
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2660 **Hearing Date:** June 17, 2026
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Version: April 27, 2026
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
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Subject: Public postsecondary education: intersegmental partnerships: STEM education.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Cal-Bridge Program and ENLACE Program as intersegmental science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathway initiatives to increase the number and diversity of students pursuing STEM doctors of philosophy (PhDs) and entering California's STEM workforce.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC). (Education Code (EC) § 66010, et seq.)
- 2) Stipulates that the CCC is under the administration of the CCC Board of Governors; and specifies that the CCC consist of community college districts. (EC § 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)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the Cal-Bridge Program as a fully intersegmental partnership program between the CCC, CSU, and UC that is independent of the CCC, CSU, and UC, but is administratively housed at either a CSU or UC campus.
- 2) Establishes the ENLACE Program as an operationally independent program that works in collaboration with the Cal-Bridge Program for the purpose of serving as a critical component of the state's STEM education ecosystem. The ENLACE

Program is to operate as an intersegmental STEM pathway program to serve students in high school and undergraduate studies across all STEM disciplines.

- 3) Requires recruitment of CCC, CSU, and UC students majoring in STEM disciplines into the Cal-Bridge Program and requires that the Cal-Bridge Program have all of the following goals:
 - a) Preparing students to apply to PhD programs in STEM disciplines, particularly UC STEM PhD programs.
 - b) Providing summer research experiences for community college and CSU undergraduates to prepare them for PhD programs or the California STEM workforce.
 - c) Supporting students to become PhD scholars and preparing them to become competitive postsecondary faculty candidates and leaders in California's technology industry.
 - d) Offering postdoctoral opportunities in the UC and CSU systems to further prepare students to become faculty in California's postsecondary education system.
 - e) Maintaining an ongoing support network of scholars and faculty to support the continuation and growth of the Cal-Bridge Program and to create a community of support.
- 4) Requires that the Cal-Bridge Program consist of the following five distinct but interrelated programs:
 - a) The Cal-Bridge Undergraduate Program, which is to provide specified types of support, including financial, mentorship, professional development, and research opportunities to CCC and CSU undergraduate scholars majoring in the physics, astronomy, computer science, computer engineering, mathematics, and statistics disciplines with the goal of supporting them to successfully apply to STEM PhD programs.
 - b) The Cal-Bridge Summer Program, which is to provide research opportunities for Cal-Bridge undergraduate and community college scholars to conduct summer research at UC and other research sites.
 - c) The Cal-Bridge Doctoral Program, which is to provide specified types of support including financial, professional development and mentorship to students in CSU and UC STEM PhD programs, particularly those in the UC system, to prepare them to become competitive postsecondary faculty candidates or leaders in California's technology industry. The bill requires, for purposes of providing continued support through the comprehensive Cal-Bridge pathway, that eligibility for the Cal-Bridge Doctoral Program be extended to any California undergraduate who majored in a discipline served by the Cal-Bridge Undergraduate Program, who participated in the Cal-Bridge Undergraduate Program, the ENLACE Program, the UC

Leadership Excellence through Advanced Degrees program, or other program with similar goals, and who matriculates to a UC PhD program in a STEM discipline.

- d) The Cal-Bridge Postdoctoral Program, which is to provide additional preparation for postdoctoral scholars to become competitive faculty candidates. The Cal-Bridge Postdoctoral Program is to include all of the following:
 - i) Two-year Cal-Bridge postdoctoral scholar positions.
 - ii) For UC and CSU Cal-Bridge postdoctoral scholars, sponsorship by STEM-instructing faculty and receive on-campus research opportunities under the direct supervision of faculty.
 - iii) For CSU postdoctoral scholars, the ability to teach classes at the segment as the instructors of record.
- e) The Cal-Bridge First Academic Scholar Training (FAST) Program, which is To provide preparation for CCC students to join the California STEM workforce, and for those interested, to successfully apply to the Cal-Bridge Undergraduate Program. The Cal-Bridge FAST Program is to include computer programming workshops, small research projects, and research opportunities in STEM disciplines specifically targeted at the CCC students.
- f) The ENLACE Program, which is to operate independently from, but in collaboration with the Cal-Bridge Program toward shared statewide STEM workforce development goals, is to consist of the ENLACE High School and Undergraduate Program, as follows:
 - i) The ENLACE High School and Undergraduate Program is to provide support, including academic and mentorship, to students from high school through undergraduate studies at CCC, CSU, and UC campuses majoring in all STEM disciplines, including engineering, the biological, physical, earth, and health sciences, and medicine.
 - ii) The high school programming conducted by the ENLACE High School and Undergraduate Program is to provide summer research experiences in STEM subjects at a participating UC to qualified 11th grade pupils.
- 5) Requires that the Cal-Bridge Program and the ENLACE Program seek areas for formal and informal collaboration to enhance their joint missions of developing a diverse and robust California STEM workforce. The Legislature intends for the programs to explore opportunities to leverage their distinct pathways from high school through doctoral and professional degrees to create a more comprehensive and inclusive ecosystem for STEM education in the state.

