

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 664
Author: Alvarez (D), et al.
Amended: 8/21/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 6-0, 7/1/26
AYES: Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Reyes
NO VOTE RECORDED: Pérez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-1, 1/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Community colleges: baccalaureate degree program: Southwestern
Community College District

SOURCE: Southwestern Community College District

DIGEST: 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.

Senate Floor Amendments of 8/21/26 make the provisions of the bill inoperative if AB 2694 (Alvarez, 2026), SB 960 (Cabaldon, 2026), or both bills are enacted and take effect by January 1, 2027.

ANALYSIS:

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 CCCs are to offer academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCCs are 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)

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 this 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 this 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 this bill's provisions on January 1, 2037.

- 8) Makes the provisions of the bill inoperative if AB 2694 (Alvarez, 2026), SB 960 (Cabaldon, 2026), or both bills are enacted and take effect by January 1, 2027.
- 9) 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.

Comments

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.”

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.

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.

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. This bill also requires interim and final evaluation by the LAO before the authority sunsets in 2037. While this 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. Targeting underserved regions, workforce shortages, or limited access to nearby public university programs may warrant additional flexibility for community college baccalaureate degrees. However, 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.

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 Southwestern Community College 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 Southwestern Community College 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, this 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.

Alternative solutions include intersegmental collaboration. This bill requires the Southwestern Community College 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. Additional state efforts to strengthen intersegmental partnerships could provide another pathway for expanding bachelor's degree access without having to expand independent CCC programs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/24/26)

Southwestern Community College District (source)
 Associated Student Organization - Southwestern College
 California School Employees Association
 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
 Student Senate for California Community Colleges

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/24/26)

California Faculty Association
 California State University, Office of the Chancellor
 University of California

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The Southwestern Community College District argues, in part, "AB 664 addresses only the bachelor's-level workforce gaps that remain even with University Center partnerships in place; programs where no local public university offers a pathway to placebound students in South San Diego County, even with co-located university partners on campus. No more than four programs may be authorized, collaboration with university partners is required first, and every authorization runs through the Chancellor's established review process. AB 664 does something a broader access bill cannot: it generates documented, independently assessed evidence of what regional intersegmental

collaboration looks like when it works. We built this pilot to be evaluated; not just the programs, but the entire collaboration model. We want the LAO's findings to give the Legislature an honest picture of what this model produced and what it would take to build on it."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The CSU argues, in part, that "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 created at community colleges throughout the state. If there are problems with the AB 927 process, we welcome conversations on how to improve, rather than circumvent, the process. The CSU is willing to engage in conversations that improve the AB 927 process to provide better outcomes for the students we serve."

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-1, 1/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: DeMaio

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Castillo, Ellis, Flora, Johnson, Macedo, Papan, Celeste Rodriguez, Sanchez, Ta

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105
8/24/26 13:00:39

**** END ****