

Calif. lawmaker pushes for \$10,000 bachelor's degree

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

With the cost of going to college already more than \$30,000 a year at many California campuses, is it possible to earn a bachelor's degree for just \$10,000 – total?

Assemblyman Dan Logue, R-Marysville, hopes so.

Borrowing an idea being promoted by Republican governors in Texas and Florida, the GOP assemblyman has introduced a bill that would create a pilot program in California for what he's billing as a \$10,000 bachelor's degree.

The degree would be available to students majoring in science, technology, engineering or math disciplines.

Assembly Bill 51 calls for closer coordination between high schools, community colleges and California State University campuses and targets three regions for the pilot program: Chico, Long Beach and Turlock.

Participating students would earn some college credit in high school through Advanced Placement classes and greater access to community college courses.

The bill calls for participating community college students to go to school full time.

Tuition at CSU right now is \$5,472 a year. Books and campus fees cost another roughly \$2,000 annually. A statement from Logue said his proposed \$10,000 degree would include textbooks. It does not cover living expenses such as room and board.

"I hope my bill will be the beginning of a revolution to the

very pressing issue of the costs of college that students face these days,” Logue said in a statement. “We cannot expect today’s students to have a higher standard of living than their parents if they continue to leave college saddled with so much debt.”

Even on a topic as politically sympathetic as making college more affordable, it remains to be seen if the Republican’s bill can make any headway in California’s Democratic-controlled Legislature.

Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez has his own plan for lowering the cost of college – what he calls a “middle-class scholarship” program – and Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown has said he wants universities to increase affordability by doing more with online education.

CSU officials have not taken a position on the bill.

Logue’s bill builds on efforts already under way in California to better streamline K-12 schools, community colleges and universities, said Judy Heiman, a higher education analyst with the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office.

“The bill also appears to draw on existing regional education partnerships, an approach we think makes a lot of sense,” Heiman wrote in an email. “In addition, the incentives in the bill for full time attendance would support current efforts to improve graduation rates.”