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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	SB 960	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	April 15, 2026
<b>Author:</b>	Cabaldon		
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<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
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**Subject:** Public postsecondary education: community colleges: statewide baccalaureate degree program.

## SUMMARY

This bill limits the prohibition on California community college (CCC) duplication of California State University (CSU) baccalaureate degree programs to instances where a CSU's campus's local admission area includes or overlaps with the CCC district's territory, except when the CSU program has been impacted for at least three consecutive years. In so doing, this bill allows a CCC district to duplicate a CSU program where a CSU campus's local admission area *does not* include or overlap with the CCC district's territory. Lastly, this bill retains the prohibition on CCC baccalaureate degree program duplication of University of California (UC) programs statewide.

## BACKGROUND

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 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 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 institution of higher education requires undergraduate and graduate instruction and research in accordance with their respective missions.

- d) The mission and function of the CCC are to offer academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCC is 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)

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Limits the prohibition on CCC duplication of CSU baccalaureate degree programs to instances where a CSU campus's local admission area includes or overlaps with the CCC district's territory, except when the CSU program has been impacted for at least three consecutive years prior to the date the program is approved.
- 2) Allows a CCC district to duplicate a CSU program where a CSU campus's local admission area *does not* include or overlap with the CCC district's territory.
- 3) Retains the prohibition on CCC baccalaureate degree program duplication of UC programs *statewide*.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill.** According to the author, "SB 960 is a student centered policy that allows a California Community College to offer a bachelor's degree in a high demand field when the regional California State University (CSU) has been

impacted in that same program for three consecutive years or if the program is not offered by the regional CSU.

“When CSU programs are consistently over enrolled and turning qualified students away, California cannot afford to let workforce pipelines stall. SB 960 provides a student and workforce focused approach to allowing some community colleges to offer a bachelor's degree. This bill removes an outdated barrier that prioritizes institutional boundaries over students' futures. By expanding affordable, local access to bachelor's degrees in critical technical fields, SB 960 strengthens California's workforce, fuels economic growth, and ensures students are not denied opportunity simply because a program is full.”

- 2) **Mission shift.** 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 degrees 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 and duplicate programs offered by a segment with primary jurisdiction.*
- 3) **Existing CCC Bachelor's 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 bi-annually. 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. This bill aims to broaden the types of programs a CCC may offer beyond their current authority.

- 4) **Program duplication.** Under this measure, a CCC district would have greater flexibility to offer a baccalaureate degree program when a CSU campus offers that same program. This change represents a significant policy shift from a statewide prohibition to a local one (under certain circumstances). Duplication of CSU programs at a campus outside the local service area would no longer be restricted. The prohibition on CSU program duplication would apply only where a CSU campus whose local admission area includes or overlaps with the CCC district's territory. However, the bill establishes an exception to the local restriction based on CSU program impaction thereby focusing local expansion to high demand fields of study. Additionally, the UC duplication prohibition remains statewide, so a CCC district cannot offer a program already offered by a UC campus, no matter the location. Notably, the bill does not change the overall program cap or approval requirements for CCC baccalaureate degrees established in existing law. *Given that this bill would allow duplication of CSU programs, the committee may wish to consider whether additional institutional performance standards or student success benchmarks are warranted.*
- 5) **Impaction.** As mentioned, this bill provides an exception to the local restriction, allowing a CCC district to offer the same baccalaureate degree program only if that CSU program has been impacted for three consecutive years. An undergraduate major, program, or campus is designated as "impacted" (subject to approval by the Chancellor) when it receives more eligible applicants during the initial filing period than it can accommodate given its instructional resources and physical capacity. Impaction may be defined by a specific program or by the entering class level (i.e., freshmen or upper division), or some combination of these. Programs or campuses are then authorized (subject to approval) to include supplemental admission criteria to screen applicants within a specific enrollment category. CSU campuses are required to provide first priority to local admission area applicants for each impacted program.

The CSU reports that across the system dozens of academic programs are impacted, including nursing, business administration, electrical engineering, psychology and social work. Additionally, five campuses, Fullerton, Long Beach, San Diego, San Jose, and San Luis Obispo, are impacted for all undergraduate degree programs. Of the 193,000 undergraduate enrolled in the CSU's impacted programs for the fall 2025 semester, approximately 36 percent of these students, nearly 70,000 in total, transferred from a CCC. The committee may wish to consider whether additional support should be provided to CSU with primary jurisdiction for granting baccalaureate degrees to increase enrollment in high-demand areas prior to expanding CCC bachelor's degree authority.

