

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Mike Fong, Chair
AB 934 (Berman) – As Amended March 24, 2025

SUBJECT: Community colleges: degrees and certificates: education plans

SUMMARY: Requires the Board of Governors (BOG) of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to require all community colleges to award degrees and certificates retroactively, as specified. Requires, commencing with the 2026–27 academic year, a community college, before the beginning of the spring term of the academic year, to identify students who, during the previous five academic years, have completed the semester or quarter units required to receive a degree or certificate, need 12 semester units or 18 quarter units, or less, to complete the minimum number of units required to receive a degree or certificate, or have completed the general education transfer requirements, and to notify those students, as provided. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CCC BOG to require all community colleges to award degrees and certificates retroactively, as specified.
- 2) Requires, commencing with the 2026–27 academic year, and before the beginning of the spring term of the academic year, each community college shall do all of the following:
 - a) Identify students who have completed the semester or quarter units required to receive a degree or certificate during the previous five academic years, and notify these students that they are eligible to receive a degree or certificate. Those students shall have the choice to opt out or to receive the degree or certificate;
 - b) Identify students who, during the previous five academic years, need 12 semester units or 18 quarter units, or less, to complete the minimum number of units required to receive a degree or certificate, and notify those students that they need 12 semester units or 18 quarter units, or less, to receive a degree or certificate.
 - c) Identify students who have completed the general education transfer requirements during the previous five academic years, and notify those students that they have completed the general education transfer requirements and are eligible for certification.
- 3) Requires, beginning in September 2026, each community college do both of the following:
 - a) Annually identify and notify new and returning students who do not have an education plan, also known as a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP).
 - b) Ensure that all students identified, as specified, receive CEPs before the end of their first academic year.

- 4) Declares the Legislature that ensuring all students receive CEPs before the end of their first academic year will help enable each community college to meet the existing requirement of placing students on the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway if students declare a goal of transfer on their CEPs and such a pathway exists for their intended major.
- 5) Specifies that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs will be made as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CCC under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, as one of the segments of public postsecondary education in this state. The CCC shall be comprised of community college districts (CCD). (Education Code (EDC) Section 70900)
- 2) Establishes that CCDs are under the control of a board of trustees, known as the governing board, who has the authority to establish, maintain, operate, and govern one or more community colleges within its district, as specified. (EDC Section 70902)
- 3) Requires the Board of Governors of the CCC, the University of California (UC) Regents, and the Trustees of the California State University (CSU), in consultation with their respective Academic Senates, to jointly develop, maintain and disseminate a common core curriculum in general education course for the purposes of transfer, and establishes a variety of related requirements. (EDC Section 66720-66722.5)
- 4) Establishes the Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012, and provides that the purpose of the act is to increase California community college student access and success by providing effective core matriculation services of orientation, assessment and placement, counseling, and other education planning services, and academic interventions. (EDC Section 78211.5)
- 5) Requires the governing board of each public postsecondary education segment to be accountable for the development and implementation of formal systemwide articulation agreements and transfer agreement programs, including those for general education or a transfer core curriculum, and other appropriate procedures to support and enhance the transfer function. (EDC Section 66738)
- 6) Requires the Chancellor of CSU, in consultation with the Academic Senate of the CSU, to establish specified components necessary for a clear degree path for transfer students, including specification of a systemwide lower division transfer curriculum for each high-demand baccalaureate major. (EDC Section 66739.5)
- 7) Establishes the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act, which, in part, requires, commencing with the fall term of the 2011-2012 academic year, a student that receives an ADT to be deemed eligible for transfer into a CSU baccalaureate degree program when the student meets specified requirements. Requires a granting of this degree when a student accomplishes both of the following:

