
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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| Bill No: | AB 500 | Hearing Date: | July 16, 2025 |
| Author: | Quirk-Silva | | |
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| Urgency: | No | Fiscal: | Yes |
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Subject: University of California: admissions changes.

SUMMARY

This bill requests the University of California (UC), to undertake certain actions before a proposal to change the conditions for undergraduate admissions is adopted by the UC Regents, including providing the proposal to the official UC student organization, the State Board of Education (SBE), the California State University (CSU) Trustees and each UC Regent. It further requires, upon receiving the proposal from UC, the SBE and the CSU Trustees to identify as an item for discussion and discuss the proposal at an open meeting of each of these boards, respectively. The bill also outlines procedural requirements the UC is requested to follow before considering and voting on a proposal.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the UC as a public trust administered by the UC Regents and endows the Regents with full powers of organization and government. Clarifies the UC is only beholden to legislative control as necessary to ensure the security of funds, compliance with the terms of the endowments of the university, and competitive bidding procedures where applicable to the university by statute for construction contracts, sales of property, and purchasing of materials, goods and services. (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (a) of the California State Constitution)
- 2) Authorizes the Board of Regents to be comprised of seven ex-officio members, 18 members of the public appointed by the Governor, one student appointed by the Regents, and one faculty appointed by the Regents. The seven ex-officio members on the Board are the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), the president and vice president of the UC alumni association, and the acting president of the UC system. (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (a) of the California State Constitution)
- 3) Stipulates the UC is to be entirely independent of all political or sectarian influence and kept free in the appointment of its Regents and in the administration of the UC's affairs. Prohibits the UC from barring a person from being admitted to any department of the UC based on the person's race, religion, ethnic heritage, or sex. Gives the Regents legal title, management, and disposition of UC property. Authorizes the Regents to do the following:

- a) Use the UC seal (enter into contracts);
 - b) Sue or be sued; and,
 - c) Delegate any function of the university to committees of the Regents or the faculty of the University or others, as deemed wise by the Regents. (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (f) of the California State Constitution)
- 4) Mandates the meetings of the Regents be public with exceptions and notices as authorized by law. (Article IX, Section 9, subdivision (g) of the California State Constitution)
- 5) States it is the intent of the Legislature for the academic standards for a high school course to meet the model uniform set of standards for admission to the CSU and UC (A-G course criteria) to align with the standards developed by the Academic Content Standards Commission in 2010 and adopted by the SBE. Requires the CSU and requests the UC to do the following:
- a) Establish a model uniform set of standards for high school courses (A-G course criteria) for the purpose of determining eligibility for admission to undergraduate programs offered by the UC and CSU;
 - b) When developing the A-G course criteria, the faculty of the CSU and UC may work in consultation with administrators and faculty from K-12 schools. Requires K-12 schools who are consulted to establish advisory boards with specified membership, including parents, classroom teachers in career technical education (CTE), business and industry representatives, to provide additional input;
 - c) Develop and implement a process for approving high school courses meeting the A-G course criteria by January 1, 2006. The courses will be approved by August 1 of each school year and a notification will be provided to the high school of the approval or denial of the course as meeting the A-G course criteria;
 - d) Develop a procedure to evaluate a high school career education course as meeting the A-G course criteria, as defined;
 - e) Take into consideration any previous work conducted to approve a high school course as meeting the A-G course criteria; and
 - f) Develop guidelines for high school computer courses to be approved as meeting the A-G course criteria. (Education Code (EC) § 60605.8)
- 6) Requires the Legislature to provide for the appointment or election of the SBE, and requires it to adopt textbooks for grades one through eight. (Article IX, Sections 7 and 7.5 of the California Constitution)
- 7) Establishes requirements for graduation from high school, including three courses in English, two courses in mathematics, two courses in science, three courses in social studies, one course in visual or performing arts or world

languages or CTE, two courses in physical education, a one-semester course in ethnic studies, and a one semester course in personal financial education. (EC § 51225.3)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requests the UC, before a proposal regarding a change to conditions for undergraduate admissions is adopted by the regents, to complete all of the following:
 - a) Provide the proposal to the official student organization representing the UC student body, the SBE, and the CSU Trustees for consideration.
 - b) Provide to each UC Regent:
 - i) Notification of the UC Regents meeting at which the proposal is to be considered.
 - ii) Information and materials regarding the proposal, including on the impact on local educational agencies (LEA), the UC, and the CSU, in advance of the meeting at which the proposal is to be considered.
 - c) Provide to the public a meeting notice regarding the UC Regents' intent to vote on the proposal pursuant to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act and before the open session begins, ensure that the proposal has been made available to the public present at the session where it will be considered for adoption.
 - d) Adopt the proposal by majority vote of the UC Regents through the making of a motion. The bill clarifies that a full discussion, in open session, of the contents of the motion or the reason why the proposal should or should not be adopted is not prohibited.
- 2) Requires, upon receiving the proposal from UC, the SBE, and the CSU Trustees to identify as an item for discussion and discuss the proposal at an open meeting of each of the these boards, respectively.
- 3) Defines various terms for purposes of the bill including:
 - a) "A change to the conditions for undergraduate admissions" to mean any of the following:
 - i) A change to the policy for undergraduate admissions to the UC adopted by the UC Regents.
 - ii) A reclassification or modification of which types of high school

courses meet the A-G subject matter requirements for admission to the UC.

