

Date of Hearing: May 7, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 934 (Berman) – As Amended March 24, 2025

Policy Committee: Higher Education

Vote: 10 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires a California Community College (CCC), beginning with the 2026-27 academic year, to annually identify and notify students who, within the previous five academic years, (a) have completed the required number of units to receive a degree or certificate, (b) need fewer than 12 or 18 semester or quarter units, respectively, to receive a degree or certificate, or (c) have completed the general education transfer requirements and are eligible for certification.

Specifically, this bill requires a CCC, beginning in September 2026, to annually identify and notify new and returning students who do not have a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and ensure all students identified receive a CEP before the end of their first academic year.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of approximately \$1.1 million to \$1.7 million to the CCCs, collectively statewide, for implementing updated degree reclamation resources and policies.
- 2) Ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund costs ranging from approximately \$11.7 million and \$20.6 million for the CCCs to hire necessary counseling staff to conduct transcript evaluations and degree eligibility assessments and conduct personalized outreach to student completers and near-completers. Costs could be lower to the extent a CCC can leverage existing staff capacity for these purposes.
- 3) Ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures likely between \$12.7 million and \$25.5 million for the Legislature to appropriate additional resources under the Student Centered Funding Formula to provide community college districts with additional funding for awarding degrees to eligible students. This estimate assumes each CCC annually awards an additional 50 to 100 students with degrees.

The CCC Chancellor's Office indicates that the above cost estimates are largely extrapolated from a recent case study of Shasta College, which implemented a degree reclamation program substantially similar to the requirements of this bill.

- 4) One-time General Fund costs between \$25,000 and \$64,000 to the CCC Chancellor's Office to draft and present changes to the Board of Governors, issue guidance, and provide technical assistance to districts.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

To help current and former community college students reach their higher education goals, AB 934 would follow the example of community colleges who have identified students who have completed all of the academic requirements for a degree or certificate and retroactively awarded those degrees or certificates. For example, Shasta College identified 252 students who were enrolled between fall 2013 and spring 2018 and had completed all the academic requirements for a degree. After contacting students, Shasta College retroactively awarded degrees to 250 of them. Beginning in the 2026-27 academic year, this bill would require every community college to retroactively award degrees and certificates to eligible students. Awarding degrees or certificates to students could mean a pay increase, job promotion, and if a student was awarded an Associate Degree for Transfer, it would mean guaranteed admission to a CSU.

2) **Background. *Comprehensive Education Plans.*** To support students in reaching their higher education goals, current law requires a CCC to provide students with education plans. CEPs take into account a student's interests, skills, career and education goals, major, potential transfer institutions, and the steps the student needs to take on their educational path to complete their identified course of study. Additionally, since 2024, state law requires a CCC to place students on the Associate Degree to Transfer pathway if such a pathway exists for their intended major of study and the students declare a goal of transfer on their CEP.

Lack of Statewide Data Infrastructure. While some CCCs have already implemented degree reclamation as a strategy to engage students who earned some college credits but no degree or certificate, there is no statewide data infrastructure to automate the evaluation of transcripts. The Legislature has appropriated funding for this purpose in recent years that may help address the same issue this bill attempts to address. For example, the Budget Act of 2024 included \$6 million to scale the eTranscript California to facilitate the sharing of electronic transcripts, but the CCC Chancellor's Office reports it has yet to receive these reappropriated Proposition 98 funds to begin this work. Additionally, the 2025-26 Governor's Budget proposes \$162.5 million Proposition 98 General Fund, \$29 million of which is ongoing, for the Common Cloud Data Platform to provide real-time information on a student's course-taking patterns, units earned, and progress towards a degree or certificate and support automatic matriculation to a CSU for students who have completed an Associate Degree to Transfer pathway.

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