

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2229 (Pellerin) – As Amended March 25, 2026

SUBJECT: The California State University Enrollment, Access, and Retention of Noncontinuous Students Program

SUMMARY: Establishes the California State University (CSU) Enrollment, Access, and Retention of Noncontinuous Students Program to increase the reenrollment rates of CSU students who have withdrawn from a campus before the conferral of a baccalaureate degree, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the CSU Enrollment, Access, and Retention of Noncontinuous Students Program is to increase the reenrollment rates of noncontinuous students, and requires the Chancellor of the CSU to adopt a policy to prioritize enrollment funding to campuses that meet enrollment figures and engage in outreach efforts to reenroll former CSU students who may have withdrawn from a campus, as part of campus retention and enrollment efforts.
- 2) Requires, on or before July 1, 2027, the trustees, in collaboration with the Academic Senate of the CSU, to adopt a policy related to the evaluation of transcripts of noncontinuous students who wish to reenroll in the CSU. The policy must ensure that the evaluation of transcripts does all of the following:
 - a) If a period of five years or less has elapsed since the student enrolled in coursework, accepts all CSU coursework as applicable to a degree in the original field of study the student was attempting before withdrawing from the campus;
 - b) If a period of more than five years has elapsed since the student enrolled in coursework, both of the following:
 - i) Accepts all the lower division general education CSU courses regardless of the time-lapsed between the student's reenrollment; and,
 - ii) For upper division CSU applicable courses, maximizes credit to the student for degree completion and minimizes time to degree.
 - c) Prohibits requiring a student to repeat CSU coursework already completed with a satisfactory grade; and,
 - d) For CCC courses taken after enrollment at the CSU, maximizes credit to the student for degree completion and minimizes time to degree.
- 3) On or before July 1, 2027, each campus will designate one noncontinuous student advisor for the campus to do both of the following:
 - a) Assist with the implementation of the policy adopted, as specified; and,

- b) Provide noncontinuous students with academic advising and support services to help the students enroll in coursework that optimizes their ability to complete their intended major. To the extent possible, the advisor will provide the noncontinuous student with a course map to graduation.
- 4) Specifies that 3) above does not require a campus to hire a new advisor to comply with the requirements.
 - 5) Requires, commencing July 1, 2027, each campus to provide priority registration to a noncontinuous student who is returning to complete a baccalaureate degree.
 - 6) Requires, on or before September 1, 2028, the CSU trustees maintain an internet-accessible data dashboard that includes all of the following:
 - a) The number of noncontinuous students who have reenrolled at a campus.
 - b) Program participation demographics, including all of the following:
 - i) Student race and ethnicity.
 - ii) Whether a student is a federal Pell Grant recipient, as available.
 - iii) Whether a student is a first-generation college student.
 - iv) Whether a student is a Cal Grant recipient.
 - v) Whether a student is a Middle Class Scholarship recipient, as specified
 - vi) The number of community college classes taken after the student withdrew from the California State University and before they reenrolled at the California State University.
 - vii) The time period between the student's withdrawal and reenrollment at the California State University.
 - c) The time-to-degree rates and completion rates for noncontinuous students, and specifies that the full-time enrollment equivalent of the information may also be included.
 - 7) Makes the following definitions:
 - a) "Campus" means a campus of the California State University.
 - b) "Noncontinuous student" means a student who was previously enrolled at a campus of the CSU and withdrew before the conferral of a baccalaureate-degree, excluding students who withdrew due to pending academic disqualification or pending disciplinary expulsion.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CSU system, comprised of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the Board of Trustees, 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.).
- 2) Requires the CSU, and requests the University of California (UC), to mandate each campus in its system to grant students the right to reenroll in their baccalaureate degree program after withdrawing or stopping out, if the student was in good academic standing with the university. (EDC Section 66208)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, “Higher education is one of the most powerful factors for upward economic and social mobility, and it’s no surprise that California’s public education system is among the best in the world. Our California State Universities rank highly for quality, value, and ensuring economic mobility. Additionally, with generous state financial aid and low fulltime undergraduate tuition, the majority of CSU undergraduates graduate with no student loan debt.”

The author continues that, “it can be difficult for CSU students who have withdrawn with the intention of returning to higher education at a later time – also referred as ‘stopped out’ – to navigate the reentry process and access supports once they have reenrolled. While some CSU campuses have taken commendable steps to support their returning students, there is currently no standardized policy for transcript evaluation. In order to ensure that these ‘stopped out’ students can reenroll and graduate as quickly and easily as possible, AB 2229 establishes the California State University Enrollment, Access, and Retention of Noncontinuous Students (EARNs) Program to ensure that returning CSU students are supported in their path to graduation. AB 2229 requires the CSU to develop a systemwide transcript evaluation policy, requires that each campus designate at least one advisor to support returning students in their path to graduate, and requires that these returning students be offered priority registration.”