- iii) A change to the admissions requirement criteria used in the review and certification of high school courses as meeting the A-G subject matter requirements for admission to the UC.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, “AB 500 seeks to address the lack of transparency and stakeholder input in changes to undergraduate admissions criteria at the University of California (UC). Currently, UC can modify its admissions policies without external review or consultation, which has led to abrupt and unclear changes, such as the recent removal of data science as an alternative to Algebra II. These changes have disproportionately impacted students from under-resourced schools who may already face limited access to required coursework. Without structured oversight, midstream shifts can create barriers to higher education for students statewide, particularly those from historically marginalized communities.”
- 2) **Undergraduate admissions.** UC Regent policy specifies that admission requirements established by the University follow the guidelines set by the California Master Plan for Higher Education, which requires that the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of the state’s high school graduates, as well as those transfer students who have successfully completed specific college work, be eligible for admission to the UC. Accordingly, UC’s admission policy deems a student eligible for admission to the system (guaranteed placement, though not necessarily to the first-choice campus) for all California applicants who are in the top 9 percent of California high school graduates (eligibility in the statewide context) or in the top 9 percent of their respective high school class (eligibility in the local context). Eligibility in the local and statewide context is based on a combination of GPA and completed A-G high school coursework. Applicants who are not in the top 9 percent must also meet eligibility requirements—completion of A-G high school courses with a weighted GPA of at least 3.0 for residents (3.4 for nonresidents)—and are considered through a comprehensive review process that evaluates 13 factors on academic and personal achievements. A limited number of students may also be admitted by exception to the academic achievement and preparation requirements. Additionally, exceptions to the academic and achievement and preparation standards may be applied to applied number of students.
- 3) **A-G course requirements.** High school students must complete at least 15 courses across seven subject areas to be eligible for admission directly from high school to either the UC or CSU. CSU has adopted the UC’s A-G course pattern as the foundation for determining eligibility for its first-time freshmen. A CSU applicant must receive a grade of “C” or better in each course for that course to count toward the requirement. A-G course requirements are as follows:

- Two years of history/social science, including one year of world history, cultures, and historical geography and one year of U.S. history, or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of American government or civics.
 - Four years of college preparatory English that integrates reading of classic and modern literature, frequent and regular writing, and practice listening and speaking.
 - Three years of college-preparatory math, including or integrating the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry.
 - Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in at least two of the three disciplines of biology, chemistry, and physics.
 - Two years of the same language other than English or equivalent to the second level of high school instruction.
 - One year of visual and performing arts chosen from dance, music, theater, or the visual arts.
 - One year of a college-preparatory elective beyond those used to satisfy the requirements above, or courses that have been approved solely in the elective area.
- 4) **UC Academic Senate committee oversees admissions policy.** The Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) is a committee of the UC Academic Senate that oversees all matters relating to UC admissions of undergraduate students. BOARS regulates the policies and practices used in the admissions process that directly relates to the educational mission of the University. It also recommends and directs efforts to improve the admissions process. The setting of eligibility standards as well as defining A-G requirements are among its duties.
- 5) **Changes in UC admission policies have led to calls for increased transparency.** On July 07, 2023, the BOARS committee unanimously voted for data science courses to no longer be considered as a replacement course for Algebra II for incoming UC applicants and further voted to create a workgroup to determine which high school mathematics courses would be considered “advanced mathematics courses” or adequate replacements for Algebra II. Subsequent reports published by a BOARS workgroup determined that, beginning in the fall of 2025, neither data science nor statistics would be considered a suitable replacement for Algebra II for purposes of fulfilling the math requirements for admission to the UC. A vote of the full board of the UC Regents to approve the changes in the criteria for admissions has not yet taken place. This has raised concerns regarding the timing of the changes and whether they changes will actually take place. Additionally, concerns were raised about the level of engagement with K-12 partners concerning admissions decisions, which

directly affect students' to meet A-G coursework requirements and schools' capacity to adequately prepare those students.

On October 10, 2024, the Assembly Committees on Higher Education and Education convened a joint hearing on the changes that found all of the following:

- a) UC BOARS made the admission criteria change due to concerns regarding the preparation of students for the academic rigor of the UC.
- b) The UC did not follow its policies for criteria changes to admission requirements.
- c) The BOARS decision will greatly impact K-12 curriculum implementation of the new mathematics framework and has left the K-12 community in a state of confusion with little to no time to implement the changes required by BOARS.