Campuses may discontinue impaction upon approval by presenting evidence of sufficient, long-term capacity as part of their request. This bill is silent on what happens to a program approved if the CSU program is later discontinued from impaction. Additionally, this bill relies on CSU program impaction as a trigger for local duplication but does not provide an opportunity to address capacity issues prior to its implementation. Lastly, impaction is currently not described in the bill, which could raise questions and generate debate during implementation. For these reasons, ***staff recommends that the bill be amended as follows:***

- Define program impaction: *“Impacted program” means a specific baccalaureate degree program offered by a campus of the CSU that has been designated as impacted by the CSU in accordance with its established policies and procedures, and for which the number of eligible applications received in the initial filing period is greater than the number that can be accommodated by the program.*
  - *Delay CSU program impaction trigger by four years. During this time CSU campus wishing to discontinue impaction in accordance with the established policies and procedures for a baccalaureate degree program shall develop a plan describing how it will address enrollment demand and maintain student access for that program. The campus shall make the plan publicly available on its website.*
  - *Clarify that a community college baccalaureate degree program approved under the impaction-based duplication exception may continue to be offered regardless of any subsequent change in impaction status of the corresponding CSU program.*
- 6) **Local Admission Area.** This measure imposes geographic limits specifically around a CSU campus’ local admission area and CCC district territory. Current law establishes how CCC district territories are defined, organized, and governed within the state. However, local admission areas are not as clearly delineated in statute. This bill is silent on how the local admission area is to be determined, which may also prompt discussion and raise questions during implementation. For this reason, **staff recommends that the bill be amended** so that CSU’s local admission area is determined as follows:
- *For purposes of this article, a CSU campus’s local admission area or local service area shall be as identified by the CSU consistent with Section 89030.5 (c).*
- 7) **Impact on CCCs core mission.** In previous discussions around authorizing the offering of CCC baccalaureate degrees, concerns were raised that broadening the CCC mission would diminish attention to transfer, associate degree completion, remedial education goals, and career technical education. In an effort to address this concern and limit any potential impact on the current mission of the CCC, as well as on existing associate degree programs at local campuses. Existing law established by AB 927 limits the number of programs a CCC may offer to no more than 25 percent of the number of associated degree programs offered at the college. To the extent this bill facilitates additional growth in CCC baccalaureate programs, the existing cap may not serve as a reasonable limit. For this reason, **staff recommends that the bill be amended** to reduce the statutory cap from 25 percent to 15 percent.
- 8) **Alternative solutions to expand access.** This bill expands CCC’s ability to establish programs independent from CSU or UC. 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 to expand and streamline 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 strength of each segment. Further, in its recommendation for alternatives to the original CCC baccalaureate degree pilot program, the LAO's analysis 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 their degree. The LAO report asserts that CCC 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. *The committee may wish to consider all of the following:*

- *Could this bill undermine any incentive for CCC/CSU collaboration among the segments to streamline pathways? What is the expectation for collaboration among the segments?*
- *Can the process for developing CCC/CSU collaborative efforts to address access issues be modified to facilitate greater proliferation of these programs?*
- *Should a CCC be required to demonstrate that existing avenues for partnership with CSU are not possible or viable before seeking an expanded authorization to offer an independent baccalaureate degree?*

- 9) **Arguments in support.** In their letter of support submitted to this Committee, the Association of California Community College Administrators states, in part: "The California Community Colleges Baccalaureate Degree Program has proven to be a vital tool in expanding access to higher education for students across the state. Since its inception, ACCCA has supported this program because it provides students with an affordable and accessible pathway to earning a bachelor's degree. Many students, particularly working adults, first-generation college students, and those in underserved communities—benefit from the ability to complete their education locally and at a lower cost.

"SB 960 builds on the success of this program by addressing persistent capacity challenges in impacted CSU programs. By allowing CCCs to offer similar baccalaureate degrees in fields where demand exceeds available CSU enrollment, this bill will help reduce bottlenecks, accelerate time to degree completion, and better align educational opportunities with workforce needs."

- 10) **Arguments in opposition.** The CSU argues, in part, in their opposition letter, "Impaction is the result of a lack of equitable state investment in the CSU. While the community colleges benefit from Proposition 98's guaranteed funding, local tax revenue and access to bond authority for facility needs, the state's investment to the CSU is lagging, unpredictable and constrains our ability to fully meet student demand. For some programs, such as our pre-licensure Bachelor

of Science in nursing programs, impactation is driven almost entirely by factors outside of the CSU's control, including the limited capacity for clinical placements.

“Expanding access to baccalaureate programs at community colleges may seem like a practical way to increase access to a bachelor's degree, but it could unintentionally worsen the enrollment challenges already facing some CSU universities. While the CSU continues to address this dynamic issue through efforts such as our direct admissions program, enhanced recruitment in rural communities, and leveraging our online and hybrid program offerings, the shift proposed by this legislation could further erode CSU's transfer pipeline and cause additional pressure on universities already contending with budget and staff reductions.”

