

## CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 927 (Medina and Choi)

As Amended August 26, 2021

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Authorizes the Board of Governors (BOG) of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to establish permanent district baccalaureate degree programs, as specified.

*Major Provisions*

- 1) Extends the operation of the statewide baccalaureate degree pilot program indefinitely, removing the "pilot" title and authorizing previously approved programs to continue operating.
- 2) Removes the requirements that the program consist of a maximum of 15 community college district (CCD) programs and for a student to commence a program by the end of the 2022–23 academic year.
- 3) Requires a CCD seeking approval to offer a baccalaureate degree program to provide evidence of unmet workforce needs to the Chancellor of the CCC, as specified.
- 4) Requires, as part of the application and review process, the Chancellor of the CCC to ensure that a CCD is provided with two timelines in which to apply for a baccalaureate degree program and receive a response, as specified, that only 15 baccalaureate degree programs are approved during each application period allowing for a total of 30 baccalaureate degree programs per academic year, and that a minimum of 30 working days is taken to validate the submitted information and assess the workforce value of the proposed baccalaureate degree program, as specified.
- 5) Requires the Chancellor of the CCC to consult with and seek feedback from the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU), the President of the University of California (UC), and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) on proposed baccalaureate degree programs, as specified, and establishes a mechanism for the assessment, consultation, and approval of program where duplication is identified, as specified.
- 6) Require a CCD to continue to offer an associate degree program in the same academic subject for which a baccalaureate degree program has been approved, unless the community college district has receive approval from the chancellor to eliminate the associate degree program, as specified.
- 7) Specifies that the total number of baccalaureate degree programs offered by a CCD, at any time, does not exceed 25% of the total number of associate degree programs offered by the CCD, including associate degrees for transfer.

**Senate Amendments**

Amendments taken in the Senate:

- 1) Includes the President of AICCU amongst the entities where consultation and feedback is requested for the creation of new baccalaureate programs, and requires the Chancellor of the CCC to send relevant materials to the President of AICCU, who may notify institutions with physical campuses in the service area of the community college district seeking the proposed baccalaureate degree program.
- 2) Requires the total number of baccalaureate degree programs offered by a community college district, at any time, does not exceed 25% of the total number of associate degree programs offered by the community college district, including associate degrees for transfer.
- 3) Specifies that the CSU and the UC may assess whether proposed baccalaureate degree programs are duplicative of existing baccalaureate programs offered by state universities, and may submit written comments to the Chancellor of the CCC regarding proposed baccalaureate degree programs. If the CSU or the UC believes there is program duplication, written objections with supporting evidence must be submitted to the Chancellor of the CCC within 30 working days of receipt of the proposal. Upon receipt of written objections, the Chancellor of the CCC will have 30 working days to convene with the applicant and the segment or segments that raised an objection to collaborate and establish a written agreement before the program is approved.
- 4) Specifies that a formal objection filed by either the CSU or the UC shall address, at a minimum, each of the following issues in order to facilitate the consultation process:
  - a) The name and description of the baccalaureate degree program currently offered by the objecting segment that may be duplicated by the proposed baccalaureate degree program, including the campuses that offer the program; and,
  - b) The specific components of the proposed baccalaureate degree program deemed as duplicative.
- 5) Specifies that the written agreement established between the objecting segment and the Chancellor of the CCC must address, at a minimum, whether each of the elements of the original objection, as specified, have been resolved.

## COMMENTS

*Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Program.* SB 850 (Block), Chapter 747, Statutes of 2014, authorized the CCC BOG, 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.

*LAO review.* The LAO published their final review of the Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Program on January 24, 2020. The LAO made the following assessments:

- 1) *Some programs show signs of meeting workforce objectives.* Assessing whether programs met industry needs was difficult based on the information provided by colleges in their initial applications. Generally, colleges provided documents citing broad support for the proposed programs with little concrete evidence of the benefits to employers. In most of these cases,

the LAO found that graduates were using their bachelor's degrees to enter management positions where a bachelor's degree is a minimum requirement. The LAO found little evidence that graduates from these pilot programs were better prepared to fill these positions compared to those with other bachelor's degrees or that pilot program graduates were helping employers fill hard-to-staff positions.

