

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2068 (Connolly) – As Amended March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: California State University: campus presidents: hiring process

SUMMARY: Establishes a procedure for the California State University to follow when the system seeks to hire a campus president. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines the following:
 - a) “Board” as the California State University Board of Trustees (CSU BOT);
 - b) “Trustee” as a member of the BOT.
 - c) “Chancellor” as the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU);
 - d) “Campus” as the CSU campus where the president has provided written notice to the CSU BOT and the Chancellor of their intention to resign or vacate the position of president; and,
 - e) “Recruitment” as actions taken by the Chancellor, the CSU BOT, or any employee of the CSU to find a member of the public to fill a vacant campus president position.
- 2) Prohibits a campus president from vacating their post, unless they have notified the Chancellor and the CSU BOT of their intention to resign or leave.
- 3) Requires the CSU BOT to convene a Presidential Search Committee (committee) within thirty days of receipt of the written notification of a president’s intention to leave and before any recruitment can be done to fill the vacancy.
- 4) Establishes the membership of the committee to include the following:
 - a) The president of the academic senate of the campus or their designee;
 - b) The president of the faculty collective bargaining unit or their designee;
 - c) The president of the classified collective bargaining unit or their designee;
 - d) The president of the Associated Students, incorporated or their designee;
 - e) One administrator from the campus appointed by the Chancellor or their designee;
 - f) One alumnus from the campus appointed by the Chancellor or their designee;
 - g) Three members of the public who are appointed by the membership of the committee as listed above:

- i) A superintendent of a local education agency located within the service area of the campus or their designee;
 - ii) The chief executive officer, president, or superintendent of a community college district within the service area of the campus or their designee; and,
 - iii) One representative from the public, who may be an elected official, from the service area of the campus or their designee;
- 5) Authorizes a designee to have the same privileges as the member of the committee.
- 6) Requires the committee in collaboration with the Chancellor's Office to:
 - a) Within thirty days of the creation of the committee:
 - i) Create a list of the desired qualities for a campus president and develop a job description for the campus president based on the qualities. The qualities and job description as created are to be used by the Chancellor's Office for the recruitment of candidates for the campus president vacancy; and,
 - ii) Create a scoring and ranking standard to screen applicants for the vacancy;
 - b) Conduct a statewide, and if necessary, a nationwide recruitment effort to find qualified candidates for the vacancy;
 - c) Within thirty days of the recruitment effort, conduct an initial screening of the applicants and select the top five candidates based on the scoring and ranking standards created by the committee;
 - d) Within thirty days of the selection of the top five candidates, conduct interviews with the top five candidates. The interviews may be done either in-person or virtually. The interview questions will be developed before the interviews by the committee in consultation with the campus community where there is a vacancy; and,
 - e) Upon completion of the interviews, decide on the final three candidates to fill the vacancy.
- 7) Requires the Chancellor, in collaboration with the committee and within thirty days of the receipt of the top three candidates from the committee, to host a public forum at the campus where there is a vacancy. The public forum will be advertised to the campus community for one week prior to scheduled forum and will be open to the public. The public forum will be recorded. The format of the forum will include:
 - a) A presentation by each of the final three candidates on their qualifications and vision or the campus;
 - b) A time for the candidates to answer questions from the committee and the Chancellor; and,
 - c) A time for the candidates to answer questions from the public in attendance at the forum.

