SUMMARY

This bill expands, commencing with the 2025–2026 academic year (AY), provisions of the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act to additionally require that a student who earns an associate degree for transfer (ADT) be deemed eligible for transfer into a University of California (UC) baccalaureate degree program if they meet certain requirements; requires the UC to guarantee admission with junior status to a California Community College (CCC) student who has earned an ADT, as specified; and, provides that a student admitted to the UC pursuant to this Act is entitled to receive priority over all other CCC transfer students, excluding CCC students who have entered into a transfer agreement between a CCC and the UC before the fall term of the 2025–2026 AY.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

1) Under the California Constitution, establishes the UC as a public trust to be administered by the UC Regents; and, grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services. (Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution).

2) Under the California Constitution, states that the university be entirely independent of all political or sectarian influence and kept free therefrom in the appointment of its regents and in the administration of its affairs. (Constitution of California, Article IX, Section 9 (f))

3) Provides that statutes related to UC (and most other aspects of the governance and operation of UC) are applicable only to the extent that the Regents of UC make such provisions applicable. (Education Code (EC) § 67400)

4) Declares the UC as the primary state-supported academic agency for research. (EC § 66010.4 (c))
5) Requires the segments of higher education to develop an intersegmental common core curriculum in general education for the purpose of transfer. This common core curriculum is known as the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC). Any student who completes the IGETC course pattern is deemed to have completed the lower division coursework required for transfer to the UC or the California State University (CSU). (EC § 66720)

6) Requests the UC to identify commonalities and differences in similar majors across all UC campuses and provide CCC students with the information in at least the top 20 majors. (EC § 66721.7)

7) Requests the UC Regents, on or before March 1 in each year from 2017 to 2022, inclusive, to submit an annual report to the Legislature, on the UC’s data on student transfers and to beginning on or before March 1, 2019, in its report to include the same data points, on transfer students with a UC Transfer Pathway. (EC § 66721.9)

8) Requires the governing board of each public postsecondary education segment to be accountable for the development and implementation of formal systemwide articulation agreements and transfer agreement programs, including those for general education or a transfer core curriculum, and other appropriate procedures to support and enhance the transfer function. (EC § 66738)

9) Requires the Chancellor of CSU, in consultation with the Academic Senate of the CSU, to establish specified components necessary for a clear degree path for transfer students, including specification of a systemwide lower division transfer curriculum for each high-demand baccalaureate major. (EC § 66739.5)

10) Establishes the STAR Act, which, in part, requires, commencing with the fall term of the 2011-2012 AY, a student that receives an ADT to be deemed eligible for transfer into a CSU baccalaureate degree program when the student meets specified requirements. Requires a granting of this degree when a student accomplishes both of the following:

   a) Completes 60 semester or 90 quarter units eligible for transfer to the CSU and that includes the CSU General Education Breadth program for IGETC, and a minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter units in a major area of emphasis as determined by the district.

   b) Obtains a minimum grade point average of 2.0. (EC § 66745, et seq.)

11) Requires the CSU and UC to jointly establish a singular lower division general education (GE) pathway for transfer admission into both segments, and also requires the CCC to place students who declare a goal of transfer on an ADT pathway for their intended major. Establishes the ADT intersegmental implementation committee to serve as the primary entity charged with oversight of the ADT [also referred to as the STAR Act of 2021]. (EC § 66749.8)

12) Requires the CSU Chancellor’s Office to implement articulated nursing degree transfer pathways for Associates Degree in Nursing (ADN) students at CCCs
seeking a Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing (BSN) at CSU prior to the 2012-2013 AY. (EC § 89267.5)

ANALYSIS

This bill expands provisions of the STAR Act regarding transfer admissions from a CCC to a CSU to apply to the UC. Specifically, it:

1) Deems, commencing with the fall term of the 2025-26 academic year, that a student who earns an ADT is eligible for transfer into a UC baccalaureate program when the student meets both of the following requirements:

   a) Completion of 60 semester units or 90 quarter units that are eligible for transfer to the UC, including both of the following:

      i) The singular lower division general education pathway, as specified.

      ii) A minimum of 18 semester units or 27 quarter units in a major or area of emphasis, as determined by the community college district, and meeting the requirements of an approved transfer model curriculum.

   b) Obtainment of a minimum grade point average of 3.0.

2) Prohibits a community college district from imposing any requirements in addition to the requirements in current law for a student to be eligible for the ADT and subsequent admission to the UC.

