

---

THIRD READING

---

Bill No: AB 927  
Author: Medina (D) and Choi (R), et al.  
Amended: 8/26/21 in Senate  
Vote: 21

---

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/14/21  
AYES: Leyva, Ochoa Bogh, Cortese, Dahle, Glazer, McGuire, Pan

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/26/21  
AYES: Portantino, Bates, Bradford, Jones, Kamlager, Laird, McGuire

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/1/21 - See last page for vote

---

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: community colleges: statewide  
baccalaureate degree program

**SOURCE:** Author

---

**DIGEST:** 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.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Differentiates the missions and functions of public and independent institutions of higher education. Under these provisions:
  - a) 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.

- b) 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.
  - c) The independent institutions of higher education are required to provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and research in accordance with their respective missions.
  - d) 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)
- 2) 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.)

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. This 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, the President of the UC and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, 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.
- 8) 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.
- 9) Requires that a formal objection filed by the CSU or UC to address specified issues or order to facilitate the consultation process.
- 10) 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.
- 11) Strikes obsolete provisions on statewide evaluations of the pilot program.
- 12) Makes other technical and conforming changes.

## Comments

- 1) *Need for the bill.* According to the author, “ 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.

“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.* SB 850 (Block, Chapter 747, Statutes of 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. According to the report, of the 15 colleges, 10 started offering classes for their baccalaureate degree pilot programs in fall 2016; the five 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.* The LAO’s final evaluation of the BA pilot program 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 of their final evaluation include: (a) CCC bachelor’s degree programs are offered at relatively low costs to students with no general concern with academic quality

or rigor; (b) many programs show little evidence of addressing workforce needs and; (c) programs are relatively small with six averaging less than 15 students per cohort.

- 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. In its recommendation for alternatives to a CCC bachelor's degree 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.

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. Existing partnership between CCC and CSU that allow associate degree students to concurrently obtain their bachelor's degrees 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.

Other LAO recommendations of which are addressed in this bill include require justification of workforce needs prior to program approval, clarify CSU and UC's role in assessing programs and, improve application and approval process.

- 5) *Impact to CCCs core mission.* In 2013, prior to the passage of SB 850, the CCC Chancellor appointed a study group to review the various aspects of bachelor degrees at community colleges. The *Report from CCC 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 and limits 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. The authority granted to CSU are more limited than that proposed by this bill. However, this bill does have some control measures to avoid duplication with CSU and UC baccalaureate programs. This bill requires 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.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- The Chancellor's Office estimates that this bill could result in ongoing General Fund costs of \$258,000 to administer the expansion of the baccalaureate degree program.
- While participation in the program is voluntary for local community college districts, there could be additional, unknown costs to districts that opt to implement baccalaureate degree programs at their campuses. These costs

include the development of programs and applications for program approval. However, the start-up costs are likely to be absorbable while the ongoing costs of providing these programs would be offset by state apportionments and student fee revenues. At the state level, there could be an increase in Proposition 98 General Fund to provide apportionment funding to support students in baccalaureate degree programs, to the extent these students would not have otherwise enrolled at a community college.

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 8/26/21)

A. T. Still University/Santa Maria  
Allan Hancock College  
Antelope Valley Community College District  
Bakersfield College  
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office  
City College of San Francisco  
Coast Community College District  
Cupertino Chamber of Commerce  
Cuyamaca College  
Foothill College Dental Hygiene Program  
Foothill-de Anza Community College District  
GENup  
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District  
Kern Community College District  
Kern County Superintendent of Schools  
Los Angeles Community College District  
Mid-Peninsula Dental Society  
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 Jose-Evergreen Community College District  
Santa Monica Community College District  
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians  
Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District

Silicon Valley Leadership Group  
South Orange County Community College District  
Yuba Community College District

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 8/26/21)

Academic Senate of the California State University

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** The San Diego Community College District in a joint letter with other districts writes, in part, “Currently over twenty states already offer bachelor’s degrees at the community college level in select workforce fields to better accommodate labor needs. Access, affordability and high quality characterize these community college programs, and research shows that the state and local economies have benefited from this adjustment. The bill would further allow the state to advance the needs of the workforce by authorizing additional bachelor’s programs. For many professions, the baccalaureate degree has become the standard for entry into the workforce. This measure would increase access to baccalaureate degree programs while also increasing the earning power of graduates.”

**ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:** The Academic Senate of the California State University writes, in part, “The experiment/pilot with the original 15 CC programs has not proven effective. It has resulted in several of the programs terminating, not a ringing endorsement for expanding the scope of offerings to 30 new BA degree programs per year. Moreover, the premise that occupation categories are pushing for BA degrees over certifications in those areas is simply not borne out by empirical evidence. The findings of the LAO report suggests, ‘The Legislature should encourage the development of shorter training programs linked with industry needs.’ Additionally, enrollment in our extended education auxiliary certifications programs, as well as emerging certifications programs develop by private companies in private sectors demonstrate that the demand for certification programs is significantly increasing, not transforming into Bachelor’s degrees.”

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR:** 79-0, 6/1/21

**AYES:** Aguiar-Curry, Arambula, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Bigelow, Bloom, Boerner Horvath, Bryan, Burke, Calderon, Carrillo, Cervantes, Chau, Chen, Chiu, Choi, Cooley, Cooper, Cunningham, Megan Dahle, Daly, Davies, Flora, Fong, Frazier, Friedman, Gabriel, Gallagher, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gipson, Lorena Gonzalez, Gray, Grayson, Holden, Irwin, Jones-Sawyer, Kalra, Kiley, Lackey, Lee, Levine, Low, Maienschein, Mathis, Mayes, McCarty,

Medina, Mullin, Muratsuchi, Nazarian, Nguyen, O'Donnell, Patterson, Petrie-Norris, Quirk, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Reyes, Luz Rivas, Robert Rivas, Rodriguez, Blanca Rubio, Salas, Santiago, Seyarto, Smith, Stone, Ting, Valladares, Villapudua, Voepel, Waldron, Ward, Akilah Weber, Wicks, Wood, Rendon

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105  
8/31/21 9:34:25

\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*