
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2021 - 2022 Regular

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Subject: Public postsecondary education: community colleges: statewide baccalaureate degree program.

SUMMARY

This bill removes the cap on the total number of baccalaureate degree programs allowed within the California Community College (CCC) system and eliminates the January 1, 2027 sunset date of the statewide baccalaureate degree pilot program, thereby permanently authorizing the offering of baccalaureate degree programs at CCCs.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Differentiates the missions and functions of public and independent institutions of higher education. Under these provisions:
- 2) The primary mission of the California State University (CSU) is required to offer undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree. The CSU is authorized to establish two-year programs only when mutually agreed upon by the Trustees and the CCC Board of Governors. The CSU is also authorized to jointly award the doctoral degree with the University of California (UC) and with one or more independent institutions of higher education.
- 3) The UC is authorized to provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and has exclusive jurisdiction in public higher education over graduate instruction in the professions of law, medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. The UC is also the primary state-supported academic agency for research.
- 4) The independent institutions of higher education are required to provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and research in accordance with their respective missions.
- 5) The mission and function of the CCC is the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCC are authorized to grant the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees. The community colleges are also required to offer remedial instruction, English as a Second Language instruction, and adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level. (EC § 66010.4)

- 6) Authorizes the Board of Governors of the CCC, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish baccalaureate degree pilot programs that do not duplicate a baccalaureate degree program offered by the CSU or UC, at up to 15 community college districts, with one baccalaureate degree program each, as specified, to be determined by the Chancellor of the CCC. Completion of an independent evaluation by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) is also required, and existing law sunsets the program on July 1, 2026. (EC § 78040 et seq.)

ANALYSIS

This bill removes the cap on the total number of baccalaureate degree programs allowed within the CCC system and eliminates the sunset date on the statewide baccalaureate degree pilot program, thereby permanently authorizing the offering of baccalaureate degree programs at CCCs. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Extends the operation of the statewide baccalaureate degree pilot program indefinitely, and authorizes previously-approved programs to continue operating.
- 2) Removes limitations allowing no more than 15 CCC programs to offer baccalaureate degrees and no more than one campus within the district to offer a baccalaureate degree program.
- 3) Establishes an application and review process conducted by the CCC Chancellor's office that allows for approval of a total of 30 CCC baccalaureate degree programs per year, as specified. The bill further requires the CCC Chancellor's Office take a minimum of 30 working days to validate the submitted information and assess the workforce value of the proposed baccalaureate degree program.
- 4) Requires that a CCC seeking approval to offer a baccalaureate degree program provide evidence of unmet workforce needs to the CCC Chancellor's Office, as specified.
- 5) Continues to prohibit a CCC from offering a baccalaureate degree program or program curricula already offered by the CSU or the UC.
- 6) Requires the CCC Chancellor's Office to consult with and seek feedback from the Chancellor of CSU, and the President of the UC, on proposed baccalaureate degree programs and whether they are duplicative of existing baccalaureate programs offered at CSU or UC.
- 7) Establishes a process whereby the CSU and UC submit written objections with supporting evidence to the CCC Chancellor's Office, if the CSU or UC believe there to be program duplication. The bill further requires, upon receipt of written objections, the CCC Chancellor to convene the applicant and objector(s) to establish a written agreement before the program is approved.
- 8) Requires a CCC to continue to offer an associate degree program in the same academic subject for which a baccalaureate degree program has been approved,

unless the Chancellor has approved the elimination of the associate degree program, as specified.

- 9) Strikes obsolete provisions on statewide evaluations of the pilot program.
- 10) Makes other technical and conforming changes.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “In 2014, SB 850 (Chapter 747) added and repealed Article 3 (commencing with Section 78040) of Chapter 1 of Part 48 of Division 7 of Title 3 of the Education Code, relating to public postsecondary education. Commencing January 1, 2015, this policy authorized the board of governors, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish a statewide baccalaureate degree pilot program at not more than 15 community college districts, with one baccalaureate degree program each, to be determined by the chancellor and approved by the board of governors.