3) Encourages a community college district to consider the local articulation agreements and together work between the respective faculties from the affected CCC and UC to implement requirements in current law for a student to be eligible for the ADT.

4) Requires the UC to guarantee admission with junior status to a community college student who has earned an ADT, as specified, with admission to a program or major and concentration that is similar to the student’s ADT or that may be completed with 60 semester units, as specified.

5) Requires UC to grant a student priority admission to the student’s local UC campus and to a program or major and concentration that is similar to the student’s ADT, as determined by the UC campus to which the student is admitted.

6) Requires a UC campus to accept transfer model curriculum-aligned ADT in every major and concentration offered by the UC campus that meets the prescribed criteria and requires a UC campus to additionally make every effort to accept transfer model curriculum-aligned ADT in each of the UC concentrations.
7) Provides that a student admitted to the UC pursuant to the Act is entitled to receive priority over all other CCC transfer students, excluding CCC students who have entered into a transfer agreement between a CCC and the UC before the fall term of the 2025–2026 AY.

8) Provides that admission to UC under the Act does not guarantee admission for a specific major or campus.

9) Requires the UC to develop an admissions redirection process for ADT admitted students who apply for admission to the UC but are not accepted into the campus specifically applied to.

10) Establishes a 60-semester unit cap for majors requiring 120 semester units, provides flexibility for high-unit majors, and prohibits UC from requiring ADT students transferring to UC to repeat courses that are similar to those taken at the CCC that counted toward their ADT.

11) Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) in the spring of 2026 to review and report to the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, the Senate Committee on Education, and the respective education finance budget subcommittees of the Assembly and Senate, an update on the implementation of the STAR Act after the inclusion of the UC.

STAFF COMMENTS

1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, “AB 1749 delivers on a long-standing goal in California: to simplify and streamline transfer paths for hardworking, qualified community college students wishing to attend a UC or a CSU. Creating a universal transfer path will increase economic opportunity and prosperity for all Californians and help our state economy thrive.”

2) **Transfer education is a core mission of CCCs.** The provision of quality transfer education is a primary mission of the community colleges. 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 transfer function is an essential component of the commitment to access. The UC and CSU are to establish a lower division to upper division ratio of 40:60 in order to provide transfer opportunities into the upper division for community college students. The goal was that UC and CSU would enroll at least one community college transfer student for each two freshmen enrolled. All eligible CCC transfer students are to be provided a place in the upper division and are to be given priority over freshmen in the admissions process.

   CCC students have many options, they can earn a traditional Associate of Arts (AA) degree, transfer to a four-year university or upskill for the workforce. Students confront many choices with each variation of options. In 2010, the
Legislature enacted a law requiring CCCs to streamline transfer to CSU and AA degree completion by developing the ADT pathway. Other terminal AA degrees and transfer pathways including UC specific options continue to be offered.

3) **ADT benefits for students.** Since the enactment of SB 1440 (Padilla, Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010), the STAR Act, the ADT has made significant strides in streamlining the transfer process for students, and has become a successful pathway to earning a bachelor’s degree. Specifically, the Act requires CCC districts to develop and grant a transfer associate degree that deems the student eligible for transfer into the CSU, when the student meets certain course requirements. Completion of an ADT guarantees a student:

   a) Admission with junior status to a CSU campus but not to a specific campus or major.

   b) No additional lower-division CSU coursework.

   c) No more than 60-semester units of upper-division CSU coursework to complete a bachelor’s degree, in addition to the 60 units completed at community college, results in a 120-unit pathway to a bachelor’s degree.

   d) Priority admission at CSU.

   This bill seeks to require UC to extend these benefits to CCC students transferring to a UC campus. However, the California Constitution declares the UC an independent body governed by the UC Regents and retains the authority to manage all academic affairs (as noted in the background of this analysis). It’s unclear to what extent UC can be compelled to comply with the provisions of this bill.

4) **ADT participation.** Since developing the ADT, the CCC system has also entered into transfer agreements with private nonprofit universities, some of which now also guarantee admission and junior standing to students with an ADT.

   As of October 2020, over 280,000 CCC students have earned an ADT and over 40 ADT (now 41) pathways exist at CCC. Since 2012, the percent of students transferring with the ADT grew from 3 percent to 42 percent. In fall 2020, transfer students entering the CSU with an ADT represented nearly half of new community college transfers. More than half of ADT transfer student graduate from the CSU within two years and 83 percent within four years compared to 76 percent who transferred with a traditional associate degree.

