

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 662 (Alvarez) – As Amended April 21, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Postsecondary education: intersegmental institution of higher education in the City of Chula Vista: South County Higher Education Planning Task Force

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the South County Higher Education Planning Task Force for purposes of evaluating the feasibility of establishing an intersegmental institution of public higher education in the City of Chula Vista. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Finds and declares that:
  - a) The residents of the southern region of the County of San Diego face barriers to accessing postsecondary education due to the absence of a public university in the region;
  - b) A collaborative, intersegmental approach is essential to identify appropriate models for expanding access in a way that meets local workforce needs and ensures regional equity; and,
  - c) The intent of the Legislature to establish a planning task force to evaluate the feasibility of creating an intersegmental institution of public higher education in the City of Chula Vista.
- 2) Establishes the South County Higher Education Planning Task Force (task force) for the purposes of evaluating the feasibility of establishing an intersegmental institution of public higher education in the City of Chula Vista.
- 3) Specifies that the task force will be composed of the following members:
  - a) At least one representative from San Diego State University (SDSU) appointed by the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU);
  - b) At least one representative from Southwestern College appointed by the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC);
  - c) At least one representative from the University of California (UC), San Diego (UCSD) appointed by the President of the UC;
  - d) At least one representative from the City of Chula Vista;
  - e) At least one representative from the Sweetwater Union High School District appointed by the San Diego County Office of Education;
  - f) At least one public member appointed by the City of Chula Vista;
  - g) At least one representative appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly; and,

- h) At least one representative appointed by the President pro Tempore of the Senate.
- 4) Requires all members of the task force to be residents of the South County area of the County of San Diego.
- 5) Requires the task force do at least all of the following:
  - a) Identify and recommend potential governance structures for the intersegmental institution of public higher education, including, but not limited to, consortia and other collaborative models;
  - b) Identify and analyze potential site locations and infrastructure requirements;
  - c) Identify and recommend potential funding mechanisms, resources, and partnerships for the intersegmental institution of public higher education;
  - d) Identify any statutory barriers to the recommendations, as specified, and recommend any statutory changes necessary for establishing the intersegmental institution of public higher education;
  - e) Conduct public engagement activities for purposes of gathering regional input; and,
  - f) Convene its first meeting on or before February 6, 2026.
- 6) Requires the task force to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature on or before January 1, 2027, to be submitted as specified.
- 7) Makes legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the City of Chula Vista.
- 8) Requires that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the measure 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 UC as a public trust to be administered by the Regents of the UC; and, grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to ensure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services (Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution).
- 2) Establishes the CSU system, comprised of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the BOT, the power, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system (Education Code (EDC) Sections 66606 and 89000 et. seq.).

- 3) 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 is comprised of community college districts (CCD). (Education Code (EDC) Section 70900).
- 4) Creates for each CCD a board of trustees, known as the governing board, and authorizes the governing board to establish, maintain, operate, and govern each CCC within their district in accordance with state and federal law, as specified. The governing board may initiate and carry on any program, activity, or may otherwise act in any manner that is not in conflict or inconsistent with any law and that is not in conflict with the purpose of a CCD, as specified. (EDC Section 70902).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose.* According to the author, “There is no four-year degree program in the South Bay, and Chula Vista and Chula Vista—the largest city in California without a four-year institution—faces significant educational and economic gaps as a result. Laying the groundwork for creating a regional university in the South Bay will provide increased educational opportunities, economic growth, workforce development and is an investment in the future of this region...the collaboration between the City, UC, CSU, and CCC aims to create a streamlined educational pathway to meet workforce demands.”

*Background.* The concept of locating a four-year university in the City of Chula Vista was introduced in 1993, during the development of the Otay Ranch land-use plan. AB 24 (Block), of 2009, would have Chancellor of the CSU to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of establishing a CSU satellite program and independent campus at Chula Vista, requiring the CSU Chancellor to complete and submit the study to the CSU Trustees within 18 months that the Trustees have certified that sufficient non-state funds were available to conduct the study. AB 24 (Block) was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. His veto read, in part:

“Nothing under current law prohibits the California State University (CSU) or any other entity to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of establishing another CSU campus in Chula Vista. I appreciate the author’s intention to plan for options for the future, and to ensure that any study would be funded with non-State General Fund dollars. I encourage the author to work with the CSU system, local and regional entities, and all other stakeholder groups to see if this objective is viable.”

