

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Darshana R. Patel, Chair  
AB 2660 (Alvarez) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

**[Note: This bill has been double referred to the Assembly Committee on Education and was heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]**

**SUBJECT:** Public postsecondary education: intersegmental partnerships: STEM education

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the Cal-Bridge Program and ENLACE Program as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathway initiatives that support high school, undergraduate, and graduate students pursuing STEM careers. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Cal-Bridge Program as a statewide intersegmental partnership among the California Community Colleges (CCC), California State University (CSU), and University of California (UC).
- 2) Creates a structured pathway for undergraduate STEM students to pursue PhDs and careers in academia and the technology workforce.
- 3) Establishes five Cal-Bridge subprograms:
  - a) Undergraduate Program (mentorship, financial aid, research opportunities);
  - b) Summer Research Program;
  - c) Doctoral Program (PhD support and professional development);
  - d) Postdoctoral Program (faculty preparation); and
  - e) First Academic Scholar Training (FAST) Program (early exposure for community college students).
- 4) Establishes the ENLACE Program as a complementary, operationally independent program supporting STEM pathways from K–12 through undergraduate education.
- 5) Authorizes the use of state funding for scholarships, research opportunities, faculty mentorship, program administration, and professional development.
- 6) Provides that UC participation is contingent upon action by the Regents.
- 7) Defines the following terms:
  - a) “Cal-Bridge Program” means the statewide program as specified;
  - b) “ENLACE Program” means the program as specified;
  - c) “UC” means the University of California;

- d) “CCC” means the California Community Colleges;
- e) “CSU” means the California State University;
- f) “PhD” means doctor of philosophy;
- g) “Scholars” means students participating in the Cal-Bridge Program;
- h) “STEM” means science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and
- i) “STEM disciplines” include, but are not limited to, all branches of engineering, the biological, physical, health, and earth sciences, and medicine.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the CCC, the CSU, and the UC (Education Code (EC) Section 66010, et seq.).
- 2) Stipulates that the CCC is under the administration of the CCC Board of Governors; and, specifies that the CCC consists of community college districts (EC Section 70900).
- 3) Establishes the California State Summer School for Mathematics and Science (COSMOS) to create a multidisciplinary academic development program in mathematics and science and to enable pupils with demonstrated academic excellence in mathematics and science to receive intensive educational enrichment in these subjects. (EC 8660)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:**

*Need for the bill.* According to the author’s office, “The STEM public university professoriate in California does not come close to reflecting the state’s diversity. As a consequence, large numbers of students from groups underrepresented in the science and technology workforce leave STEM majors before completing their BS degree, thereby grossly underutilizing the talent of the state. California needs to enact Cal-Bridge and ENLACE to broaden opportunities by identifying and nurturing the diverse talent of all Californians.

For the past ten years, the Cal-Bridge program has brought together the three segments of the California higher education system (CC, CSU, and UC) to provide a comprehensive, end-to-end pathway for California’s diverse STEM undergraduates to attain a PhD and join the state’s public university faculty. Cal-Bridge has already been proven successful. Multiple graduates from this program have obtained tenure-track faculty jobs in the CSU and CCC systems.

Similarly, the ENLACE program at UC San Diego fosters binational collaboration by pairing high school and college students from the U.S. and Mexico for seven weeks of intensive, world-class research. By transcending borders and providing immersive lab experiences, ENLACE opens doors to STEM fields for traditionally underrepresented populations, inspiring participants to pursue PhDs and enriching the scientific community with diverse perspectives.”

*The ENLACE Program.* ENLACE is a summer research program that pairs current undergraduate and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students from the US and Mexico and places them in research

environments at participating UC campuses. It is currently housed at the UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering. According to information provided by the author:

The ENLACE Summer Research Program at UC San Diego was founded in 2013 and is now the largest binational summer research program in the United States. ENLACE pairs students from both sides of the California–México border for a seven-week immersive research experience focused on technologies benefiting the CaliBaja region. The program has grown from 5 students in 2013 to 200 students annually.

It provides mentorship, academic support, and research opportunities from high school onward, aiming to diversify and strengthen California's overall STEM workforce in research, industry, and healthcare.

By transcending borders and providing immersive lab experiences, ENLACE opens doors to STEM fields for traditionally underrepresented populations, inspiring participants to pursue PhDs and enriching the scientific community with diverse perspectives.