5) **UC Transfer Admission Programs.** UC has several transfer admission programs for CCC students with more than 60 percent of transfer-students graduating from UC within two years and close to 90 percent in four years. These programs include:

   a) **Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG).** The TAG program guarantees CCC students admission to a specific major at the UC campus of their choice, provided they meet certain course and GPA requirements. Campuses
offering TAG agreements are Davis, Irvine, Merced, Riverside, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. By submitting a TAG agreement, students can confirm their admission to a particular UC campus and may receive an early review of their academic records, early admission notification, and individual guidance about major preparation and general education coursework. The conditions for a TAG often include major preparation requirements and a requisite GPA in those courses.

b) **UC Transfer Pathways.** The Transfer Pathways are a common set of major-based preparatory courses offered across all nine UC undergraduate campuses for twenty of the majors most sought after by CCC transfer applicants. As a clear roadmap for prospective transfers, a Transfer Pathway guides CCC students by identifying a single set of CCC courses, aligned with their chosen major, which will transfer to UC campuses. CCC students can follow one of UC’s Transfer Pathways to start preparing for their major at a community college and can keep their UC campus options open.

c) **Pathways+.** Pathways+ is the most recent transfer guarantee policy based on the UC Transfer Pathway majors. CCC students complete one of the UC Transfer Pathways, which includes major-preparatory coursework accepted across all nine UC campuses, as well as a TAG for the major. By completing a UC Transfer Pathway and a campus-based TAG in the same major, Pathways+ students are prepared for competitive admission across all nine of UC’s undergraduate campuses, while simultaneously securing guaranteed admission to one of the TAG campuses.

d) **UC Transfer Pathway (UCTP) Degrees.** The UCTP Associate Degrees in Chemistry and Physics are pilot community college degree programs that build on UC’s Pathways+ program.

e) **Associate Degree for Transfer.** Students who complete an ADT are eligible for transfer admission to UC and are admitted provided they meet other UC admission criteria and GPA requirements.

f) Other local transfer agreements.

This bill attempts to integrate the ADT pathway with the guarantee of admission within the UC system for the purposes of streamlining CSU and UC transfer admission pathways for community college students.

6) **Promising UC Merced pathway aligned with ADT.** The collaboration among regional leaders in the CCC, CSU, and UC systems has resulted in a streamlined pathway to a bachelor’s degree for students in the central valley. This initiative is lead by the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC) is aimed at simplifying and streamlining transfer pathways between community colleges and universities. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to create 2+2 pathways that build upon the ADT. This will enable students at any CCC in the region to prepare for transfer and complete a bachelor’s degree at either UC Merced or one of the three CSU campuses in the Valley (Stanislaus, Fresno, and
Bakersfield). This development is expected to have a positive impact on the educational attainment of students in the region.

7) **Arguments in opposition.** The UC argues, in part, in their opposition letter, “The University enrolls more community college students than any university of its type in the nation. Each year we receive approximately 40,000 transfer applications and, of those, 75 percent gain admission. These students do not only enroll at the University—they succeed, earning degrees and contributing to an educated, upwardly mobile California workforce. The current process through which campuses review applications—called comprehensive review—has allowed campuses to admit students from all walks of life. Nearly half of our transfer students are first generation or low income, and over 30 percent are non-native English speakers. In the last decade, enrollment among students from underrepresented groups has grown much faster than overall enrollment.

The University continues to expand access and ease the transfer process for our transfer students as part of an ongoing effort to evolve and ensure we are operating in the best interest of our students. Between 2014 and 2021, the number of community college applicants to the University increased by a third, and the number of community college students admitted to UC campuses increased by more than that—by 36 percent—during the same period.

Although the University both appreciates and understands the desire to streamline the transfer process, the current language in AB 1749 is not reflective of an approach that prioritizes successful outcomes for transfer students. In fact, AB 1749, if adopted, would harm students by forcing them to take courses they do not need, thus increasing their time to degree and the cost to attain their education. For example, many ADTs require more or different courses than UC campuses currently require for admission into certain majors. This means that students would be taking courses that the ADT requires but that in no way support progress toward their major. This places an unnecessary burden on our students.