- 6) Specifies the ways funding appropriated for purposes of the Cal-Bridge Program may be used, including financial aid to students and administrative salaries, among other things.
- 7) States that the bill's provisions are only applicable to the UC only to the extent that the UC Regents make it applicable.
- 8) Defines various terms for the purposes of the bill.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, "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 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."

- 2) **Existing Cal-Bridge program.** The Cal-Bridge Program is a partnership between UC, CSU, and CCC faculty that aims to increase the number of CSU students from groups traditionally underrepresented in astronomy and physics who complete bachelor's degrees and enter a PhD program, particularly at one of the participating UC campuses (Irvine, Los Angeles, San Diego, Riverside, and Santa Barbara). The main Cal-Bridge Program is a partnership between 9 UCs, 22 CSUs, and CCCs, with over 200 faculty from the three systems participating. Scholars are recruited from CSU and CCC campuses across the state, with the help of local faculty or staff liaisons at each campus. CCC students transfer to a participating CSU to join the program. In the Cal-Bridge Summer Program, students are selected from the same network of all 23 CSUs and 116 CCC to spend 8-10 weeks conducting research in STEM disciplines at one of 20 major research institutions in California and across the country. To be eligible for the Cal-Bridge Program, applicants must be 18 years old, enrolled in a CSU campus with a physics, astronomy, computer science, or mathematics major, or a CCC student transferring to a 4-year institution.

The Cal-Bridge Program has been operating since 2014 and includes participation from CCC, CSU, and UC faculty and campuses throughout the state. This bill codifies the program.

- 3) **Student support and educational outcomes.** Once selected, Cal-Bridge Scholars benefit from financial support, intensive joint mentoring by CSU and UC faculty, professional development workshops, and exposure to research opportunities at the participating UC campuses. Specifically, students benefit from: 1) joint intensive mentoring by two faculty, one from their home CSU campus and the other from a nearby UC campus; 2) substantial need-based scholarships up to \$10,000 per year to allow the scholars to reduce work hours and focus on academics; 3) professional development workshops designed to prepare the scholars to successfully apply to PhD programs; and 4) providing summer research opportunities, primarily through the Cal-Bridge Summer Program. According to information provided by the author's office, scholars in the Cal-Bridge Program have a 70% acceptance rate to PhD programs with their first application, a statistic that is unmatched anywhere else in the country. The first cohorts of scholars have now obtained their bachelor's and doctoral degrees and have begun to join the ranks of California's public university faculty.
- 4) **STEM diversity and workforce development.** Information provided by the author demonstrates the lack of representation in STEM degrees, particularly doctoral degrees and faculty positions, among historically underrepresented groups. According to a recent report of the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, "Hispanic, Black, and American Indian or Alaska Native persons collectively account for 37% of the U.S. population ages 18–34 years in 2021 and 26% of science and engineering bachelor's, % of science and engineering master's, and 16% of science and engineering doctoral degrees earned by U.S. citizens and permanent residents in 2020. Women were also underrepresented among degree recipients at all degree levels in physical and earth sciences, mathematics and computer sciences, and engineering."

Proponents of the measure contend that Cal-Bridge helps address these disparities by providing financial support, mentoring, professional development, and research opportunities. Cal-Bridge scholars have achieved a 92% bachelor's degree completion rate, compared to approximately 62% for the CSU system overall. The program has awarded bachelor's degrees to 66 students in 2024, 66 students in 2025, and 58 students in 2026. Since the first Cal-Bridge PhD graduate completed the program in 2021, 20 program participants have earned doctoral degrees.

- 5) **Cal-Bridge Program funding.** The National Science Foundation funded the Cal-Bridge Program until 2022. Since then, the state has stepped in to support the program providing funding in multiple years through the annual budget act most recently with \$5 million in the in the 2025 budget act.
- 6) **Existing ENLACE program.** ENLACE is a summer research program established in 2013 at UC San Diego and pairs Californian and Mexican 11th grade or undergraduate students for a seven-week immersive research experience in a STEM field relevant to the CaliBaja region. The program provides

mentorship, academic support, and research opportunities for students and aims to diversify California's STEM workforce in research, industry, and healthcare through providing opportunities in STEM fields to typically underrepresented students. The program has grown from 5 students in 2013 to 200 students annually. The cost to participate in 2026 is \$7,500 per student, not including airfare or visa processing fees. This bill would formally establish ENLACE and Cal Bridget programs in statute and specify their missions, structures, goals, and allowable uses of funding.

7) **Related legislation.**

AB 2349 (Wilson, 2024) would have established, subject to appropriation, the Cal-Bridge Program, as an intersegmental partnership program between the CCCs, the CSU, and the UC to promote diversity in STEM fields. AB 2349 died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SUPPORT

Alameda County Office of Education
American Association of University Women - California
California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
Delta Kappa Gamma International - Chi State
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges

OPPOSITION

None received

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