“The current baccalaureate degree statute is set to expire July 1, 2026 creating questions from students that are seeking to enter into the four-year programs as to whether or not the program will continue as they move through. Additionally, there is a need to expand the number of colleges that are authorized to offer baccalaureate degree programs and the number of these programs that colleges can offer.

“By 2030, if current trends continue, 38% of jobs will require at least a bachelor’s degree – this is only increasing. More and more, the baccalaureate degree is becoming the required degree for entry-level work. However, if education trends suggest that only 33% of working-age adults in California will have a bachelor’s degree by 2030. This is a shortfall of 1.1 million college baccalaureate degree graduates. Community colleges can help to fill this gap as they account for over half of all California undergraduate enrollment.

“The current 15 programs have been open for students for over five years now and have graduated and placed hundreds of students in high-paying, quality jobs. These programs have been additive to what California’s four-year institutions offer, not duplicative. Under AB 927, this policy would continue, as language would specifically prohibit duplication with CSU and UC programs. Additionally, the consultation process would require linkages to the workforce and applicants to demonstrate a local workforce need prior to approval.”

- 2) ***Status of existing pilot.*** Senate Bill 850 (Block, Ch. 747, Stats. 2014) authorized the Board of Governors, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish a baccalaureate degree pilot program. The pilot program allows up to 15 participating community college districts to offer one baccalaureate degree program each to meet local workforce needs as long as it does not duplicate a baccalaureate degree program already offered by the CSU or the UC. The

Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) conducted interim and final evaluations of the pilot program, which were due on July 1, 2018, and February 1, 2020, respectively. SB 850 provisions sunset July 1, 2026.

Under SB 850, the four-year degree programs must be up and running by the 2017-18 academic year. Below is the list of colleges that were selected to participate in the pilot:

1. Antelope Valley College (airframe manufacturing technology)
2. Bakersfield College (industrial automation)
3. Cypress College (mortuary science)
4. Feather River College (equine industry)
5. Foothill College (dental hygiene)
6. Mesa College (health information management)
7. Mira Costa College (biomanufacturing)
8. Modesto Junior College (respiratory care)
9. Santa Ana College (occupational studies)
10. Shasta College (health information management)
11. Skyline College (respiratory care)
12. West Los Angeles College (dental hygiene)
13. Rio Hondo College (automotive technology)
14. Santa Monica College (interaction design)
15. Solano Community College (biotechnology)

According to the report, of the 15 colleges, 10 started offering classes for their baccalaureate degree pilot programs in fall 2016; the 5 remaining colleges began offering classes fall 2017. At its height, the overall participation level for 15 programs combined reached 699 students.

- 3) ***Program evaluation by the LAO.*** SB 850 additionally directed the LAO to conduct interim and final evaluations of the pilot program, which were due on July 1, 2018, and July 1, 2020 (date moved up by subsequent legislation), respectively, before the pilot program sunsets. The final evaluation was released ahead of schedule in February 2020. SB 850 directed LAO to include in its report, among other things, an evaluation of completion rates, the impact of baccalaureate degree pilot program on underserved and underprepared students, information on job placement of graduates and recommendations on whether and how the statewide baccalaureate degree pilot program can or should be extended and expanded. Key findings and recommendations of the final evaluation that are relevant to the provisions in this bill include the following:

Summary of Findings

- Highpoints. Community college bachelor's degree programs are offered at a relatively low cost for students and of the student's surveyed 51 percent noted that they would not have pursued a bachelor's degree otherwise. Students enrolled in a bachelor's degree pilot program with an associate degree in the same major have an easier educational pathway toward degree completion.

The report also found no general concern with academic quality or rigor of the pilot programs. The programs have been designed to teach concepts and skills that would be immediately relevant in related industries.

- **Challenges.** The LAO assessed whether programs met industry needs. Based on their review and as noted in the evaluation, 7 of the 15 programs showed signs of meeting workforce needs. For 8 of the 15 programs, there was little evidence that the programs addressed workforce needs and that graduates from these pilot programs were better prepared to fill positions compared to those with bachelor's degrees or that the program graduates were helping employers fill hard to staff positions.
- **Concerns.** The report noted that the programs are relatively small, 6 programs averaged less than 15 students per cohort. Low enrollment levels after three or four years of operation suggests student demand for bachelor's degrees in the particular fields selected is limited.

