

## ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 664 (Alvarez)

As Amended January 5, 2026

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Authorizes the Chancellor of the California Community College (CCC) to allow the Southwestern Community College District (SWCCD) to offer no more than four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degrees programs, as provided. Requires interim and final reports from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), and sunsets the provisions on January 1, 2035.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Authorizes, as specified, the Chancellor of the CCC to allow SWCCD to offer no more than four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs.
- 2) Requires the Chancellor of the CCC to ensure that the application and review procedures and requirements, as specified, are met for any program authorized under these provisions.
- 3) Requires the governing board of the SWCCD to submit proposals for baccalaureate degree programs to be authorized pursuant to this article to the chancellor. A proposal must include all of the following:
  - a) Data supporting the regional labor-market demand for the proposed degree program;
  - b) Data demonstrating the lack of availability of the proposed degree program at the regional public universities or the inability of a degree program offered at a regional public university to meet the demand for the degreed, skilled workforce in the region;
  - c) Evidence of collaboration that prioritizes structured partnerships between the SWCCD and regional public universities to avoid unnecessary duplication and to expand access to baccalaureate degrees. The structured partnerships may include, but not be limited to, any of the following:
    - i) Guaranteed transfer agreements.
    - ii) 2+2 articulation agreements.
    - iii) Dual enrollment pathways with high school and public university partners such as 1+1+2 models.
    - iv) Credit for prior learning.
    - v) Shared use of facilities to support colocation or cross-location delivery models.
  - d) Evidence of program approval through the appropriate accreditation body, if necessary.
- 4) Specifies that full-time equivalent students enrolled in a baccalaureate program authorized pursuant to this article will be included in the existing funding model developed and adopted pursuant to, and the fee provisions, for community college baccalaureate degree program, as specified.

- 5) Requires the LAO, on or before July 1, 2030, to conduct and present to the Legislature and to the Governor, an interim evaluation of any baccalaureate degree programs, as specified.
- 6) Requires the LAO, on or before July 1, 2034, to conduct and present to the Legislature and to the Governor, a final evaluation of any baccalaureate degree programs, as specified.
- 7) Requires SWCCD to provide the information necessary to conduct the evaluations, as determined by the LAO, to the CCC Chancellor, and for the CCC Chancellor to provide that information to the Legislative Analyst's Office.
- 8) Specifies that the article will remain in effect only until January 1, 2035, and as of that date is repealed.
- 9) Makes the following definitions:
  - a) "Regional public university" means a public university located within the community college district's service area.
  - b) "Underserved, college desert area" means the designated service area of a community college district that does not include a public university and where the nearest public university majors have been declared "impacted."
- 10) Finds and declares that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable within the meaning of Section 16 of Article IV of the California Constitution because of the unique positioning of the SWCCD service area, being in an underserved, college desert area.

## COMMENTS

*Background.* As noted by the author, efforts have existed for decades to increase four-year program availability in the Chula Vista region. The city of Chula Vista introduced a four-year university plan in 1993, during the development of the Otay Ranch land-use plan.

*Current initiative.* The University Now Initiative (UNI) was created by SWCCD and the City of Chula Vista to "...create a thriving, binational higher education ecosystem that supports the binational region's economic development by producing a skilled workforce aligned with industry demands." The UNI Steering Committee is made up of 50 regional leaders from higher education, business, economic development organizations, and other sectors, and included San Diego State University, UC San Diego, Sweetwater Union High School District, National University, and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, amongst many other partners.

In 2024 UNI published a white paper that outlined their vision and goals for a university innovation district. The white paper recommends the expansion of academic programs that align with the region's workforce demands, emphasizing partnerships between SWCCD, the UC, and the CSU systems. The report also specifically recommends expanding baccalaureate degree programs, noting that it would be ideal to craft "...legislation that would prioritize and expedite approval of [baccalaureate degree program] applications from community colleges that are in a service area lacking a public university presence or for a program that previously received approval through the [baccalaureate degree program] process. Fast-tracking approval of [baccalaureate degree] applications in underserved areas ensures timely access to high-demand programs, helping address workforce gaps and providing educational equity.

*Master Plan for Higher Education.* For a detailed a detailed history, see the Committee on Higher Education analysis.

*Committee staff notes* that recent efforts to duplicate baccalaureate degree programs offered by CCC campuses and CSU campuses, like those found in AB 1400 (Soria) of 2025, were vetoed by Governor Newsom, who noted in his AB 1400 (Soria) veto message that "...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."

### **According to the Author**

According to the author, "South County is one of the largest regions in California without a public university offering bachelor's degrees, leaving hundreds of thousands of residents - many of them working adults, place-bound students, and transit-dependent families - without realistic access to the credentials our regional economy increasingly requires. Even with strong partnerships among Southwestern College, UC San Diego, San Diego State University, CSU San Marcos, and the City of Chula Vista, we continue to see bachelor's-level workforce shortages that existing public university capacity alone cannot meet."

