

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 664 (Alvarez)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

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 Amendments

Amendments taken in the Senate 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.

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, the University of California (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 California State University (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 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."

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."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following fiscal impact:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.

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

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-1-10

YES: 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

NO: DeMaio

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Castillo, Ellis, Flora, Johnson, Macedo, Papan, Celeste Rodriguez, Sanchez, Ta

UPDATED

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