- 8) Requires the Chancellor, within thirty days of the public forum, to share the recording of the public forum with the CSU BOT in a closed session of the CSU BOT.
- 9) Requires the CSU BOT, within thirty days of closed session, to make an offer of employment and appoint a campus president from the final three candidates.
- 10) Prohibits an offer of employment to be made until the candidate has participated in a public forum on the campus with the vacancy.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CSU system, made of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the CSU BOT, the powers, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system (Education Code (EDC) Section 66606 and 89030, et seq).
- 2) Authorizes the CSU BOT to provide by the rule for government of their appointees and employees all of the following: appointment; classification; terms; duties; pay and overtime pay; uniform and equipment allowances; travel expenses and allowances; rates for housing and lodging; moving expenses; leave of absence; tenure; vacation; holidays; layoff; dismissal; demotion; suspension; sick leave; reinstatement; and employer's contribution to employees', annuitants', and survivors' health benefits plans (EDC Section 89500 subdivision (a)).
- 3) Authorizes the CSU BOT, beginning on July 1, 1961, to fill academic and administrative positions at the CSU. Authorizes the CSU BOT to create and adjust the salaries and classifications of academic, nonacademic, and administrative positions and endows the CSU BOT with the sole authority to fill the positions by appointment without the need for additional approval by a state officer or agency for the salaries nor the classifications. The CSU BOT, when determining the initial salaries or when adjusting salaries for all positions, will consider whether the salary is a competitive offer to recruitment and retention of qualified candidates when compared to other educational institutions, private industries, or public jurisdictions that are employing personnel with similar duties and responsibilities. Clarifies the creation and adjustment of nonacademic employees' salaries will be in accordance with Government Code Section 19826 and the BOT will not make adjustments that require expenditures in excess of existing funding for the payment of salaries. Clarifies the Education Code sections pertaining to the appeals for dismissals, demotions, and suspension will be applicable to academic employees (EDC Section 66609, subdivision (c)).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Author's statement.* As stated by the author, "CSU students, faculty, staff, and community members deserve to have their voices heard in the presidential search process. AB 2068 will promote transparency and attract a broader, more diverse pool of candidates that will be hand-picked with campus community needs in mind. Every CSU campus impacts the lives of thousands of people, all of whom should be represented in the selection of its leader."

CSU procedures for hiring campus presidents. In the last six years, the CSU conducted presidential searches for 17 of the system’s 23 campuses.¹ The CSU BOT has the statutory authority to appoint an individual to the role of campus president and therefore is subsequently responsible for ensuring the person is qualified for the role. To ensure candidates are qualified and will maintain the leadership role for years to come, the CSU BOT has adopted a policy and procedure for how presidential searches are to be conducted to fill vacancies.² The current search process conducted by the CSU and the new process being suggested by AB 2068 (Connolly) are similar in nature. The table below provides a side by side comparison:

<i>Existing Presidential Search Process</i>	<i>Proposed by AB 2068 Presidential Search Process</i>
Sitting President retires or resigns.	Prior to resigning or retiring, the President must provide written notice to the Chancellor and the CSU BOT.
<p>Chancellor and the executive staff determine the timeline for the presidential search (typically with a 6-9 month timeline).</p> <p>The Chancellor’s Office engages a firm to help with the recruitment and search process.</p>	<p>Each step of the process is held to a 30 day timeline – for a total timeline of 7 months.</p> <p>Does not include explicit procedures for how the Chancellor’s Office conducts the search for qualified candidates.</p>
<p>Presidential Search Committee –</p> <p>The Chair of the CSU BOT, four trustees, the Chancellor, the chair of the academic senate, two faculty representatives, one member of the campus support staff, two students, one member of the campus advisory board, one campus alumnus, one vice president, two campus external community members, and one president from another campus.</p>	<p>Presidential Search Committee –</p> <p>The president of the academic senate of the campus, the president of the faculty collective bargaining unit, the president of the classified collective bargaining unit, the president of the Associated Students, Incorporated, of the campus, one administrator from the campus, one alumni from the campus, and three members of the public, as specified.</p>
<p>The Presidential Search Committee does all the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts organizational meeting and campus open forums to inform the job description for the candidate search; • Reviews all the resumes provided by the search; • Conducts the first round of interviews; and • Recommends semifinalists for second 	<p>The Presidential Search Committee does all the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines the qualities and job description for the candidate search; • Determines a scoring guide to rank the candidates; • Reviews all resumes and determine the top five candidates; • Conducts interviews for the top five candidates; and, • Recommends the top three to the

¹ <https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/about-the-csu/leadership/presidents>

² <https://calstate.policystat.com/policy/16104447/latest>

round of interviews.	Chancellor and the CSU BOT.
Second round of interviews are conducted by the Chancellor, Chair of the BOT, and Trustee who was the Chair of the Trustees Committee for the Selection of the President.	Public forum is conducted on the campus with the final three candidates.
Chancellor has one-on-one interviews with finalists (the number of finalists is not included in the policy).	The recorded public forum is shown to the CSU BOT in a closed session.
Finalist interviews with the CSU BOT in a closed session.	CSU BOT makes an offer of employment.
CSU BOT announces the next President.	

