

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
ACA 18 (Caloza and Ahrens)
As Amended April 29, 2026
2/3 vote

SUMMARY

Amends the California State Constitution to include two voting Student Regent positions and creates two nonvoting Student Regent-Designate positions for the University of California Board of Regents.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires the University of California Board of Regents (Board of Regents), beginning on July 1, 2027 and every July 1 thereafter, to consult with the representatives of the student of the university to appoint to the board four students enrolled at a campus of the University to serve as student Regents. The students are to be appointed as follows:
 - a) One undergraduate student appointed in an even numbered year will serve a term of two years; in which the first year the undergraduate student will serve as the Student Regent - Designee with no voting authority and in the second year, the undergraduate student will be Student Regent with full voting authority;
 - b) One undergraduate student appointed in an odd numbered year will serve a term of two years; in which the first year the undergraduate student will serve as the Student Regent - Designee with no voting authority and in the second year, the undergraduate student will be Student Regent with full voting authority;
 - c) One graduate student appointed in an even numbered year will serve a term of two years; in which the first year the graduate student will serve as the Student Regent -Designee with no voting authority and in the second year, the graduate student will be Student Regent with full voting authority;
 - d) One graduate student appointed in an odd numbered year will serve a term of two years; in which the first year the graduate student will serve as the Student Regent -Designee with no voting authority and in the second year, the graduate student will be Student Regent with full voting authority.
 - e) Clarifies a student regent who is authorized to serve as a Regent who graduates on or after January 1 in the second year of the student's two-year term may continue to serve for the remainder of the student's term as Regent.
 - f) Makes technical and clarifying changes to Section 09 of Article IX of the California Constitution.

COMMENTS

The need for a constitutional amendment. In 2021, then-Senator Glazer authored a constitutional amendment to expand the UC Board of Regents to include two Student Regents with full voting authority. SCA 5 (Glazer) of 2021, was held under submission in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. In the Assembly Committee on Higher Education's analysis for SCA 5, Committee

staff asserted the constitutional amendment was not necessary as the UC Regents had already expanded the membership of the board with non-voting faculty representatives and non-voting student representatives. A suggestion was made in the analysis that the UC Board of Regents already contained the authority to establish another Student Regent with full voting authority.

While this may have been the interpretation of the Committee at the time, history contradicts this interpretation. In 1974, the voting population of California voted to implement Proposition 04. Among other things, Proposition 04 of 1974 expanded the UC Board of Regents to include: the Vice President of the Alumni Association as an ex officio member, two additional Governor-appointed Regents, and the opportunity for the Regents to appoint one faculty member and one student to the UC Board of Regents. According to the original ballot pamphlet provided by UC Law San Francisco Scholarship Repository, the changes to composition of the UC Board of Regents was to "insure that the University will be more responsive and reflective of the interests of a rapidly changing California." According to Ballotpedia, Proposition 04 was a legislatively referred constitutional amendment, meaning the legal interpretation at the time was a constitutional amendment was required to reorganize the UC Board of Regents. While the UC Board of Regents has expanded their membership since 1974 to include additional non-voting members, history would suggest in order to expand voting authority to additional members, a constitutional amendment is required.

The authority delegated to the UC Board of Regents by the California Constitution render the UC as ""a branch of state government equal and coordinate with the legislative, judiciary, and the executive branches." If the understanding of a previous Attorney General of California is that the UC Board of Regents is a fourth branch of government, than the language of the California Constitution establishing the UC Board of Regents should be interpreted in the same manner as the language establishing the California State Assembly (Assembly) and California State Senate (Senate). To expand the voting membership of the Assembly or the Senate, it would require a constitutional amendment as the number of elected officials, 80 for the Assembly, and 40 for the Senate, as enshrined in the California Constitution. The members of both houses simply could not vote to expand their membership without the authorization of the people of California. Therefore, so too is the UC Board of Regents prohibited from expanding their voting membership since "the courts and the Attorney General [of California] recognize the Regents as a separate branch of government because of its incredible power and autonomy over the UC system."

This measure takes the necessary step of authorizing a constitutional amendment and subsequent ballot proposition to expand the UC Board of Regents membership to include four Student Regents – two acting as a designee and two with full voting authority. The measure would also remove the discretion of the UC Regents to determine whether a Student Regent should be appointed each year. Instead, the constitutional amendment would remove the discretion and require two students to be appointed as voting Regents and two students as Student Regent - Designees to be appointed in perpetuity.