"AB 664 provides a targeted and collaborative response. It allows Southwestern College to offer a limited number of workforce-aligned bachelor's degrees in fields where regional universities do not offer programs or cannot meet demand, while requiring coordination and partnership across public higher education systems. This approach builds on regional workforce research, employer input, and the broader multi-campus vision taking shape in South County. In addition to addressing immediate bachelor's-degree access and workforce gaps, AB 664 advances South County's long-standing vision to establish a public university presence in Chula Vista by building the academic and institutional foundation necessary for that goal."

### **Arguments in Support**

SWCCD wrote in support of this legislation, noting that "Southwestern College has demonstrated that collaboration, not competition, can work. Our University Center hosts degree programs from San Diego State University, CSU San Marcos, and UC San Diego, showing that systems can operate as an ecosystem: sharing responsibility, aligning pathways, and using public resources effectively."

"AB 664 builds on that foundation by authorizing a narrow, faculty-led, and carefully evaluated pilot with clear guardrails. These guardrails include required collaboration with CSU and UC partners, explicit prohibition on program duplication, independent evaluation by the Legislative Analyst's Office, and a statutory sunset. Together, they ensure the pilot remains limited in scope, accountable in design, and focused on areas where local public capacity is demonstrably insufficient. The bill is intentionally structured to advance academic infrastructure in parallel with, not ahead of, broader intersegmental governance and fiscal coordination already underway through AB 662. This sequencing allows progress to continue responsibly while longer-term system solutions move forward."

"AB 664 does not revise or expand statewide baccalaureate authority. Instead, it reflects a measured, time-limited approach that aligns with the State's existing emphasis on collaboration, coordination, and workforce responsiveness: principles already affirmed through enacted legislation. In doing so, it allows students and employers in regions without a public university to move forward now, without pre-judging future statewide policy decisions."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

The CSU Chancellor's Office wrote in opposition, noting that "State law has authorized, with the passage of Assembly Bill 927 (Medina), that the California Community Colleges (CCC) may establish up to 30 baccalaureate degree programs per academic year, provided that the program or program curricula is not already offered by the CSU or University of California (UC). AB 927 requires the CCC to consult with and seek feedback from the CSU, UC, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities on proposed baccalaureate degree programs to identify and prevent duplication, and to provide documentation of the collaborative approaches these institutions have taken to meet regional workforce needs. This process has led to the creation of more than 50 baccalaureate degree programs offered at community colleges across the state."

"As proposed, AB 664 would allow Southwestern Community College District to circumvent the consultation and feedback required by state law and offer up to four undefined baccalaureate degree programs. More broadly, AB 664 creates a precedent for other community college districts to do the exact same thing. This broad authority raises significant concerns of unfettered duplication of existing baccalaureate degree programs and the inefficient use of state resources."

"The CSU supports the author's intent to expand access to higher education in South San Diego County and the City of Chula Vista. In the past year, San Diego State University and California State University San Marcos have worked to address the region's workforce needs as identified by Southwestern College through the development of various "2+2" programs. This has included work toward establishing in-person baccalaureate degree programs in nursing, psychology, business administration, computer information systems and cyber security at Southwestern College's campus in Chula Vista."

"However, AB 664 would undermine the collaboration at the heart of these partnerships. We encourage Southwestern Community College District to pursue their baccalaureate degree proposals through the AB 927 process that is prescribed in state law. As noted earlier, there have been 52 baccalaureate degree programs in community colleges created throughout the state. If there are problems with the AB 927 process, we welcome conversations on how to improve, rather than circumvent, this process, if insufficient to meet the region's workforce needs. The CSU is willing to engage in conversations that streamline the AB 927 process to provide better outcomes to the CSU, UC and community colleges."

### **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of an unknown but potentially significant amount, likely ranging from high tens of thousands to low hundreds of thousands of dollars,

according to the Chancellor's Office, for the SCCD to implement up to four new workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs.

- 2) One-time General Fund costs of up to \$33,000 for the Chancellor's Office to develop an application for the pilot, issue guidance, and provide technical assistance.

## **VOTES**

### **ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 9-1-0**

**YES:** Fong, Boerner, Jeff Gonzalez, Jackson, Muratsuchi, Patel, Ahrens, Sharp-Collins, Tangipa

**NO:** DeMaio

### **ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0**

**YES:** Wicks, Hoover, Stefani, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Bauer-Kahan, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

## **UPDATED**

VERSION: January 5, 2026

CONSULTANT: Kevin J. Powers / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960

FN: 0002233