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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	AB 664	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	July 1, 2026
<b>Author:</b>	Alvarez		
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<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
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**Subject:** Community colleges: baccalaureate degree program: Southwestern Community College District.

## SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the California Community Colleges (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. It further requires an interim and final report from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), and sunsets the provisions of the bill on January 1, 2037.

## BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Differentiates the missions and functions of public and independent institutions of higher education. Under these provisions:
  - a) 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.
  - b) The UC provides 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.
  - c) The independent institutions of higher education provide undergraduate and graduate instruction and research in accordance with its respective mission.
  - d) The mission and function of the CCC are to offer academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCC is authorized to grant the associate degrees. The CCCs 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. (Education Code (EC) § 66010.4)

- 2) Authorizes the CCC Board of Governors, 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. Allows for the approval of 30 CCC baccalaureate degree programs per academic year. Current law further 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. (EC § 78040 et seq.)
- 3) Requires the CSU Trustees to ensure that any changes in the admission criteria for campus admission comply with specified consultation, public meeting, notification, and disclosure requirements, and prohibits any change from becoming effective until one year has elapsed, or six months, if the change is based upon the resources of the local service area of the affected campus. Applies these requirements to all changes in the admission criteria that affect eligibility of local service area applicants, including changes to transfer requirements and determinations regarding impact of majors. (EC § 89030.5)

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes the CCC Chancellor to authorize the Southwestern Community College District to offer no more than four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs, one in each of the following fields:
  - a) Forensic Studies.
  - b) Allied Health Education and Leadership.
  - c) Interaction Design.
  - d) Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).
- 2) Requires that the CCC Chancellor ensure that the application and review procedures and requirements related to the application period and timelines are met for any authorized program.
- 3) Requires the Southwestern Community College District to submit proposals for baccalaureate degree programs to be authorized pursuant to the bill's provisions to the CCC Chancellor and requires that the proposals 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 skilled degree workforce in the region.
  - c) Evidence of collaboration that prioritizes structured partnerships between the Southwestern Community College District and regional public universities to avoid unnecessary duplication and to expand access to baccalaureate degrees. The structure of 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 co-location 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 by the bill's provisions will be included in the existing funding model developed and adopted consistent with the fee provisions for community college baccalaureate degree programs, as specified.
  - 5) Requires the LAO to conduct and present to the Legislature and to the Governor, an interim evaluation by July 1, 2031, and a final evaluation by July 1, 2035, of any baccalaureate degree programs offered under the bill that includes information about completion rates and program impact on underserved and underprepared students, among other things.
  - 6) Requires the Southwestern Community College District to provide the information necessary to conduct the evaluations, as determined by the LAO, to the CCC Chancellor and requires the chancellor to provide that information to the LAO upon request.
  - 7) Sunsets the bill's provisions on January 1, 2037.
  - 8) States that a special statute is necessary and that a general statute cannot be made applicable because of the unique position of the Southwestern Community College service area, being in an underserved college desert area.

**STAFF COMMENTS**

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, “South County San Diego is one of the largest regions in California without a public university offering bachelor’s degrees, leaving many residents, particularly working adults, place bound students, and transit dependent families, without realistic access to the credentials required by today’s regional economy. While Southwestern College has long standing partnerships with UC San Diego, San Diego State University, CSU San Marcos, and the City of Chula Vista, existing public university capacity and proximity are not sufficient to meet local bachelor’s level workforce demand.

“AB 664 is a targeted, place based pilot grounded in years of faculty led, regionally driven research and intersegmental collaboration. The workforce aligned bachelor’s degree programs contemplated by the bill were identified through sustained academic planning, labor market analysis, and program mapping conducted by faculty in coordination with regional UC and CSU partners. These efforts were undertaken to ensure that any proposed programs respond to documented workforce needs while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

“The bill authorizes Southwestern College to offer a limited number of bachelor’s degree programs in fields not adequately served by regional universities, requires collaboration with UC, CSU, and local partners, and includes evaluation and sunset provisions to ensure accountability. AB 664 is not intended to predetermine future university governance or siting decisions. Instead, it serves as a near term, collaborative step within the broader intersegmental strategy already endorsed by the Legislature and Governor to expand higher education access in South County.

