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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### **SB 960 (Cabaldon) - Public postsecondary education: community colleges: statewide baccalaureate degree program**

**Version:** April 22, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** May 4, 2026

**Policy Vote:** ED. 6 - 0

**Mandate:** No

**Consultant:** Lenin Del Castillo

**Bill Summary:** This bill provides an exception to the existing prohibition on the California Community College (CCC) baccalaureate degree program duplication of California State University (CSU) programs if a program has been impacted for three consecutive years.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- The Chancellor's Office does not anticipate additional Proposition 98 General Fund costs as a result of this measure. While the bill may lead to an overall increase in the number of new baccalaureate degree programs, it would not increase per-student costs as existing statute ties baccalaureate degree program funding to the current community college marginal cost rate for a full-time equivalent student. Additionally, the Chancellor's Office indicates that community college districts must demonstrate full financial and operational capacity, including staffing, student supports, and long-term sustainability, before receiving authorization to offer a baccalaureate degree program.
- The Chancellor's Office estimates one-time General Fund workload costs of between \$13,000 and \$59,000 to update the district application for the baccalaureate degree program, issue guidance, and provide technical assistance.
- The CSU indicates that depending on the number of new community college baccalaureate programs that are authorized as a result of this bill, it could impact enrollment across campuses and pose significant cost pressures on the CSU.

**Background:** Under existing law, the primary mission of the CSU is to offer undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree in 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 University of California (UC) and with one or more independent institutions of higher education.

The UC is authorized to provide 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.

Under existing law, the mission and function of the CCCs is the offering of academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level, and the CCCs are authorized to grant the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees. The community colleges 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.

**Proposed Law:** This bill provides an exception to 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. Specifically, beginning July 1, 2030, a community college district may offer a baccalaureate degree program offered by a CSU campus whose local service area includes, or overlaps with, the territory of the district if the CSU program has been impacted for three consecutive years before the date the program is approved. The bill provides that before July 1, 2030, a campus of the CSU that wants to discontinue impaction for a baccalaureate degree program shall develop a plan describing how the campus will address enrollment demand and maintain student access for that program. The campus will make the plan publicly available on its website. A district's baccalaureate degree program that is approved under the impaction-based duplication exception may continue to be offered regardless of any subsequent change in the impaction status of the corresponding CSU program.

This bill defines "impacted program" as 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.

**Related Legislation:** AB 1400 (Soria, 2025) would have required the CCC Chancellor to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Pilot Program that authorizes select districts to offer a BSN degree. AB 2104 was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

***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) was nearly identical to AB 1400 (Soria, 2025) and vetoed by the Governor with the following message, 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.***

**Staff Comments:** Existing law 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. It allows for the approval of 30 CCC baccalaureate degree programs per academic year. This bill would expand the CCC's ability to offer a baccalaureate degree program when a CSU campus offers that same program by providing an exception in instances where a CSU program has been impacted for three consecutive years. This impacted based duplication exception would begin on July 1, 2030. The bill defines "impacted program" as a specific baccalaureate degree program 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.

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."

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