Some College, No Credential. In the United States, there are 43.1 million people who stopped out of college without earning a credential often referred to as the “some college, no credential” (SCNC) population. Of those, 37.6 million are working-age adults under the age of 65. All fifty states and the District of Columbia have seen an increase in their SCNC population compared to the start of the 2021-22 academic year. California’s SCNC population numbers at 6.6 million total, with 5.6 million being working age adults under the age of 65.

The size of California’s SCNC population becomes a matter of special state attention when considering the magnitude of state investment in these students. According to the CSU, state-mandated fee waivers represented more than \$55.4 million in foregone revenue for the CSU system in the 2023-24 academic year. Almost 50% of CSU’s dependent undergraduate students received Cal Grant awards and the state spent \$548,125,598 in the form of Middle Class Scholarship dollars on CSU undergraduates alone in the 2023-24 academic year.

In a 2024 *State of Higher Education* study conducted by the Lumina Foundation and Gallup, the most cited reason for stopping out postsecondary education was the cost of the degree or credential, followed by the need to work or conflicts with employment, emotional stress, and time to degree following closely behind.

Lack of a consistent policy. While some CSU campuses have taken proactive steps to support their returning students, there is currently no standardized policy for transcript evaluation and advising for these students both during the reenrollment process and once they have reenrolled. Instead, each campus has an distinct transfer credit policy, which is conducted at various times upon the student's acceptance or enrollment.

Upon reenrolling, students sometimes discover that they have lost their "catalog rights". Catalog rights are the policies, requirements, and course/program descriptions that are published in the University Catalog in a specific year. In practice, this can mean that students are required to repeat coursework because the class they took in the past is no longer offered, and the campus won't count that course towards their degree requirements.

Second Start. In 2024, the CSU system implemented Second Start, a pilot program at fourteen CSU campuses to reset the GPAs of eligible returning stopped out students. In order to qualify for the program, students had to have stopped out more than three years ago with a cumulative GPA below 2.0. Once reenrolled, the student would pursue an undergraduate degree and complete 12 units with a GPA of 2.5 or better within 12 months. Upon completion of these units at the GPA threshold, the student would have their previous GPA wiped for purposes of their cumulative GPA.

Arguments in support. The Campaign for College Opportunity (CCO) wrote that "nationwide, more than 37 million Americans have left college without earning a credential, and California accounts for approximately 6 million of those individuals. For many students, not continuing college is not a choice, but one dictated by financial hardship, caregiving obligations, or the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. When students return, they face systems not ready to welcome them back. They encounter confusing processes for re-enrollment, outdated transcript policies, and a lack of dedicated advising. These barriers are inequitable and unnecessary, and they fall disproportionately on Black, Latinx, low-income, and first-generation college students."

The CCO continued that "Campaign's March 2026 report, *The State of Higher Education for Black Californians*, documents persistent completion gaps for Black students across all segments of California's public higher education system. No segment has closed the graduation rate gap between Black and white students to under 10 percentage points. Our 2026 Black Student Success Agenda calls for targeted strategies for adult learners returning to and completing their education. California's postsecondary attainment goal of 70 percent by 2030 is ambitious, and the state remains far from reaching it. According to The Campaign for College Opportunity's 2026 report, *Set Up to Succeed: Meeting California's Postsecondary Education Attainment Goal*, co-published with Complete College America, California's postsecondary attainment rate stood at just 56 percent in 2023. The state must produce more than 1.3 million additional college-educated adults in the next five years [to meet the goal]."

Committee comments. AB 2229 (Pellerin) makes a case targeted at returning students who have left the CSU prior to attaining their baccalaureate degree, yet many of the conditions present for these undergraduate students also apply to graduate students – many of whom also balance their educational goals with work, life, and family obligations. *Moving forward, the author may wish to expand the scope of the bill to include graduate students.*

Prior legislation. AB 1796 (Choi), Chapter 323, Statutes of 2022, requests the University of California (UC) Regents and requires the California State University (CSU) Trustees to require each campus of their respective systems to grant students the right to reenroll in their baccalaureate degree program after withdrawing or stopping out if the students was in good academic standing with the university.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Campaign for College Opportunity
Southern California College Attainment Network

Opposition

None on file

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