In a letter submitted by the Chairs of the Assembly Committees to the UC Regents, stated that these decisions have a tremendous impact on K-12 students seeking to meet graduation and admissions requirements for both the CSU and UC, and without consulting the SBE, UC BOARS changed the eligibility criteria for securing admission to the UC. It further called for the UC to partner with K-12 and with the broader higher education community in the decision to change the admissions criteria.

- 6) **UC Academic Senate response.** In response to the formal request from the UC Board of Regents and the Assembly Committees on Higher Education and Education, on April 23, 2025, the UC Academic Senate voted to change their bylaws to state BOARS' responsibilities in its engagement with California K-12 education partners. Specifically, the bylaw changes require the BOARS committee to consult with representatives from the SBE and K-12 subject matter specialists on proposed changes to course requirements for undergraduate admissions. Regarding the changes to the mathematics requirements, UC stated that BOARS updates to the definition of courses that fulfill the UC's mathematics admission requirements would not require approval from the UC Regents. However, the university administration will postpone implementation of the changes by one year so that the change will take effect for students applying in fall 2026 for enrollment in the 2027-2028 academic year.

This bill as it relates to educational partners, requests the UC to provide, prior to adoption, a proposal to change the conditions for undergraduate admissions to the SBE as well as to the UC student association and the CSU trustees. It requires the SBE and the CSU Trustees to discuss openly those proposed changes at a meeting of their respective boards. This bill attempts reinforce the role of educational partners in decisions that impact their students.

- 7) **Applicable admission changes.** The applicable changes to the conditions for undergraduate admissions under this bill include changes to the policy made by the UC Regents, changes to which high school courses count towards the A-G subject requirements, and changes in how high school courses are reviewed and

approved for meeting the A-G subject requirements. Any of these changes would represent modification to the conditions for undergraduate admission.

- 8) **Prescribes meeting conditions.** The bill outlines procedural requirements the UC is requested to follow before considering and voting on a proposal including how they notify the UC Regents, inform the public, and conduct the voting (by majority vote). Given UC's constitutional autonomy, this bill requests UC to establish meeting requirements. The committee may wish to consider whether these provisions strike the appropriate balance between supporting transparency on matters impacting K-12 students and educational partners, while also acknowledging UC's autonomous governance status.

- 9) **Related and prior legislation.**

AB 684 (Patel, 2025) would expand the definition of "Regent of the University of California" to also include the Academic Senate of the University of California, Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools for purposes of the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act. AB 684 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1217 (Fong, 2025) would request the UC to align the admission criteria used in the review and certification of high school courses with the content standards, frameworks, and model curriculum adopted by the SBE for the applicable subject area. AB 1217 further updates the existing local educational agency course certification process for CSU and UC admissions, including a requirement that the approving entity provide a reason for a denial and suggest ways for the local educational agency to obtain future approval. AB 1217 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 309 (Leyva, 2023) would have established the A-G Completion Improvement Grant Program, contingent upon an appropriation, for the purpose of providing additional supports to LEAs to help increase the number of California high school pupils, particularly unduplicated pupils, who graduate from high school eligible to attend a UC or CSU; (2) increases notification requirements regarding high school graduation requirements and UC/CSU admission requirements; and (3) commencing with the 2026-27 school year, would have required charter schools and county offices of education to meet the same requirement as school districts to offer to all otherwise qualified pupils a course of study fulfilling the requirements and prerequisites for admission to the UC/CSU in a timely manner. SB 309 died in the Assembly Education Committee, its contents were subsequently included in the 2021 Budget.

AB 233 (Boerner Horvath, 2021) would have requested the UC Regents to adopt a policy directing the UC Office of the President implement other various California State Auditor recommendations related to the general student admission process to be effective for the UC's 2023 admissions cycle. AB 233 died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 1215 (Boerner Horvath, 2021) would have requested the UC Board of Regents (Regents) to adopt policies directing the UC Office of the President to

establish various systemwide protocols pertaining to undergraduate admissions. AB 1215 was vetoed by Governor Newsom whose veto message read in part:

“I am committed to ensuring the fairness of admissions processes at all California colleges and universities, which is why I signed previous legislation with that goal in mind. However, I believe that the system-wide requirements stipulated in this bill could constrain the UC's ability to effectively use its holistic admissions process in admitting diverse cohorts of new students.

“Moreover, I believe that the UC has addressed the majority of issues identified by the State Auditor with the seriousness they deserve and has already implemented many of the safeguards required by this bill. In light of the UC's ongoing implementation of audit recommendations, this bill is premature.

“I will continue to monitor this issue and expect that the UC follows through on these new procedures.”

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

SaveMath

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