SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1831 (Ahrens) - California State University: executive compensation: restrictions

Version: June 4, 2026
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 6 - 1
Mandate: No
Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees to adopt a new policy governing presidential compensation, prohibiting compensation increases for certain executive positions during years in which tuition increases are approved and executive and management positions when represented employees do not receive salary increases.

Fiscal Impact: To the extent that any of the existing presidents leave CSU for higher compensation elsewhere as a result of this bill, it could result in additional, unknown General Fund recruitment costs for CSU to replace these employees.

Background: Existing law establishes the CSU and vests the CSU Board of Trustees with broad authority over the management, administration, and control of the university system. It authorizes the Board of Trustees to establish, classify, and adjust salaries for academic, administrative, and nonacademic employees, and requires the Board to consider the competitiveness of compensation relative to comparable educational institutions, public agencies, and private employers when recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.

Existing law requires actions regarding compensation for the Chancellor, vice chancellors, campus presidents, and other principal officers, as well as executive compensation policies, to occur in open session.

Existing law requires salary determinations and compensation policies to be made within available resources and consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the CSU Board of Trustees, on or before July 1, 2027, to repeal the executive compensation policy adopted in November 2025.

This bill requires the Board of Trustees to adopt a replacement executive compensation policy that:

1. Aligns the initial salary of campus presidents with their prior experience in comparable leadership positions and with compensation levels at comparable higher education institutions; and

2. Conditions annual salary increases for campus presidents on meeting or exceeding institutional and systemwide performance goals established by the

Chancellor and the Board of Trustees, including goals related to enrollment, employee evaluations, fundraising, student retention and graduation, student engagement, equity outcomes, and career readiness.

This bill prohibits compensation increases for the Chancellor, vice chancellors, and executive presidents during any fiscal year in which the Board of Trustees authorizes a tuition increase. It also prohibits compensation increases for the Chancellor, vice chancellors, executive presidents, and Management Personnel Plan employees during any fiscal year in which represented employees do not receive salary increases.

Staff Comments: The CSU Board of Trustees has statutory authority over personnel and compensation matters, including the authority to establish compensation policies and determine salaries necessary to recruit and retain qualified employees. This bill would place specific statutory limitations on how the Board may exercise that authority in the future. According to the author, "…enough is enough: CSU administrators are public civil servants and should not be getting rich on the backs of California families. It is outrageous that the California State University system is approving massive pay increases for administrators already making more than our Governor or the U.S. President while raising student tuition and fees, cutting classes and student services, and not honoring pay agreements made with their staff. AB 1831 (Ahrens) will rein in out-of-control CSU administrator compensation and center the focus of CSU management on California students and families being able to access affordable, quality public higher education."

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