Several concerns were identified with the application review process, primarily due to the accelerated time line set by the CCC Chancellor's Office. This resulted in weak validation and review process of proposed programs and their workforce value. Additionally, the Chancellor's Office provided CSU with little information about each program and a short window to allow feedback despite the requirement for consultation with the CSU.

4) *LAO recommendations.* In addition to the findings listed above, the LAO provides several recommendations, including alternatives to authorizing CCC bachelor's degree programs and improvements if the Legislature were to make existing programs permanent or authorize new programs. Below is a summary recommendations for making improvements to the current authority of CCC bachelor's degree programs which are most relevant to the bill:

- Consider requiring community college bachelor's degree programs to 1) meet a minimum threshold for its cohort size and 2) maintain graduation rates at or above the rates for CSU transfer students.
- Require colleges to demonstrate their programs are meeting workforce needs. Specifically, by demonstrating that industry partners 1) have difficulty filling certain positions that require a bachelor's degree, 2) are paying bachelor's degree holders more than those with related associate's degrees, and/or are hiring candidates with the specialized pilot bachelor's degree over candidates with other bachelor's degrees.
- Require the Chancellor's Office to use a longer application time line that gives colleges sufficient time to develop their curriculum.

- Require the Chancellor's Office to provide more detailed information to CSU on the proposed programs, as well as to seek feedback from CSU at several points in the approval process.
- Clarify the CSU's role is to assess whether the programs are duplicative of its existing programs, but it also could submit comments regarding the quality of the proposed curricula submitted by the colleges.
- Allow the Chancellor's Office to remain responsible for rating the quality of submitted applications and making recommendation to the CCC Board of Governors for approval.
- Require more accurate and consistent fiscal data to account for spending on Bachelor of Arts programs.

This bill incorporates the LAO recommendations relative justification of workforce needs, clarifying CSU and UC's role in assessing programs and, improving application and approval process. The bill is silent on the first recommendation to establish minimum cohort size and require programs maintain graduation rates similar to the rates for CSU transfer students.

- 5) ***Impact to CCCs core mission.*** In 2013, prior to the passage of SB 850 (Block, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2014), the Community College Chancellor appointed a study group to review the various aspects of bachelor degrees at community colleges. The *Report from California Community Colleges Baccalaureate Degree Study Group*, acknowledges questions and reservations that community college bachelor's degrees represent a further erosion of the Master Plan for Higher Education, the potential for duplication of programs, and concerns that broadening the CCC mission would diminish attention to transfer, basic skills, and career technical education. The study group recommended that further work proceeds with ongoing dialog with CSU and UC, and that further study should consider the potential impact on the current mission of the CCC as well as on existing programs at local campuses. This bill places an annual cap on the number of approved baccalaureate degree programs; however, it is silent on the overall number of degree programs a college may accumulate.

*Should the bill be amended to limit the number of baccalaureate degrees offered by a community college to ensure the CCC core mission continues as its primary focus? **Staff recommends that the bill be amended** to limit the total number of baccalaureate degrees offered at a community college, at any time, so as *not* to exceed 25% of the total number of associate degrees offered at that college, including, associate degrees for transfer.*

- 6) ***Master Plan for Higher Education.*** As outlined in the Master Plan for Higher Education and by state statute, the CCCs are designated to have an open admission policy and bear the most extensive responsibility for lower-division undergraduate instruction. Its three primary areas of mission include education leading to associates degrees and university transfer, career technical education, and basic skills. The primary mission of the CSU is undergraduate and graduate

instruction through the master's degree. The UC was granted the sole authority to offer doctoral degrees.

Notwithstanding the differentiation of the mission envisioned by the Master Plan and outlined in statute, the Legislature has authorized the CSU to go beyond its original mission to offer four professional doctoral degrees which include the Doctor of Audiology, Doctor of Education, Doctor of Physical Therapy and Doctor of Nursing. Each program was individually approved through legislation. Fees were capped at the rate charged at the UC, no additional funding was provided by the state, and these programs were to be implemented without diminishing or reducing enrollment in undergraduate programs. Additionally, the CSU programs offer applied doctorates and are not duplicative of degrees offered by UC. These authorities were more limited than that proposed by this bill. However, as a control measure to avoid duplication with CSU and UC baccalaureate programs, the bill requires the CCC Chancellor to consult with and seek feedback from CSU and UC. It further forces collaboration and agreement among the segments should CSU or UC object to a program that is duplicative.