According to the Author

As explained by the author, "sixteen years ago, I came to the State Capitol as a UC San Diego student to protest tuition hikes by the UC Regents. Today, students are facing those same challenges—only worse: rising tuition, unaffordable housing, and growing uncertainty that impacts their ability to succeed. Yet on the 26-member UC Board of Regents, only one student has a vote. Students deserve more than a seat in the room—they deserve a vote that counts. ACA

18 is about fairness, accountability, and meaningful representation. By expanding student voting power on the UC Board of Regents, we ensure that the voices of those most impacted by decisions on tuition, housing, and student life are heard loud and clear. Now more than ever, it's time to put students first and give them a real say in the decisions that shape their education and future."

The author further indicates the need for the measure as, "UC enrollment has grown exponentially since the creation of the Student Regent position with over 300,000 students enrolled at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. It is imperative that student voices are meaningfully amplified on decision-making tables. With only one voting Student Regent and one non-voting Student Regent, students are not adequately heard or represented."

Arguments in Support

As the sponsors of the measure, the UC Student Association (UCSA) emphasizes the need for the expansion of the UC Board of Regents because "the UC serves as a cornerstone for the state's economic growth, research innovation, and workforce development, and given the UC's scale and impact, it is essential that students, who are at the heart of our mission, have meaningful representation in the decisions that directly impact them and their futures. Student Regents have historically played a critical role in shaping policies that directly affect students. For example, in 2021, the UC Board of Regents were considering a cohort-based tuition increase proposal, which increased rates for incoming freshmen and transfers by upwards of five percent. In response, the UC Student Regent, Alexis Zaragoza, championed student-led negotiations which ultimately secured an amendment to the tuition plan that increased the return to financial aid from 33% to 45% of every tuition dollar charged. This has contributed towards the UC Blue and Gold opportunity plan becoming one of the most robust financial aid packages that support our low-income students with financing their education."

Additionally, UCSA notes, "as it stands, there are 26 members on the UC Board of Regents.¹ Since the passage of Proposition 4 in 1974, students have been represented by only one voting Student Regent. UC enrollment has grown exponentially since the creation of the Student Regent position, with over 300,000 students enrolled at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. With rising attacks on higher education nationally and increasing cost pressures at a state and campus level, it is imperative that student voices are meaningfully consulted and amplified at the decision-making table. ACA 18 will double the voting membership on the UC Board of Regents and allow for increased representation, engagement and participation from students in the nation's premiere public research university."

Finally, UCSA states, "with more student voices on the UC Board of Regents, ACA 18 demonstrates our value in university shared governance and the possibilities when students can lead by example. When stakeholders of any institution are meaningfully included, they bring urgently needed perspectives to the forefront. ACA 18 will propel generations of students and future leaders by ensuring that there is one undergraduate representative and one graduate or professional candidate on the Regents to compel their case and voice support for the UC's systemwide priorities on affordability, student well-being, and the lived experiences of those the university ultimately serves. ACA 18 ensures that those most directly impacted by decisions made by the Board of Regents, the students, have more consistent and representative voices among the University's highest governing body."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund costs of \$172,000 annually to the UC for the UC Board of Regents to add two additional student Regents.

According to the UC Office of the President (UCOP), the cost of one student Regent, voting or non-voting, is \$86,000 per year, which represents costs associated with tuition, fees, scholarships, room, board, and transportation provided to the student in the form of credits and reimbursements. UCOP reports it currently pays these costs for both one student voting member and one student non-voting member on the Board of Regents. Therefore, this bill would double those costs by creating a total of four required student members.

- 2) One-time General Fund costs to the Secretary of State in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for printing and mailing costs to place the measure on the ballot in a statewide election. Actual costs may be higher or lower, depending on the length of required elements and the overall size of the ballot. Over the last three election cycles, the printing and mailing costs per page averaged around \$80,000.

VOTES**ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 9-0-1**

YES: Fong, DeMaio, Solache, Jeff Gonzalez, Jackson, Muratsuchi, Patel, Gipson, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Celeste Rodriguez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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