In addition, AB 1749 would not allow us to use our comprehensive review process, thus undermining our considerable efforts to foster inclusivity and welcome a student body that reflects the broad composition of the State. We are concerned that guaranteeing admission solely on the basis of the courses students take and what grades they receive, ignores the many other important factors that makes a student who they are. Our current comprehensive review process already considers receipt of an ADT as one of many important factors in evaluating an application. AB 1749 would deprioritize the other factors we consider equally important, such as the student's life experiences and special circumstances, location of the student's college and residence, and experiences that demonstrate unusual promise for leadership. The University of California is prepared to work with the author, Legislature, and other key stakeholders to focus on student-centered approaches to improving transfer. This includes further refining the systemwide proposal developed earlier this year or developing a pilot program at a UC campus that could implement the ADT guarantee on a small scale to determine its impacts to our student body.”
8) **Arguments in support.** According to the Campaign for College Opportunity (Campaign), “despite making significant progress over the last decade to improve the transfer process through the ADT, California’s transfer process remains significantly impeded by misalignment between the CSU and UC’s preferred transfer programs, and remains overly complex as a result of the UC’s reliance on separate transfer admission programs rather than utilizing the ADT as a systemwide admission guarantee.”

Further, the Campaign states, that, “by utilizing separate campus by campus transfer admission guarantees via the TAG program, or even program by program transfer agreements via the Pathways Program, community college students are left to navigate a complex maze of costly decision points as they navigate the transfer maze, while also deciding whether their transfer goals are with the CSU or the UC. This misalignment is of particular concern for California’s low income, first generation, Black, and Latinx students. Latinx students represent over half of the students who declare a transfer goal, yet only 35% transfer within four years. Black students declare transfer goals at a much lower rate, only seven percent, and only five percent successfully transfer.”

The Campaign contends that, “there is much progress to celebrate about in our pursuit of a streamlined, simplified transfer pathway that is easy for students to navigate – with the most significant progress occurring when the CCC, CSU, and UC are willing and able to collaborate around shared goals and adopt universally accepted pathways for the purposes of transfer. The most recent example of our public higher education segments coalescing in this way is through the adoption of a singular General Education pathway (Cal-GETC) for the purposes of transfer to both the CSU and UC. The development of Cal-GETC took significant effort from each segments’ faculty representatives, but their efforts to prioritize the student experience will result in less confusion and improved time to degree for students. However, more work remains to simplify transfer. We owe it to our students to ensure that they have a clear roadmap for transfer success, and that community college students are able to utilize the ADT to earn an admissions guarantee to both the CSU and the UC.”

9) **Prior legislation**

AB 928 (Berman, Chapter 566, Statutes of 2021), the STAR Act of 2021, in part, required the CSU and UC to jointly establish a singular lower division GE pathway for transfer admission into both segments, and also required the CCC to place students who declare a goal of transfer on an ADT pathway for their intended major.

SB 440 (Padilla, Chapter 720, Statutes of 2013), required, prior to the 2014-2015 AY, a CCC create an ADT in every major that has an existing transfer model curricula (TMC). Specifies that once a TMC is approved by faculty, community colleges use it to design an ADT in that particular major.

AB 2302 (Paul Fong, Chapter 427, Statutes of 2010), made changes to existing law regarding transfer admissions to support the transfer pathway proposed by SB 1440 (Padilla) (as described below).
SB 1440 (Padilla, Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010) created the STAR Act, which, in part, created the ADT; a two-year 60-unit associate degrees for transfer that are fully transferable to CSU. These degrees require completion of: (1) a minimum of 18 units in a major or area of emphasis, as determined by each community college; and, (2) an approved set of general education requirements. Students who earn such a degree are automatically eligible to transfer to the CSU system as an upper-division student in a bachelor’s degree program and need only complete two additional years (an additional 60 units) of coursework to earn a bachelor’s degree.

SUPPORT

Campaign for College Opportunity (Sponsor)
African American Male Education Network & Development
Alliance College-ready Public Schools
Alliance for A Better Community
BLU Educational Foundation
California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office
California Competes
California School Employees Association
California Teachers Association
College for All Coalition
Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement
Consejo De Federaciones Mexicanas
Delores Huerta Foundation
Hispanas Organized for Political Equality
Inner City Struggle
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Los Angeles United Methodist Urban Foundation
Para Los Ninos
Parent Institute for Quality Education
Partnership for Los Angeles Schools
Promesa Boyle Heights
Southern California College Access Network
Southern California College Attainment Network
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
Television Academy Foundation
The Education Trust - West
uAspire
UC Student Association
Unite-LA
University of California Student Association
Young Invincibles

OPPOSITION

University of California
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