*Recent efforts.* The University Now Initiative (UNI) was created by Southwestern Community College District (SWCCD) and the City of Chula Vista to “...create a thriving, binational higher education ecosystem that supports the binational region’s economic development by producing a skilled workforce aligned with industry demands.” The UNI Steering Committee is made up of 50 regional leaders from higher education, business, economic development organizations, and other sectors, and included San Diego State University, UC San Diego, Sweetwater Union High School District, National University, and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, amongst many other partners.

In 2024 UNI published a white paper that outlined their vision and goals for a university innovation district. The white paper recommends the expansion of academic programs that align with the region’s workforce demands, emphasizing partnerships between SWCCD, the UC, and the CSU systems. The report also notes that UNI has focused part of its efforts to help inform the

long-term initiative of establishing a multi-institutional campus on 383 acres of land designated for this purpose in eastern Chula Vista.

*Arguments in support.* The City of Chula Vista wrote that “since 1993, through the adoption of the Otay Ranch General Development Plan, the City of Chula Vista has maintained a vision of locating a university within eastern Chula Vista. The City has taken actionable steps to make this vision a reality and has codified the vision within its 2005 General Plan and 2018 Sectional Planning Area Plan (SPA) which approved the entitlements for a [University Innovation District (UID)]. Recent planning efforts have included an academic program planning study and local workforce needs assessment that identified the priority academic programs critical to addressing emerging workforce development demands. Additionally, the City is currently conducting a feasibility study on a potential first phase of development on the City-owned 383-acre UID site. AB 662 supports the City’s vision and aligns with the 2025-2026 Legislative Platform as approved by City Council. Any financial allocations by the City of Chula Vista required to comply with AB 662 will be contingent on City Council authorization.”

SWCCD also wrote in support, noting that “Chula Vista, located in South San Diego County, remains underserved when it comes to accessible public higher education. Chula Vista is the only city in California with a population greater than 200,000 residents that does not have a state university within its city limits. South San Diego County, with a broader regional population of approximately 585,000 is also lacking a public four-year university significantly limiting educational and economic opportunities for the region.”

SWCCD writes that the task force established in this AB 662 will “will be tasked with evaluating governance models, degree offerings, funding mechanisms, and statutory requirements necessary to realize a new, innovative higher education institution tailored to meet the needs of local students and the regional workforce.”

*Committee comments.* The committee recommends, and the author has accepted, amendments that will modify the South County Higher Education Planning Task Force proposed in AB 662 (Alvarez) *to clarify that the focus of the measure is on the development of a mixed-use intersegmental educational facility.* Specifically, the amendments:

- 1) Declare the intent of the Legislature to establish a planning task force to evaluate the feasibility of creating a mixed-use intersegmental educational facility in order to provide postsecondary educational courses, academic programs, and student support services in the City of Chula Vista, and makes clarifying amendments to this effect throughout the bill.
- 2) Adds that all task force members must work in or have a vested interest in the South County.
- 3) Specifies that the chair of the task force will be voted on by a majority of appointed members.
- 4) Requires the first meeting to be on or before July 1, 2026.
- 5) Requires the report to be submitted to the Legislature by July 1, 2027.
- 6) Authorizes the task force to request and receive, but not require, information from the Board of Governors of the CCC and the Chancellor of the CCC, the State Department of Education, any community college district, any local educational agency, the office of the Chancellor of

the CSU, the office of the President of the UC, or any organization representing independent institutions of higher education.

7) Requires the task force to be subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, as specified.

8) Sunsets the provisions on January 1, 2031.

*Prior legislation.* AB 24 (Block), of 2009, would have Chancellor of the CSU to conduct a feasibility study regarding the feasibility of establishing a CSU satellite program and independent campus at Chula Vista. The bill was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger, and a portion of that veto is quoted on page 3 of this analysis.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

City of Chula Vista  
Southwestern Community College District

### **Opposition**

None on file.

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