

THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 960
Author: Cabaldon (D)
Amended: 4/22/26
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 6-0, 4/15/26
AYES: Pérez, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Reyes
NO VOTE RECORDED: Ochoa Bogh

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SUBJECT: Public postsecondary education: community colleges: statewide
baccalaureate degree program

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: 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, commencing July 2030, 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.

ANALYSIS:

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 (EDC) § 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. (EDC § 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 impactation of majors. (EDC § 89030.5)

This bill:

- 1) Limits the prohibition on CCC duplication of CSU baccalaureate degree programs to instances where a CSU campus's local service area includes or overlaps with the CCC district's territory, except:
 - a) Beginning July 1, 2030, when the CSU program has been impacted for at least three consecutive years prior to the date the program is approved.
- 2) Provides that before July 1, 2030, a CSU campus that wants to discontinue impactation of a baccalaureate degree program must develop a plan describing how the campus will address enrollment demand and maintain student access for that program. The bill requires the plan to be made publicly available on the campus website.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Authorizes a community college district to continue to offer a CCC baccalaureate degree program approved under impactation based duplication regardless of any subsequent change in impactation status of the corresponding CSU program.
- 5) Retains the prohibition on CCC baccalaureate degree program duplication of UC programs statewide.
- 6) Reduces the total number of baccalaureate degree programs offered by a community college district from 25% to 15% of the total number of associate degree programs offered by the community college district.
- 7) Defines the following terms:
 - a) Impacted programs to mean a specific baccalaureate degree program offered by a campus of the California State University that has been designated as impacted by the California State University 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.

- b) “Local service area” has the same meaning as citing in existing law to mean the California State University service area for the campus as set forth in the California State University Coded Memorandum AA-2005-05, dated February 23, 2005, or as subsequently amended.

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 programs.* 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, this bill establishes an exception to the local restriction based on CSU program impactation 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. This bill does not change other approval requirements for CCC baccalaureate degrees established in existing law.
- 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 undergraduates enrolled in the CSU’s impacted programs for the fall 2025 semester, approximately 36% of these students, nearly 70,000 in total, transferred from a CCC. Consideration of whether additional support should be provided to CSU to increase enrollment in high-demand areas prior to expanding CCC bachelor’s degree authority in overlapping areas is also merited.

Campuses may discontinue impaction upon approval by presenting evidence of sufficient, long-term capacity as part of their request. This bill clarifies that a community college baccalaureate degree program once approved under the impacted based duplication exception may continue to be offered regardless of any subsequent change in impaction status of the corresponding CSU program. Additionally, this bill relies on CSU program impaction as defined as a trigger for local duplication and provides an opportunity to address capacity issues prior to full implementation.

- 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. As such, this bill specifies how local service areas are to be determined.
- 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% of the number of associated degree programs offered at the college. This bill reduces the statutory cap from 25% to 15%.

- 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 Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) 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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee analysis, this bill would have the following 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

Association of California Community College Administrators
California Community College Baccalaureate Association
California Community College Independents
California School Employees Association
Campaign for College Opportunity
Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges Board
Citrus College
Coast Community College District
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges
Greater Sacramento Urban League
Long Beach Community College District
Mt. San Antonio College
North Orange County Community College District
PowerCA Action
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

California Faculty Association
California State University, Office of the Chancellor

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.”

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, impaction 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.”

Prepared by: Olgalilia Ramirez / ED. / (916) 651-4105
5/16/26 9:57:31

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