“By allowing the region to address immediate access and workforce gaps while generating data on demand, program viability, and intersegmental coordination, AB 664 supports informed, evidence based planning for the future of higher education in South County San Diego.”

- 2) **Mission differentiation.** The state has four segments of higher education: three public and one private. Each plays a vital and unique role for the state and its students. Their mission statements are outlined in state statute. The CCCs are to have an open admission policy and bear the most extensive responsibility for lower-division undergraduate instruction. Its primary area of mission includes academic and vocational instruction leading to associate degrees and university transfer, career technical education, and remedial education. The primary mission of the CSU is undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master’s degree. The UC was granted the sole authority to offer doctoral degree programs and is the state’s primary research institution. Despite the differentiation of mission, the Legislature has authorized the CSU and CCCs to go beyond their original mission to offer doctoral degrees and baccalaureate degree programs, respectively, so long as programs do not duplicate those offered by the other segments with primary jurisdiction. Further expansion of CCC baccalaureate degree authority, as proposed in this bill, would signal the Legislature’s willingness to allow CCCs to potentially deviate further from their

core mission, duplicate programs offered by a segment with primary jurisdiction, and bypass the existing CCC baccalaureate approval process.

- 3) **Existing CCC Baccalaureate degree program.** SB 850 (Block, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2014) authorized the Board of Governors, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish a CCC baccalaureate degree pilot program. The pilot program included 15 participating CCC Districts to offer one baccalaureate degree program each to meet local workforce needs, as long as it did not duplicate a baccalaureate degree program already offered by the CSU or the UC. The original pilot led to the statewide authorization established by AB 927 (Medina, Chapter 565, Statutes of 2021), which allows the CCC Board of Governors to approve qualifying programs twice a year on an ongoing basis. Today, as reported on the CCC Chancellor's website, 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. These programs are intended to address unmet regional workforce needs rather than broad expansion into traditional academic fields of study. Since 2017, approximately 1,893 students have attained a CCC bachelor's degree, with 293 completed in the 2023-2024 academic year. Rather than expanding access through that existing statewide process, this bill establishes a separate statutory pathway applicable only to Southwestern Community College District.
- 4) **District specific authorizations could result in a patchwork of district specific statutes.** As mentioned, existing law establishes a uniform process for approving community college baccalaureate degree programs that applies equally to all community college districts. This bill instead creates a district-specific exception authorizing Southwestern Community College District to seek approval from the CCC Chancellor for four specified programs under separate statutory authority. The District would be required to demonstrate regional workforce demand, show that existing public universities cannot adequately meet that demand, and provide evidence of collaboration with regional public universities before programs could be authorized. The bill also requires interim and final evaluation by the LAO before the authority sunsets in 2037. While the bill attempts to address the higher education needs of South San Diego County, creating regional exceptions based on the circumstances of a single community college district could encourage similar requests from other regions and result in a patchwork of district-specific statutes rather than a consistent statewide policy. *If it is the desire of the Committee that underserved regions, workforce shortages, or limited access to nearby public university programs warrant additional flexibility for community college baccalaureate degrees, those policy questions may be better addressed through statewide changes that establish objective criteria applicable to all community college districts, rather than through legislation tailored to a single community college district.*
- 5) **Clarifying purpose of the TESOL degree.** Under this measure, Southwestern Community College District may seek approval to offer baccalaureate degree programs in Forensic Studies, Allied Health Education and Leadership, Interaction Design, and TESOL. According to the District, the proposed

bachelor's degree in TESOL is intended to prepare graduates for careers in adult education, workforce English training, instructional coordination, and other settings that do not require a California teaching credential. The District further states that the program is not intended to serve as a K-12 teacher preparation program or satisfy California's credentialing requirements. Rather, graduates interested in becoming K-12 teachers would pursue a post-baccalaureate credential program offered through the applicable four-year university. While this explanation provides helpful context, the bill does not specify the intended scope or purpose of the proposed TESOL degree. Because "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages" could reasonably be interpreted by prospective students as preparation to teach in California public schools, the absence of clarifying language may create uncertainty regarding the careers for which the degree is designed. *The Committee may wish to consider whether the bill should more clearly describe the intended workforce focus of the TESOL degree or expressly clarify that the program does not constitute an approved educator preparation program or satisfy California teaching credential requirements.*