- a) Completes 60 semester or 90 quarter units eligible for transfer to the CSU and that includes the CSU General Education Breadth, and a minimum of 18 semester or 27 quarter units in a major area of emphasis as determined by the district; and,
 - b) Obtains a minimum grade point average of 2.0. (EDC Section 66745, et seq.)
- 8) Requires the CSU and UC to jointly establish a singular lower division general education (GE) pathway for transfer admission into both segments, and also requires the CCC to place students who declare a goal of transfer on an ADT pathway for their intended major. Establishes the ADT intersegmental implementation committee to serve as the primary entity charged with oversight of the ADT [also referred to as the STAR Act of 2021]. (EDC Section 66749.8)
- 9) Establishes the UC Associate Degree for Transfer Pilot Program, commencing with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), to prioritize admission of a student who earns an associate degree for transfer (ADT) from selected community colleges and to redirect a student who meets those requirements but is denied admission to the applicable campus and offer admission to at least one other campus.. (EDC Section 66749.9)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, “statewide coordinated efforts to improve access to higher education and career education, including the Governor’s Master Plan for Career Education, demonstrate the timeliness and need to support current students and reengage former students with some college credits but no degree. To help current and former community college students reach their higher education goals, AB 934 would follow the example of community colleges who have identified students who have completed all of the academic requirements for a degree or certificate and retroactively awarded those degrees or certificates. For example, Shasta College identified 252 students who were enrolled between fall 2013 and spring 2018 and had completed all the academic requirements for a degree. After contacting students, Shasta College retroactively awarded degrees to 250 of them. Beginning in the 2026-27 academic year, this bill would require every community college to retroactively award degrees and certificates to eligible students. Awarding degrees or certificates to students could mean a pay increase, job promotion, and if a student was awarded an Associate Degree for Transfer, it would mean guaranteed admission to a CSU.”

“To further support students in achieving their goals, [CCCs] are required to provide students with education plans. These education plans (also known as comprehensive education plans) are developed and take into account a student’s interests, skills, career and education goals, major, potential transfer institutions, and the steps the student needs to take on their educational path to complete their identified course of study. However, a recent report by the California State Auditor found that students do not consistently have comprehensive education plans and, as a result, provided recommendations to ensure that students have a current comprehensive education plan. Beginning in September 2026, this bill would ensure that all community college students have a comprehensive education plan before the end of their first academic year. Providing an academic game plan within their first year, would provide a clear path for students

to know what classes they need to take to reach their higher education goals, saving them time and money.”

Background. The CCCs are the state’s largest workforce provider, offering associate degrees and short-term job training certificates in more than 175 different fields. Meeting the current and future need for higher education requires improving success rates with current students as well as attracting and graduating individuals from groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

According to *After Everything*, a 2024 report published by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, by 2031, approximately 72 percent of jobs nationally will require higher education and training. Failure to make significant improvements in certificate or degree completion could result in a less productive economy, lower incomes for residents, less tax revenue for the state, and more dependence on social services. Additionally, according to information posted on the CCC Chancellor’s Office, graduates earning an associate degree from a CCC will see an increase in earnings of \$11,100 compared to those with only a high school diploma.

Previous legislation (SB 1425, Block) from 2014, would have required community colleges to award degrees and certificates retroactively to eligible students. In the years since, some community colleges have implemented this effort and begun identifying students and retroactively awarding degrees or certificates.

For example, Shasta College released a report in September 2021 outlining their work. Shasta College identified 575 former students who were enrolled between fall 2013 and spring 2018 and had stopped out but had accumulated 60 or more credits. Almost half—252—of these students had completed all the academic requirements for a degree. After contacting students, Shasta College retroactively awarded degrees to 250 of them.

To further support students in reaching their higher education goals, CCC are already required to provide students with education plans. These education plans (CEPs) are developed and take into account a student’s interests, skills, career and education goals, major, potential transfer institutions, and the steps the student needs to take on their educational path to complete their identified course of study.

As of August 1, 2024, existing law (the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act of 2021), requires the CCCs to place students on the ADT pathway if such a pathway exists for their intended major of study and the students declare a goal of transfer on their education plans.

Committee staff notes that the provisions of this bill will go into effect in the 2026–27 academic year. Moving forward, the author may wish to consider working with stakeholders to ensure that this timeline is sufficient for CCC campuses to implement the policies and systems necessary to carry out the provisions of this bill.