- 2) *Programs provide several benefits for students.* The most common benefit of the pilot cited by students was the relatively low cost of attending the community college bachelor's degree programs. In a survey conducted by the pilot community colleges, 51% of respondents stated they would not have pursued a bachelor's degree if their community college program had not been offered. The pilot programs particularly benefited students with an associate degree in the same major and related work experience in the industry
- 3) *No general concern with academic quality.* The LAO found no notable issues with the 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. Furthermore, all programs have been accredited by the CCC regional accrediting body and, if applicable, have obtained third-party accreditation required by industry.
- 4) *Concerns with small size of programs.* The LAO was concerned with colleges operating relatively small programs, particularly six programs that averaged less than 15 students per cohort. The enrollment for these programs was far below the projections included in colleges' applications.
- 5) *Concerns with accelerated review and limited consultation.* The LAO noted that several concerns with the application review process, primarily due to the accelerated time line set by the CCC Chancellor's Office – about one month for colleges to submit applications and one month for the pilot programs to be selected. To meet these expedited time lines, colleges were not required to have completed all the typical local curriculum development and review processes. Moreover, the CCC Chancellor's Office and application review team did not have sufficient time to validate the information submitted and assess the workforce value of the proposed degrees. The LAO also identified several concerns regarding CCC's consultation with CSU. Most notably, the CCC provided CSU with little information about the programs and requested feedback within three business days.

### **According to the Author**

According to the author, "The success of the baccalaureate pilot programs at the CCC has enabled students across the state to pursue affordable degrees that will better prepare them to enter California's economy. Since SB 850 [(Block) of 2014], the demand to extend and expand these programs remains high. Therefore, AB 927 is a critical bill that will make permanent the successful baccalaureate degree programs and further allow other community colleges to introduce degrees that do not duplicate those at the CSU or UC, but instead fill a much needed gap in California's workforce development."

### **Arguments in Support**

*Arguments in support.* A coalition of CCDs, chambers of commerce, and community organizations wrote in support of AB 927. San Diego CCD, a co-sponsor of the bill, noted that, "In recent years, many organizations, including the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), have identified the need for over one million bachelor's degree holders in California in the coming decade, especially in workforce fields. The PPIC found that to keep up with the demand

for a college-educated workforce the state would need to increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded by 40%. In 2014, in order to help address this shortfall, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed SB 850 authorizing up to fifteen community college districts to offer bachelor's degrees in workforce fields that did not duplicate programs already offered at UC and CSU. Those programs have proven to be very successful serving a diverse population, including people who may not otherwise have access to a baccalaureate program."

"A statewide survey of the graduates of these programs found that 75% of graduates were first-generation college students, received FAFSA, struggled financially, experienced homelessness or housing insecurity, indicated a disability, or served in the military. 83% of graduates were employed within 3 months of completing their degree, and with over 90% employed in the same field of study. 94% continued to reside in California. Graduates saw an income boost of \$25,000 as a result of their programs. 82% of graduates feel that the bachelor's degree has prepared them well for their employment, with 87% stating that the value of the bachelor's program was both affordable and well worth the tuition."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

The CSU Academic Senate wrote in opposition to AB 927, as amended on April 12, 2021, that "It appears this bill is attempting to address an unfilled void in the bachelor's degree market, namely that certain occupational categories have shown an increasing demand for graduates with a BA, rather than a Certification, in those areas that are not specifically addressed at the CSU or UC...Although there are 115 accredited [CCCs], distributed in far more geographically dispersed areas of California than the CSU or UC, the argument is specious that the CCC is better equipped to handle local students for a four-year degree. First, at most CCCs, compared to CSU campuses, there are significantly more part-time than full-time instructors such that the faculty support is not there to accommodate four-year degrees, particularly (by contract) part-time faculty are precluded from counselling or committee work. Second Cal State Online, offering over 30 full programs, links the entire state to higher education BA degrees, whereas the CCC fully online AA degree program (Calbright college), has been an abysmal failure (only 900 registrants and 12 graduates during its existence). The CSU online system can easily scale to accommodate any additional proposed BA degrees, as upper-division General Education courses already exist online."

### **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.

**VOTES:**

**ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 11-0-1**

**YES:** Medina, Choi, Arambula, Bloom, Gabriel, Irwin, Levine, Low, Blanca Rubio, Santiago, Valladares

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Kiley

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 16-0-0**

**YES:** Lorena Gonzalez, Bigelow, Calderon, Carrillo, Chau, Megan Dahle, Davies, Fong, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Levine, Quirk, Robert Rivas, Akilah Weber, Holden, Luz Rivas

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0**

**YES:** 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

**SENATE FLOOR: 38-0-2**

**YES:** Allen, Archuleta, Atkins, Bates, Becker, Borgeas, Bradford, Caballero, Cortese, Dahle, Dodd, Durazo, Glazer, Gonzalez, Grove, Hertzberg, Hueso, Hurtado, Jones, Kamlager, Laird, Leyva, Limón, McGuire, Melendez, Min, Newman, Nielsen, Ochoa Bogh, Pan, Portantino, Roth, Rubio, Skinner, Umberg, Wieckowski, Wiener, Wilk

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Eggman, Stern

**UPDATED**

VERSION: August 26, 2021

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FN: 0001917