***Previous success of the ENLACE.*** According to information provided by ENLACE program administrators, the program is now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year and has over 1,300 alumni. The program began in 2013 with five students, and grew to 200 students in 2025. Of the high school students that have participated in the program, 100% have enrolled in college. Of the total participants in the program (high school and undergraduate), more than 15% are now in doctoral programs. Participants report the program has had an impact on college and graduate school choices, selection of degree program, expectations of college life, and knowledge of college and graduate school admissions processes.

***Cost of the program.*** According to its website, the cost to participate in ENLACE for the 2026 summer is \$7,500 USD, which participating students must cover. This fee includes:

- Housing for 7 weeks at the UC San Diego dormitories;
- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day of the week (all 7 days);
- Weekend field trips (3 planned for 2026);
- Personal protective equipment for the lab (safety glasses and lab coat);
- Participation in College/Graduate School Prep workshops; and
- Science & Society Lectures and Featured Scientist Lectures.

This fee does not cover airfare or visa processing fees. Scholarships are available based on financial need, and must be applied for separately.

***Similar state programs currently in statute.*** The California State Summer School for Mathematics & Science (COSMOS) program is an immersive summer research experience that places California high school students in STEM laboratories at participating UC campuses. Founded in 1998 (AB 2536 (Poochigian), Chapter 805, Statutes of 1998), it is currently funded through 2028.

Unlike ENLACE, which accepts students from Mexico, COSMOS only accepts current Californian high school students. However, according to their mission statement, it is their intention that program participation reflects the diversity of California, and prepares California students for future careers in STEM. When the program was authorized to accept international students, they were limited to 20 students or 5% of total participants, whichever was lower. Total cost to attend the program is currently \$5,300 per student.

***Recommended Committee Amendments.*** *Staff recommends the bill be amended* as follows:

- 1) Replace the name ENLACE K-12 Program with ENLACE High School Program.
- 2) Clarify that the ENLACE High School Program shall provide summer research experiences in STEM subjects at participating UC campuses to qualified 11th grade students.

***Arguments in support.*** According to the Alameda County Office of Education, “The lack of diversity in the California public university STEM faculty is a persistent problem, now further exacerbated by the federal government’s increasing opposition to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. This stance threatens to worsen existing consequences, from low participation among historically underrepresented populations in STEM education to the lack of diversity in the state’s science and technology workforce.

Within the past year, the federal government has also made extensive cuts to scientific research at California’s universities, affecting work on dementia, vaccines, women’s issues, and health problems affecting the LGBTQ+ community. While recent court rulings have forced the release of some grant funds, California must take proactive approaches to protect our STEM research infrastructure and professional workforce.

AB 2660 creates the ENLACE program to prepare high school and college students attending California community colleges, CSUs, or UCs for post-secondary STEM education and workforce opportunities. This bill also responds to federal cuts in STEM research funding and nationwide rollback in DEI programs by codifying the Cal-Bridge program to provide resources and research opportunities to students at the university level. These programs would work hand-in-hand to cultivate a pathway from secondary education to advanced doctoral research or high-level STEM careers, while ensuring that California’s scientific leadership reflects the diversity of the state itself.”

***Related legislation.*** SB 101 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 4, Statutes of 2025, provided \$5 million in one-time funding to support the Cal-Bridge Initiative. It stipulates that the funds could be used to support fellowships, undergraduate research, salaries and benefits for postdoctoral students, scholarships for students prior to their first PhD year, faculty professional development, and administration of the program.

AB 2349 (Wilson), of the 2023-24 Session, would have established the Cal-Bridge Program as an intersegmental partnership program between the CCCs, the CSU, and the UC to promote diversity in STEM fields. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 101 (Skinner), Chapter 12, Statutes of 2023, provided \$4 million one-time GF to support the Cal-Bridge Initiative. Stipulating that the funds could be used to support fellowships, undergraduate research, salaries and benefits for postdoctoral students, scholarships for students

prior to their first PhD year, faculty professional development, and administration of the program.

SB 154 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 43, Statutes of 2022, provided \$5 million in one-time funding to support the Cal-Bridge Initiative. It stipulates that the funds could be used to support fellowships, undergraduate research, salaries and benefits for postdoctoral students, scholarships for students prior to their first PhD year, faculty professional development, and administration of the program.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Alameda County Office of Education  
American Association of University Women - California  
CA Commission on the Status of Women and Girls  
Delta Kappa Gamma International - Chi State  
Southwestern Community College District  
Technet

**Opposition**

None on file.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Sarah Cate Hawthorne / ED. / (916) 319-2087