
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2694 (Alvarez) - Public postsecondary education: community colleges: statewide baccalaureate degree program

Version: July 6, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 6 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill modifies the existing community college district baccalaureate degree program by authorizing program duplication if there is no substantially similar program offered at the California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) within the geographic region.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Chancellor's Office indicates that the bill would not result in additional Proposition 98 General Fund costs to participating community college districts (CCDs) as the bill would operate within the fiscal conditions already established in statute for baccalaureate degree programs offered at community colleges. Additionally, the Chancellor's Office indicates that while the bill may lead to an overall increase in the number of new baccalaureate degree programs being approved, it cannot increase per-student costs as current statute ties funding for these programs to the current community college marginal rate for a full-time equivalent student. Further, community college districts must demonstrate full financial and operational capacity, including staffing, student supports, and long-term sustainability, before receiving authorization to offer a baccalaureate degree program.
- Depending on the number of new community college baccalaureate programs that are authorized as a result of this bill, it could impact enrollment across UC and CSU campuses and pose significant General Fund cost pressures.
- The Chancellor's Office may incur minor General Fund costs to complete the annual report and provide technical assistance.

Background: Under existing law, the primary mission of the California State University (CSU) is to offer undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education including teacher education. The CSU is authorized to establish two-year programs only when mutually agreed upon by the Trustees and the CCC Board of Governors. The CSU is also authorized to jointly award the doctoral degree with the University of California (UC) and with one or more independent institutions of higher education.

The UC is authorized to provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and has exclusive jurisdiction in public higher education over graduate instruction in the

professions of law, medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. The UC is also the primary state-supported academic agency for research.

Under existing law, the mission and function of the CCC is the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCC are authorized to grant the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees. The community colleges are also required to offer learning supports to close learning gaps, English as a Second Language instruction, and adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level.

Existing law authorizes the CCC BOG, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish baccalaureate degree programs that do not duplicate a baccalaureate degree program offered by the CSU or UC. It allows for the approval of 30 CCC baccalaureate degree programs per academic year. Existing law also requires the CCC Chancellor to consult with and seek feedback from the CSU Chancellor, the UC President, and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities on proposed baccalaureate degree programs, as specified, and establishes a mechanism for the assessment, consultation, and approval of programs where duplication is identified, as specified.

Proposed Law: This bill modifies the eligibility and approval process for a community college district participating in the statewide CCC baccalaureate degree program. Specifically, this bill adds conditions for eligibility for a district participating in the CCC baccalaureate degree program to additionally satisfy either of the following:

1. Demonstrate, in its application, that it meets or exceeds performance benchmarks and goals for associate degree and certificate completion, as established by the CCC BOG.
2. If the district has not yet met the required benchmarks and goals for associate degree programs, submit a board-adopted improvement plan with measurable milestones consistent with the district's obligations under the strategic plan of the CCCs.

This bill prohibits a district from offering a baccalaureate degree program or program curricula substantially similar, instead of already offered, to a program offered by the CSU or the UC.

This bill allows the offering of a CCC baccalaureate degree program that is substantially similar where the CSU or UC does not enroll students from that geographic region in the same degree pathway or where documented unmet regional workforce needs justify the program.

This bill includes in the list of information required for submission for review by the Chancellor's Office and CCC Board of Governors, documentation demonstrating that the district meets the attainment eligibility requirements including the performance benchmarks and goals for associate degree and certificate completion for the community college district, or where applicable, the board-adopted improvement plan.

This bill reduces the total number of baccalaureate degree programs that may be offered by a district, at any time, from less than 25 percent to 15 percent of the total number of associate degree programs offered by the district.

This bill removes the requirement that the Chancellor's Office notify and send materials to the CSU Chancellor, UC President and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities about the proposed baccalaureate degree program.

This bill removes the current process by which CSU or UC may assess and object to a program that they believe duplicates a UC or CSU existing degree program and instead requires that the CCC Chancellor consult with and seek feedback from the CSU Chancellor and UC President regarding proposed baccalaureate degree programs that may be substantially similar to CSU or UC programs offered within the geographic region of the proposing district. If the CSU or UC believe there is substantial similarity within the geographic region, they may submit a written objection with supporting evidence. Upon receipt of an objection, the Chancellor's Office is required to convene the applicant and the objector to establish a written agreement before the program is approved.

This bill requires the Chancellor's Office to annually report to the Legislature, no later than March 1, on the status of all approved baccalaureate degree programs, the approved information for each approved program, including student outcome data and evidence of achieving the specified attainment goals.

Related Legislation: AB 2301 (Soria, 2026) requires the Chancellor's Office to establish a Community College Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program that would authorize 10 community college districts to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. AB 2301 is pending in this committee.

AB 664 (Alvarez, 2026) authorizes the CCC Chancellor to allow Southwestern Community College District to offer four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs, outside of the existing CCC baccalaureate degree approval process. AB 664 is pending in this committee.

SB 960 (Cabaldon, 2026) limits the prohibition on CCC duplication of CSU baccalaureate degree programs to instances where a CSU's campus local admission area includes or overlaps with the CCC district's territory, except when the CSU program has been impacted for at least three consecutive years. SB 960 is pending in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1400 (Soria, 2025) would have required the CCC Chancellor to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Pilot Program that authorizes select districts to offer a BSN degree. AB 2104 was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

Last year, I vetoed a nearly identical bill, citing two primary reasons that continue to persist.

First, the 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program,

which may be used to develop or expand BSN partnerships with UC, CSU, and independent nonprofit higher education institutions. These partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education must continue to collaborate on building these programs, and returning this bill will ensure those collaborative efforts are not undermined.

Second, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been authorized to offer independent programs outside of their traditional roles, provided they do not duplicate degree offerings of other public segments. I encourage the CCC system to focus on implementing this expanded authority and to ensure that it can continue to make progress on the unique and vital role the CCC plays in serving its students and the state. Given these significant changes, a pause should be maintained to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.

Staff Comments: Existing law authorizes the CSU and CCCs to go beyond their core missions that are outlined in statute to offer doctoral degrees and baccalaureate degree programs as long as the programs do not duplicate those offered by the other segments with primary jurisdiction. existing law generally prohibits a CCC from offering a baccalaureate degree that duplicates one already offered by CSU or UC. Currently, there are more than 50 approved CCC baccalaureate programs statewide, primarily in applied and workforce-related fields such as health care, industrial technology, and public safety. Specific degree offerings include respiratory care, mortuary science, industrial automation, and public safety management. This bill would narrow the prohibition on duplication by permitting substantially similar programs, thereby broadening the circumstances under which community colleges may offer programs that overlap with UC or CSU. Specifically, this bill would replace the current statewide duplication standard with one based largely on geographic region, allowing substantially similar programs where the CSU or UC does not enroll students from that region or where documented regional workforce need exists. The bill defines “substantially similar” to mean programs whose curriculum, learning outcomes, and objectives are materially overlapping such that they serve indistinguishable academic and workforce purposes. Further, this bill modifies the existing consultation process by eliminating the requirement that the Chancellor’s office provide application materials to the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities and replacing the current duplication review process with one requiring the Chancellor’s Office to consult with the CSU and UC when an objection is raised. According to the author, “California’s economic future depends on our ability to meet regional workforce demands while expanding equitable access to higher education. AB 2694 ensures that community college bachelor’s degree programs remain responsive, affordable, and aligned with local labor market needs. By clarifying outdated statutory barriers, this bill helps students—especially those who are place-bound or underserved—access high-quality, four-year degree opportunities in their communities.”

-- END --