

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1555 (Hadwick)
As Amended March 19, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Creates a limited exemption from non-resident tuition for certain out-of-state students attending the College of the Siskiyous (COS).

Major Provisions

- 1) Exempts a student from the payment of the non-resident tuition fee if the student attends the COS and resides in one of the following designated counties in the neighboring State of Oregon:
 - a) Jackson;
 - b) Josephine; and,
 - c) Klamath.
- 2) Limits the number of students receiving this exemption to no more than 200 students per academic year.
- 3) Requires the governing board of the Siskiyou Joint Community College District (SJCCD) to adopt rules and regulations for determining the students' residence classification and to establish procedures for the appeal and review of residency determinations.
- 4) Makes legislative findings and declarations stating the need for a special statute applicable to the COS due to its geographic location near the Oregon State border.
- 5) Establishes that the bill may create a state-mandated local program by imposing additional administrative responsibilities on the SJCCD.

COMMENTS

Siskiyou County. Siskiyou County is located in inland northern California, adjacent to the Oregon State border. It is the fifth largest county in California by area. The COS has two campuses in Siskiyou County, one in the City of Weed and the other in the City of Yreka. The COS is the northernmost college in California and the only college in Siskiyou County. The COS is one of a small percentage of California Community College (CCC) campuses that provide on-campus housing for students.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). California and Oregon, along with a number of other states, participate in WICHE. The WICHE oversees three student reciprocal exchange programs allowing students to attend out of state colleges and universities at a reduced rate.

The COS participates in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), the WICHE exchange program serving undergraduates, which is a tuition savings program that makes attending out-of-

state colleges and universities more affordable for students in the West. Through WUE, qualifying students receive a reduced out-of-state tuition rate, making college more affordable. Further, through WUE, participating two- and four-year public colleges and universities across the West agree to charge out-of-state students no more than 150% of the institution's in-state rate. Tuition savings vary by school and/or major, but participating students can save tuition expenses with WUE.

Reciprocity agreements. The COS currently has a reciprocity agreement in place with the State of Oregon. The Oregon Exchange Program allows COS to admit up to 50 eligible students who are Oregon residents to attend COS at a discounted rate, rather than paying the full out-of-state tuition. This reciprocity agreement also includes in-state tuition to eligible California residents attending COS and seeking to transfer to and attend Southern Oregon University or Oregon Institute of Technology.

The author states, "it is important to note that this bill is not merely absorbing the cost of enrolling non-resident Oregon students. California and Oregon have preexisting 'good neighbor' policies which results in an essentially zero-sum fiscal effect to each state. Oregon enrolls California students at a reduced cost. California therefore can enroll Oregon students at a reduced cost. Students are not only more likely to go to college that they live near; they are also more likely to live near the college they attended. Attracting Oregon students to California who already live in and near the region will only better serve California."

Current law allows California Community College Districts (CCDs) meeting specific geographic requirements, and serving fewer than 1,500 students, to provide a non-resident tuition fee exemption to an unlimited number of non-resident students from a neighboring state and count them towards the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) for apportionment. Previously, the COS was eligible for this existing provision, however, in December of 2024 the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) informed the COS that it had exceeded 1,500 total students and would be subject to a cap of 100 non-resident students pursuant to statute for purposes of the tuition fee exemption and would need to adjust their programming accordingly for academic year 2025-26.

This measure allows up to 200 eligible Oregon resident students per academic year to attend the COS and pay in-state tuition while also counting the students towards the COS's SCFF apportionment. Similarly, SB 605 (Gaines), Chapter 657, Statutes of 2015, created a temporary exemption for non-resident students from Nevada attending the Lake Tahoe Community College, capped at 200 students per academic year, and allowed these students to count towards the college's SCFF apportionment funding, which SB 436 (Dahle), Chapter 573, Statutes of 2021, made permanent.

Cross-border community college access. Students living in neighboring Oregon counties may reside closer to the COS than to any Oregon institution of higher education. By allowing a limited number of these students to receive a non-resident tuition exemption, this measure seeks to improve access to postsecondary education and workforce training in rural border communities.

Limitation on participation. To limit fiscal and enrollment impacts and align with existing law for other regions with this allowance, this measure caps participation in the exemption program at 200 students per academic year. This provision appears intended to balance expanded access for nearby residents while maintaining the primary mission of serving California residents.

According to the Author

According to the author, "the Northern Siskiyou communities interact daily with neighboring Oregon towns for work, healthcare, commerce, and schooling and vice versa. Many residents in Jackson, Josephine, and Klamath counties are a part of an interconnected cross border community."

The author contends that, "the current tuition policies create financial barriers for these students, even though many live much closer to the College of the Siskiyous than any other public institution in their own state. Denying access to the College, simply because the state boundary cuts through the region, punishes our community for geography they do not control."

Further, the author states that, "AB 1555 addresses this inequity by allowing up to 200 eligible students to qualify for in-state tuition. College of the Siskiyous is uniquely structured as a CTE-heavy college with California-recognized firefighting, emergency medical services, law enforcement and nursing. Attracting Oregon students trained at the College can help immediately fill critical workforce shortages in my rural communities in Northern California."

Arguments in Support

According to COS, sponsors of this measure, "the border region of Siskiyou County and Southern Oregon functions as a singular, bi-state community where residents cross state lines daily for essential services. Given that 90% of community college students stay within a 50-mile radius of home, Siskiyous is uniquely positioned to fill workforce gaps that neighboring Oregon institutions currently cannot. By enrolling Oregon students in its specialized Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement, and Nursing programs, Siskiyous can directly address critical regional shortages, most notably in emergency medical training. Strengthening these pipelines not only bolsters the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection but also enhances California's overall climate resiliency."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) No new state costs. According to the CCCCCO, under a provision in existing law, until the 2025-26 academic year the COS had no cap on non-resident students it was allowed to offer in-state tuition to and count towards its SCFF apportionment. To the extent this bill's cap of 200 students results in increased Proposition 98 General Fund under the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), the CCCCCO reports that any such increase is likely to be fully funded through the existing SCFF growth budget allocation.
- 2) Because legislative authority for this exemption is at the request of the college, duties required under the bill would not expose the state to reimbursement costs.

VOTES**ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 9-0-1**

YES: Fong, DeMaio, Boerner, Jeff Gonzalez, Jackson, Kalra, Patel, Sharp-Collins, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 13-0-2

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Calderon, Muratsuchi

UPDATED

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