

Devaluing the Bachelor's Degree Fast Track Edition

[pullquote]In a way, the legislation has a head start: Last year, in an effort to bring down textbook costs, Mr. Steinberg won passage of a law requiring free online textbooks for the 50 most popular introductory college courses, and in the process created a faculty panel – three members each from the University of California, California State University and the community college system – to choose materials.

The new legislation would use that panel to determine which 50 introductory courses were most oversubscribed and which online versions of those courses should be eligible for credit. Those decisions would be based on factors like whether the courses included proctored tests, used open-source texts – those available free online – and had been recommended by the American Council on Education. A student could get credit from a third-party course only if the course was full at the student's home institution, and if that institution did not offer it online.[/pullquote]

Today's New York Times includes **an article about a potentially disastrous bill wending its way through the California state legislature.** I've written about devaluing the bachelor's degree before. If this bill passes, that will become **devaluing the bachelor's degree, fast track edition.** My lovely wife has made numerous insightful comments about this. Unfortunately I'm very busy this week (and probably next week, too) on a project with a tight deadline. For now you'll have to settle for this brief note.

In brief, this law would force public colleges and universities in California to accept transfer credit for online courses. The courses would be approved by an already-existing panel →→→→→

Yes, you read that correctly. **Nine – nine – faculty members get to make this decision for the rest of us. If anyone can take the time to find out who those nine people are, I would appreciate it.** But there's one more statement made by State Senator Darrell Steinberg:

"We want to be the first state in the nation to make this promise: No college student in California will be denied the right to move through their education because they couldn't get a seat in the course they needed," said Darrell Steinberg, the president pro tem of the Senate, who will introduce the bill. "That's the motivation for this."

In other words, students deserve a bachelor's degree. They have a "right to move

through their education.” And here I thought the faculty had something to say about who gets a degree and who doesn’t.

Color me nauseous.