One of the fundamental principles of the CSU’s presidential search process is the confidentiality of the candidates. At no time does the CSU disclose the identity of the candidate and a candidate’s interaction with the CSU is limited to the CSU’s Presidential Search Committee and the CSU BOT. AB 2068 (Connolly) would establish an open presidential search, where steps of the hiring process include a public disclosure of possible candidates. This disclosure or public forum is a process that other states have employed to determine qualified candidates for open positions at postsecondary education institutions. As illustrated above, both of the hiring procedures include campus community involvement. The current CSU procedure has the Presidential Search Committee convening open meetings on the campus where the public shares their thoughts on the qualifications for a campus president. The current public forums inform the iterative process of the job description for the open president position. AB 2068 (Connolly) has two opportunities for the public to provide input during the hiring process. First, during the compilation of the interview questions for potential candidates and then during the public forum where the candidates are essentially interviewed by the campus community.

The CSU system is a public four-year university which prides itself on being regionally based and community-driven. The 23 campuses are overseen by presidents who have a vast influence on the campus culture, the economic impact of the region where the campus is located, and the social-emotional imprint upon a generation of students. Providing for a more transparent and community-driving approach in the hiring of campus presidents would ensure the leads of the campus are equipped to address the individual needs of their campus community.

Arguments in support. As the sponsors of the measure, the California Faculty Association, states “currently, the CSU employs a top-down approach when conducting its hiring process to fill campus president positions. The Chair of the CSU Board of Trustees (BOT) appoints a Trustees Committee for the Selection of the President (TCSP), composed of the Chair of the BOT, four trustees, and the CSU Chancellor. This committee is responsible for determining the attributes desired in candidates, reviewing and interviewing candidates, and the BOT is the final decision-maker. The chair of the TCSP appoints an advisory group that includes faculty representatives, the campus’s Academic Senate, students, alumni, and the president of another CSU campus all selected by the CSU Chancellor. Despite this process, the CSU Board of Trustees and CSU Chancellor make the final decision on the appointment of a campus president. Campus presidents

provide a vital role, not only as the liaison between the campus and the rest of the CSU system, but also between the campus and its surrounding community. Presidents are responsible for creating and maintaining relationships with local leaders and developing partnerships that are beneficial for both the CSU campus and those who live and work in the area.

CFA further states, “establishing a presidential search process that involves students, faculty, staff, campus administration, alumni, and the campus community would promote transparency and show a commitment to shared governance. Comprehensive input from the local community provides multiple perspectives on institutional needs, and this process may attract a broader, more diverse pool of candidates.”

Arguments in opposition. The CSU Office of the Chancellor respectfully opposes AB 2068 (Connolly) and states, “the advisory committee and a committee of trustees work together as a unified presidential search committee, participating equally in key stages of the process, including the campus open forum, candidate review and first-round interviews. This structure ensures that shared governance and stakeholder perspectives are fully integrated while maintaining a coordinated and effective search process. AB 2068 would replace this flexible, nationally aligned model—already grounded in meaningful campus and community engagement—with a rigid and prescriptive framework. Several provisions of the bill present significant challenges:

Compressed Timelines and Impact on Candidate Pools

The bill imposes multiple 30-day deadlines across major phases of the search. Presidential searches are complex, multi-stage processes that must align with academic calendars, stakeholder availability and recruitment cycles. These searches typically take six to nine months to ensure robust participation and a strong, diverse candidate pool. Compressed timelines would limit the ability of highly qualified candidates—often sitting presidents or senior leaders—to engage in the process, potentially excluding strong candidates who cannot meet accelerated deadlines.

Prescriptive Processes and Implementation Challenges

The bill mandates standardized approaches to job descriptions, scoring and candidate evaluation within compressed timeframes. CSU’s current process tailors leadership profiles and interview questions to each campus based on robust local stakeholder input gathered early through open forums and engagement. By contrast, the proposed framework centralizes key decisions within the search committee, reducing the level of broader campus and community input that informs the qualities, expectations and evaluation of candidates.

Public Finalist Forums and Recruitment Risks

AB 2068 requires public forums with final candidates prior to selection. CSU’s current process maintains strict confidentiality until appointment, consistent with widely recognized best practices in higher education leadership searches. Public disclosure at the finalist stage would likely deter highly qualified candidates—particularly those currently serving in leadership roles—who cannot risk professional disruption during an active search. The CSU’s current policy already incorporates robust community input that directly informs the leadership profile and interview process without compromising candidate confidentiality.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Faculty Association (Sponsor)
California State University Employees Union (CSUEU)
Teamsters California

Opposition

California State University, Office of the Chancellor

Analysis Prepared by: Ellen Cesaretti-Monroy / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960