

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 640 (Cabaldon)
As Amended September 02, 2025
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the California State University (CSU) direct admission program between participating CSU campuses and local educational agencies (LEAs). It further requires the California Community Colleges (CCC) to promote the CSU dual admission transfer program.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes the CSU Direct Admission program and requires the CSU Chancellor to designate one or more CSU campuses as university participants in the program.
- 2) States the Legislature's intent that the CSU Chancellor designate each CSU campus with available enrollment capacity to be a university participant.
- 3) Requires that LEAs that have implemented a transcript-informed pupil accounts for pupils in grades nine through 12 inclusive, to participate in the program.
- 4) Requires that the reporting available on the CaliforniaColleges.edu platform be used to provide the data required to determine program eligibility upon the implementation of transcript-information pupil accounts for pupils in grades nine through 12, on the platform.
- 5) Provides all grade 12 pupils who are enrolled in a participating LEA are designated as CSU applicants.
- 6) Requires, on or before the priority application filing period each year, the CSU must send a direct admissions letter to each eligible student notifying them they have been directly admitted and describe the enrollment procedure necessary to enroll.
- 7) Specifies that upon accepting an offer of admission to one of the university participants, a pupil is required to complete the necessary procedures for enrollment.
- 8) Modifies provisions related to the CSU dual admission transfer pathways program for first-time freshman applicants by:
 - a) Extending the sunset date from the 2025-26 academic year to 2035-36 academic year;
 - b) Expands the period of time from two to three years for which a student is to complete an ADT or other established course of study for transfer to be granted guaranteed admission; and,
 - c) Requires the CCC to promote the dual admission program to new students, as specified.
- 9) Defines various terms for the purposes of the bill including university participant to mean a campus of the CSU that is designated to participate in the CSU Direct Admission Program.

COMMENTS

Establishment of associate degree for transfer (ADTs). Enacted over a decade ago, the ADT was designed to simplify the transfer maze at CCC. Since its enactment, the ADT has made significant strides in streamlining the transfer process for students, and has become a successful pathway to earning a bachelor's degree. The ADT is a two-year, 60-unit degree that guarantees admission to the CSU and participating private institutions of higher education. Students who earn an ADT are automatically eligible to transfer as an upper-division student in a bachelor's degree program and need only complete two additional years (an additional 60 units) of coursework to earn a bachelor's degree.

Community college transfer. The transfer function is an essential component of the commitment to access. The UC and CSU are to establish a lower division to upper division ratio of 40:60 in order to provide transfer opportunities into the upper division for community college students. The goal was that the UC and CSU would enroll at least one community college transfer student for each two freshmen enrolled. All eligible CCC transfer students are to be provided a place in upper division courses for their major and are to be given priority over freshmen in the admissions process.

National trends. More and more states are seeking to reduce the stress of high schools students by informing them that they have guaranteed admission to various state colleges and universities *before* students apply. States have shared that the intent of this "direct or promised admission" is to keep talent close to home and to develop an educated workforce. This admission process is a model that, in part, matches students with local colleges and universities based on their grades and informs them of their options, whether career education, a bachelor's degree, or both is indeed attainable.

The number of state-run direct admissions programs has grown significantly from one state in 2015, to over a dozen in 2025. States with these programs include, Idaho (the first in the nation), Minnesota, South Dakota, Washington, Indiana, Hawaii, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Utah, Illinois, Texas, New York, and Oregon. Five of the aforementioned states adopted the policy just last year.

Several other states have introduced legislation this year, including Arkansas, or have plans to create pilot programs. Additionally, while this State does not have a statewide direct admission program, the CSU currently has a direct admission pilot program with 10 of the 23 CSU campuses.

CSU Direct Admission Pilot Program. As noted in the *National trends* section of this analysis, the CSU is currently piloting a direct admission program. The CSU, in partnership with the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) established the first partnership within the direct admission pilot program. According to a March 28, 2025, *Cal Matters* article, entitled, "No need to apply: Cal State is automatically admitting high school students with good grades," over 17,000 high school seniors attending high schools within RCOE, in fall of 2024, received a congratulatory note indicating that due to their GPA and because of their particular high schools, they were automatically admitted to one of 10 CSU campuses of the students' choice.

