

# Calif. shelves massive online education plans

By Steve Kolowich, Chronicle of Higher Education

Legislation in California originally aimed at getting state colleges to award credit for massive open online courses and other offerings from nonuniversity providers has been shelved for at least a year.

The bill, SB520, caused a stir when it was introduced, in March, by State Sen. Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento. Faculty unions strongly opposed it, and later drafts of the bill would give faculty-governance bodies more oversight of what outside courses could count for credit.

Steinberg has shelved the bill. The senator will re-evaluate next summer whether the legislation is still necessary, said Rhys Williams, a spokesman.

The senator changed his mind after the three public systems in California moved to expand their online offerings. California State University, for example, announced on Wednesday that it would offer 36 online courses this fall that could be taken for credit by students at any of the system's 23 campuses.

The latest California budget provides some new money to the state's public higher-education institutions, and the three systems – California State, University of California, and California Community Colleges – “have all produced plans for developing online access, course completion, which is a very welcome policy outcome,” said Williams.

Steinberg is “willing to see how those plans materialize and then evaluate their impact next year,” said Williams. (Because of how the Legislature operates, it would be possible to simply pick up the bill where it left off, rather than start

again from scratch, he said.)

The spokesman did not elaborate on how the senator planned to assess the universities' online efforts, though he suggested there would be no specific set of criteria. "I don't think the senator's going to start prescribing specific goals to meet," he said.

The decision to put the California bill on hold, which was originally reported by the *Oakland Tribune*, represents yet another stalled effort to insinuate MOOCs into the existing landscape of credit-bearing higher education. Last month Florida passed a bill that opened the door to public universities' giving credit for MOOCs, but only slightly. And several institutions that have tried to create nontraditional pathways to credit have seen no takers among MOOC students.