY
CONSIDERATION OF WAIVERS TO THE EXISTING TITLE 5 ‘AMERICAN
INSTITUTIONS’ REQUIREMENT”**

Whereas, For decades the California State University has maintained a requirement (in Title 5 administrative law) for all CSU graduates to “acquire knowledge and skills that will help them to comprehend the workings of American democracy and of the society in which they live, to enable them to contribute to that society as responsible and constructive citizens” (Title 5 40404); and

Whereas, An informed citizenry is necessary in American democracy, but mounting evidence shows that “most individual voters are abysmally ignorant of even very basic political information”¹; and

Whereas, The passing last Autumn of SB 1440—a measure designed to streamline transfers from the California Community Colleges to the CSU, has enabled the creation of “Transfer AA” degrees from the CCC system; the CCC system, however, refuses to include the Title 5 American Institutions requirements as a part of these newly created transfer degrees; and

Whereas, The CSU Board of Trustees is considering changes in the Title 5 “American Institutions” requirement that will enable (but not necessarily require) the Chancellor, Presidents and “appropriate campus authorities”

¹See for example Ilya Somin, “When Ignorance Isn’t Bliss: How Political Ignorance Threatens Democracy” (Policy Analysis No. 525, September 22, 2004.) “In this paper I review the overwhelming evidence that the American electorate fails to meet even minimal criteria for adequate voter knowledge” (p. 2.) See also Andrew Romano, “How Dumb Are We? Newsweek gave 1,000 Americans the U.S. Citizenship Test—38% failed. The country’s future is imperiled by our ignorance,” *Newsweek* March 28 and April 4, 2011.

to waive the American Institutions requirement for certain majors and groups (called “the proposal” in this document); and

Whereas, After a few weeks of informal conversations, the proposal was first publicly broached at an April 13 meeting with the CSU Presidents; this unfortunate time line has resulted in insufficient consultation to date with History and Political Science faculty and almost no time—in the last month of classes—for local Academic Senates and their curriculum committees to respond; and

Whereas, The possibility of using the existing option of comprehensive exams in American Institutions to bring the CSU fully into compliance with SB1440 has not been fully explored now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Board of Trustees should delay any consideration of Title 5 changes to the “American Institutions” requirement until the possibility of using the existing Comprehensive Exam option to bring the CSU into compliance with SB 1440 is fully explored with the help of the system’s Political Science and History faculty; we acknowledge that there may need to be procedural and/or policy changes in the administration of these exams but believe that the option could be of great promise in complying with SB 1440 without the need for a Title 5 change; be it further

Resolved, The Academic Senate of San Jose State University reaffirms its commitment to the principle that all graduates of our institution should demonstrate an understanding of “American democracy and of the society in which they live” so that they may “contribute to that society as responsible and constructive citizens”; be it further

Resolved, That the CSU should strongly consider the option of not recognizing transfer AA degrees that fail to allow the American Institutions requirement within the constraints of SB1440 degrees--as being too dissimilar to our own degrees; be it further

Resolved, That the CSU should request that the Legislature amend “The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act” (SB 1440) to clarify that American Institutions requirements should be fully maintained during the implementation of the law; be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be distributed to the Chancellor, to the Board, to the ASCSU, to all campus senates, and to the Chairs of all CSU History and Political Science Departments, the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, and the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges.