
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 664 (Alvarez) - Community colleges: baccalaureate degree program: Southwestern Community College District

Version: May 22, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 6 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill authorizes the Southwestern Community College District to offer four workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs outside of the existing California Community Colleges (CCCs) baccalaureate degree approval process.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Chancellor's Office indicates that the estimated one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of \$80,000 to \$138,000 for the Southwestern Community College District to implement up to four new workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs could be absorbed within existing resources, while the ongoing costs of providing these programs would be offset by state apportionments and student fee revenues. These costs would include the design of academic standards and student learning outcomes, updates to existing curriculum, and implementation of new courses.
- The Chancellor's office estimates one-time General Fund workload costs of up to \$33,000 to develop the application for the college, issue guidance, and provide technical assistance.
- This bill could result in one-time General Fund costs, potentially in the high tens of thousands to low hundreds of thousands of dollars, for the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) to complete the report and submit it to the Legislature each year. It may also impact the ability of the LAO to fulfill other existing or future legislative mandates and requests, as the LAO's budget is subject to the Legislature's constitutional spending cap.

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.

Proposed Law: This bill allows 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: forensic Studies, allied Health Education and Leadership, interaction Design, and teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

This bill requires the Chancellor to ensure that the application and review procedures and requirements related to the application period and timelines are met for any authorized program.

This bill requires the Southwestern Community College District to submit proposals for baccalaureate degree programs to be authorized pursuant to the bill's provisions to the Chancellor and requires that the proposals include all of the following:

1. Data supporting the regional labor market demand for the proposed degree program.
2. 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.
3. 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 guaranteed transfer agreements, 2 + 2 articulation agreements, dual enrollment pathways with high school and public university partners such as 1+1+2 models, credit for prior learning, and shared use of facilities to support co-location or cross-location delivery models, and evidence of program approval through the appropriate accreditation body, if necessary.

This bill 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.

This bill 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. The bill 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.

The bill's provisions would sunset on January 1, 2037.

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 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. AB 2694 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 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. 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."

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