- 7) **Other options.** Unlike the authority granted to CSU, this bill authorizes an unrestricted number of baccalaureate degrees to be offered within the community college system, subject to specified conditions. These provisions represent a significant policy shift that could result in a broad departure from the CCCs mission established by the Master Plan for Higher Education and by state statute.

Other options that are arguably more effective do not require a departure from CCCs mission. In its recommendation for alternatives to the baccalaureate degree pilot program, the LAO report notes that more effective options exist for the state to better address workforce needs and/or increase access to bachelor's degree programs. Rather than establish 120-unit programs that lead to bachelor's degree, the Legislature could encourage closer partnerships between industry and colleges or universities to provide shorter training programs that would provide students who have associate degrees with additional skills to be promoted into supervisory positions.

Secondly, some CCCs have agreements with baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. Improving alignment between CCC and the universities, in particular CSU, could increase the number of CCC students who ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree and reduce the amount of time students take to obtain their degree. For example, the Tri-County Nursing Pathway is a partnership between Riverside City College and two CSU campuses (Fullerton and San Bernardino) that allows associate degree nursing students to concurrently obtain their bachelor's degrees. Students can enroll in CSU courses while still completing their associate degree requirements, allowing them to obtain their bachelor's degree with only six additional months of coursework. The LAO report further asserts, that such partnerships could not only be more cost-effective, but also benefit more students (including place-bound students) across more occupational fields, thereby having more widespread impact.

Could this bill undermine any incentives for similar collaborations across the public segments to address regional workforce needs? To the extent that existing collaborative efforts cannot meet demand or need, the committee may wish to consider:

- Should additional funding be provided to public baccalaureate degree granting institutions to increase the number of degree slots available in high demand areas?
- Can the process for developing collaborative efforts to address workforce needs be modified to facilitate greater proliferation of these programs?
- Should a community college be required to demonstrate that existing avenues for partnership with other institutions are not possible or viable before seeking authorization to offer a baccalaureate degree?

8) *Prior and related bills.* SB 769 (Hill, 2017) when heard in this committee, would have authorized the CCC Chancellor's Office in consultation with the CSU and UC to expand the total number of CCC baccalaureate degree pilot programs from 15 to 25 and extended the January 1, 2024 repeal of the statewide pilot program by five years. The contents of SB 769 was subsequently amended to extend the pilot for an addition five years. Ultimately, SB 769 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 577 (Dodd, Chapter 603, Statutes of 2018) authorizes the Board of Governors of the CCC, in consultation with the CSU and UC, to authorize a community college district to offer a teacher credentialing program meeting specified requirements.

SB 850 (Block, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2014) authorizes the Board of Governors of the CCC, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish baccalaureate degree pilot programs, at up to 15 community college districts, with one baccalaureate degree program each, as specified, to be determined by the Chancellor of the California Community College.

AB 661 (Block, 2011) authorized Grossmont-Cuyamaca and the San Mateo Community College districts to offer one baccalaureate degree pilot program per campus. AB 661 was not heard on the Assembly Floor.

AB 2400 (Block, 2010) authorized the San Diego, Grossmont-Cuyamaca and San Mateo Community College districts to establish baccalaureate degree pilot programs. No vote was taken and AB 2400 was held in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

SUPPORT

Antelope Valley Community College District
 Bakersfield College
 Coast Community College District
 Cupertino Chamber of Commerce

Foothill-de Anza Community College District
Genup
Kern Community College District
Miracosta Community College District
Mt. San Jacinto Community College District
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
Palo Verde Community College District
Peralta Community College District
Power
Rancho Santiago CCD
Rio Hondo College
San Bernardino Community College District
San Diego Community College District
San Francisco; City College of
San Jose-evergreen Community College District
Santa Monica Community College District
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
South Orange County Community College District
Yuba Community College District

OPPOSITION

Academic Senate CSU

-- END --