According to the CSU's October 23, 2024, Press Release, entitled, "CSU Partners with Riverside County to Launch First-Ever Direct Admission Pilot," the qualifying high school seniors in RCOE had to be on track to meet college preparatory courses (A-G requirements) and the direct

admission offer is a conditional admission to one of the 10 CSU campuses by way of a brochure mailed to their home address. Students will then use the CaliforniaColleges.edu platform to select their preferred CSU campuses, with official acceptance letters to be sent directly from the various participating CSU campuses.

The current CSU campuses that students can attend include: CSU Channel Islands, Chico State, Cal State East Bay, Cal Poly Humboldt, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo – Solano Campus (previously was Cal Maritime), Cal State Monterey Bay, Cal State San Bernardino, CSU San Marcos, San Francisco State, and Sonoma State.

Per the CSU, in the October 2024 CSU Press Release, "we are excited to provide a direct pathway to higher education for thousands of high school students across Riverside County, we want students to know that the door to college opportunity is open to them, and to help relieve some of the stress and uncertainty about applying for college. Riverside County is an excellent location for this first-ever program for the CSU, as it is ethnically and economically representative of the diversity of California, and many of the students the CSU is so proud to serve."

This measure appears to build off of the West Sacramento Home Run Program (a program that provides access to high-quality early learning for all children, opportunities to develop valuable workplace skills, and financial assistance for postsecondary education and training) and the CSU's direct admission pilot program in RCOE.

Dual admission. This measure aims to extend and promote an existing CCC to CSU transfer program. Current law establishes the Dual Admissions Pathway at CSU for first-time freshman applicants starting in the 2023-24 through the 2025-26 academic year. The dual admission agreement guarantees that a student will: 1) be admitted to their chosen campus if they complete transfer requirements, which may include completion of an ADT or another established course of study for transfer within two academic years at a CCC; and, 2) have access to a library, counseling, and other services from the CSU campus nearest to their primary residence. Further, it requires CSU to report by April 1, 2026, on the program including college participants, a description of services, and information on program applicants and student outcomes.

This measure extends the dual admissions program until the 2035-36 academic year and expands eligibility to students who have completed an ADT or another established course of study for transfer within three rather than two years.

Additionally, this measure requires that the CCCs take the following actions in order to promote the CSU dual admissions program:

- 1) Share information about the program at new student orientation;
- 2) Provide information about the program through an annual email to the new students for each incoming fall term;
- 3) Post information about the program in an easily identifiable and accessible format on the campus website; and,
- 4) Post information about the program in counseling offices and transfer centers.

According to the Author

According to the author, "it should be as easy and seamless to go from 12th grade to the next step as it is to go from 10th grade to 11th grade. Tens of thousands of California students are fully qualified to go to CSU, but don't jump the hurdles of the admissions process. At the same time, nearly half of CSU's campuses have substantial available enrollment capacity and need more students to sustain their high quality academic programs. High schools already have all the transcript information they need in order to validate that a graduating student is CSU-admissible. SB 640 seals the cracks through which too many students fall and gets a coveted letter of admission to thousands of qualified students."

Further, the author contends that, "SB 640 helps eliminate barriers to higher education for students who may be the first in their families to attend college by removing the need to navigate a complex and intimidating application process. Many first-generation students face significant obstacles, such as lack of college guidance, unfamiliarity with admissions procedures, and inability to pay application fees, that discourage them from applying, even when they are qualified."

Arguments in Support

According to Children Now, "the college application and admissions process is daunting for even the most informed students attending well-resourced high schools and while the transfer process from the CCC to the CSU has improved, more needs to be done to mitigate the often-insurmountable barriers to attending college. Establishing a direct admission process and eliminating the need for an application for CSU eligible students would remove unnecessary hurdles that limit access to the CSU. Expanding and extending the use of the dual admissions process would do the same for CCC students and creating TMCs that offer greater social mobility will increase the value and utility of attending a community college and earning a CCC degree or credential."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) Ongoing General Fund costs likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars per year for the CSU, systemwide, to provide mailers and notify students of admittance. To the extent the bill results in increased enrollments from the Direct Admissions Program costs would be lower.
- 2) Ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund costs, up to \$60,000, for the CCCs, collectively statewide, to provide specified information regarding dual admission programs to new students via orientation, campus websites, and within counseling offices and transfer centers.

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 37-0-3

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, McGuire, McNeerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Cervantes, Limón, Reyes

ASM HIGHER EDUCATION: 10-0-0

YES: Fong, DeMaio, Boerner, Jeff Gonzalez, Jackson, Muratsuchi, Patel, Celeste Rodriguez, Sharp-Collins, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Ahrens, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

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