Arguments in support. The Southern California College Attainment Network (SoCal CAN), a network of 114 individual community based organizations in the college access and success field, wrote that “AB 934 will create significant progress towards statewide educational

attainment and workforce development goals by making sure that each student is aware of their progress and has a clear understanding of their pathway to completion through proactive campus outreach. Starting with the 2026-27 academic year, this bill will require each community college in California to identify students who have completed the requirements to receive a degree or certificate within the previous five years and notify them of their eligibility to claim it. Students who need 12 semester units or 18 quarter units or less and students who met general education transfer requirements will also be identified and notified of their status. Students may stop out of college for reasons such as financial challenges, family obligations, work responsibilities, or even institutional policies. These types of barriers disproportionately impact Black, Latinx and/or Hispanic, Indigenous, and underrepresented AAPI students, which are 30 percent more likely than White students to need to stop out before completing a degree. The changes this bill proposes invites these students back into higher education after facing setbacks, often beyond their control, helping to close racial equity gaps in completion.”

The Campaign for College Opportunity wrote in support, noting that “especially for SCNC students who stopped out in a hurry, they may have accumulated enough credits that would have earned them a degree or certificate, but did not have the time to meet with a counselor at their community college to initiate the process of receiving that award, costing students \$5,000-\$10,000 annually in lost potential wages. AB 934 would retroactively award degrees or certificates to community college students who completed their program but did not officially receive their credential, dating back to 2020—a year marked by abrupt, life-changing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the bill would invite students who are within a few courses of completing their degree or certificate to return to college and finish their program. [CCCs] serve as the main public institution for Californians to upskill, earn an associate’s degree, or start a transfer pathway, unfortunately while about 70 percent of community college students intend to transfer or earn an associate degree, just more than 25 percent transfer or complete any associate degree or certificate within six years, and less than one in ten do so within two years. Last year the State Auditor found that CCC students received inconsistent education plans and that colleges had inconsistent processes to reach out to students to help them receive one... to best support community college students, we strongly urge your support for AB 934.”

Prior legislation. SB 484 (Portantino, 2018) would have required the governing board of each community college district to direct community colleges to identify and notify students who complete an ADT, to automatically award these students with the degree and add the students to an identification system that is maintained by community colleges in a manner that is accessible to the CSU and the UC for purposes of streamlining transfer. SB 478 was ultimately vetoed by Governor Newsom whose message read in part:

“Community colleges should already be identifying and notifying students who have earned associate degrees, associate degrees for transfer, and certificates. The community colleges’ apportionments funding formula already provides fiscal incentive for them to do so. Moreover, this bill likely creates a reimbursable state mandate, thereby creating additional cost.”

SB 478 (Portantino, 2017) was essentially identical to SB 484 (Portantino, 2017). SB 478 was ultimately vetoed by Governor Brown whose message read in part:

“I support efforts to increase the number of transfer students to the California State University and the University of California, as well as to other four-year private universities, but funding a sporadic, manual "degree audit" is not the answer.”

“It would be better for community colleges to update their technology systems and processes in total, so that all students know how close they are to completing their degrees.”

SB 1425 (Block, 2013), would have required that the CCC Chancellor to develop or identify a commercially available utility to conduct systemwide automatic degree audits and required all CCC campuses to award degrees and certificates, as specified, retroactively to students who have been identified, as specified, as eligible to receive a degree or certificate. SB 1425 was held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alliance College-ready Public Schools Foundation
Alliance for a Better Community
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
Campaign for College Opportunity
College Access Plan
College for All Coalition
Determined to Succeed
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Fulfillment Fund
Innecity Struggle
Kid City Hope Place
Los Angeles Urban Foundation
Motivating Our Students Through Experience
Operation Jump Start
Para Los Ninos
Social Justice Learning Institute
Southern California College Attainment Network
USC Mcmorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative

Opposition

None on file.

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