- 6) **Alternative solutions include intersegmental collaboration.** This bill requires the District to demonstrate that it has explored partnership opportunities with the CSU and the UC before seeking approval to offer a baccalaureate degree program. This requirement recognizes the state's goals for intersegmental collaboration where feasible. If it is the desire of the Legislature to expand access to baccalaureate degree programs, arguably, more effective and efficient alternatives do not require a departure from the CCC's mission but instead could focus on expanding and streamlining bachelor's degree pathways between CCCs and public or nonprofit universities. There are numerous examples of successful CCC/CSU pathway partnerships across the state, including Sonoma State University's (SSU) liberal studies bachelor's degree completion program, which provides upper-division instruction to transfer students taught by SSU faculty on the Mendocino Community College campus. This model brings the university to CCC students, building on the strengths of each segment. Further, in its recommendation for alternatives to the original CCC baccalaureate degree pilot program, the LAO's evaluation of the original pilot notes that improving alignment between CCC and the universities could increase the number of CCC students who ultimately obtain a bachelor's degree and reduce the amount of time students take to obtain a bachelor's degree. The LAO report asserts that CCCs and university pathways could not only be more cost-effective but also benefit more students (including place-bound students), thereby having a more widespread impact. *The Committee may wish to consider whether additional state efforts to strengthen intersegmental partnerships could provide another pathway for expanding bachelor's degree access before authorizing more independent CCC programs.*

- 7) **Related legislation.**

AB 2302 (Soria, 2026) requires the California Community College (CCC) 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 scheduled to be heard in this Committee on July 1, 2026.

AB 2053 (Ta, 2026) authorizes the Chancellor of the CCC to authorize the Coast Community College District to offer a workforce-aligned cybersecurity baccalaureate degree program at Coastline College, as provided. Require the LAO to, on or before July 1, 2030, conduct and present to the Legislature and the Governor an interim evaluation of the baccalaureate degree program that is offered pursuant to that authorization and, on or before July 1, 2034, a final evaluation of that degree program, as provided. AB 2053 (Ta) was heard in the Assembly Committee on Higher Education on April 21, 2026 and failed passage.

AB 2136 (Pacheco, 2026) authorizes the BOG of the CCC to authorize the Cerritos Community College District to offer up to three applied baccalaureate degree programs in the fields of public safety management, paralegal studies, and automotive technology. AB 2136 was held in the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

AB 2694 (Alvarez, 2026) changes the standard governing when community college districts may offer baccalaureate degree programs, replacing a hard prohibition on duplicating CSU or UC programs with a more flexible "substantially similar within the geographic region" test that includes exceptions for unmet workforce need and lack of CSU or UC enrollment from that region. The bill also modifies the objection and consultation process, narrowing the required consultation to programs that may be substantially similar to nearby CSU or UC offerings and streamlining the written agreement process when an objection is filed. AB 2694 is scheduled to be heard in this Committee on July 1, 2026.

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 currently pending hearing in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

## **SUPPORT**

Southwestern Community College District (sponsor)  
Associated Student Organization - Southwestern College  
Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce  
City of Chula Vista  
HomeFed Corporation  
Los Angeles Regional Consortium  
National University  
San Bernardino Community College District  
San Diego 's Building and Construction Trades  
South County Economic Development Council  
Southwestern College Academic Senate

## **OPPOSITION**

California Faculty Association

California State University, Office of the Chancellor

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