11) ***Prior and related legislation.***

Recent legislative efforts have sought individual program or district specific exemptions from duplication restrictions, including the following:

AB 2694 (Alvarez, 2026) would narrow the prohibition on CCC baccalaureate degree programs duplication of CSU and UC programs based on geographic region. AB 2694 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 664 (Alvarez, 2026) would establish an alternative pathway for baccalaureate degree approval for Southwestern Community College District by statutorily authorizing the CCC Chancellor to authorize the Southwestern Community College District to offer no more than 4 workforce-aligned baccalaureate degree programs. AB 664 is pending assignment in the Senate Rules Committee.

AB 2053 (Ta, 2026) would establish an alternative pathway for baccalaureate degree approval for Coast Community College District by statutorily authorizing the CCC Chancellor to authorize the Coast Community College District to offer a workforce-aligned cybersecurity baccalaureate degree program at Coastline College, as provided. AB 2053 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 2136 (Pacheco, 2026) would establish an alternative pathway for baccalaureate degree approval for Cerritos Community College District by authorizing the CCC Board of Governors to authorize the Cerritos Community College District to offer up to three applied baccalaureate degree programs in the fields of public safety management, paralegal studies, and automotive technology, as provided. AB 2136 is pending hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 1400 (Soria, 2025), nearly identical to AB 2104, would have required the Chancellor of the CCC to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Pilot Program that authorizes select CCC districts to offer a BSN degree. AB 2104 was vetoed by Governor Newsom, whose veto message read in part:

***“Last year, I vetoed a nearly identical bill, citing two primary reasons that continue to persist.***

***“First, the 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand BSN partnerships with UC, CSU, and independent nonprofit higher education institutions. These partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education must continue to collaborate on building these programs, and returning this bill will ensure those collaborative efforts are not undermined.***

***“Second, 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.”***

AB 2104 (Soria, 2024) would have required the Chancellor of the CCC to develop a BSN Pilot Program that authorizes select CCC districts to offer a BSN degree. AB 2104 was vetoed by Governor Newsom, whose veto message read in part:

***“I support the author's intent to expand access to baccalaureate nursing degree programs in underserved communities. The 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) partnerships with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education should continue to focus on building these programs together, and I am concerned this bill could inadvertently undermine that collaboration.***

***“Additionally, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been provided with expanded authority to offer independent programs. Given these major changes, a pause should be taken to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.”***

SB 895 (Roth, 2024) would have required the CCC Chancellor's Office to establish a Community College BSN Pilot Program that would authorize 10 CCC districts to offer a BSN degree. SB 895 was vetoed by Governor Newsom, whose veto message read, in part:

***“I appreciate the author’s commitment to expanding access to baccalaureate nursing degree programs for community college students. The 2024 Budget Agreement included \$60 million per year, from 2025-26 to 2028-29, for the Rebuilding Nursing Infrastructure Grant Program, which may be used to develop or expand Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) partnerships with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships have proven successful in expanding BSN access for community college students and increasing the number of BSN degree recipients. All segments of higher education should continue to focus on building these programs together, and I am concerned this bill could inadvertently undermine that collaboration.***

***“Additionally, in recent years, both the CCC and the CSU have been provided with expanded authority to offer independent programs. Given these major changes, a pause should be taken to understand their full impact before additional authorities are granted.”***

AB 927 (Medina, Chapter 565, Statutes of 2021) permanently authorized the offering of baccalaureate degree programs at CCCs for degree programs that are not already offered by CSU or UC.

SB 769 (Hill, 2017) when heard in this committee, would have authorized the CCC Chancellor’s Office in consultation with the CSU and UC to expand the total number of CCC baccalaureate degree pilot programs from 15 to 25 and extended the January 1, 2024, repeal of the statewide pilot program by five years. The contents of SB 769 were subsequently amended to extend the pilot for an additional five years. Ultimately, SB 769 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 850 (Block, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2014) authorizes the Board of Governors of the CCC, in consultation with the CSU and the UC, to establish baccalaureate degree pilot programs, at up to 15 CCC districts, with one baccalaureate degree program each, as specified, to be determined by the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

AB 661 (Block, 2011) would have authorized Grossmont-Cuyamaca and the San Mateo Community College districts to offer one baccalaureate degree pilot program per campus. AB 661 was not heard on the Assembly Floor.

AB 2400 (Block, 2010) would have authorized the San Diego, Grossmont-Cuyamaca, and San Mateo Community College districts to establish baccalaureate degree pilot programs. No vote was taken, and AB 2400 was held in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

## **SUPPORT**

Association of California Community College Administrators  
California School Employees Association

Campaign for College Opportunity  
Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges Board  
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges  
PowerCA Action  
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

**OPPOSITION**

California Faculty Association  
California State University, Office of the Chancellor

**-- END --**