

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 1769 (Ramos) – As Introduced February 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Student transfer: tribal colleges.

SUMMARY: Requires the California State University (CSU) and California Community Colleges (CCC), and requests the University of California (UC), to develop and implement transfer and articulation pathways for students attending California tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires CSU and CCC, and requests UC, to establish transfer agreement and articulation programs for students attending TCUs.
- 2) Requires programs to include key components, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Enrollment and resource planning;
 - b) Intersegmental faculty curricular efforts;
 - c) Coordinated counseling and transfer services;
 - d) Financial aid and transfer services;
 - e) Early outreach activities; and,
 - f) Support centers.
- 3) Requires the CSU and CCC, and requests the UC, to the extent capacity is available, to develop and implement concurrent enrollment opportunities to allow TCU students to take courses at the CSU, CCC, and UC.
- 4) Requires CSU and CCC, and requests UC, to assess and leverage existing transfer tools and systems (e.g., articulation systems, transfer curricula).
- 5) Defines the following:
 - a) “Public postsecondary educational institution” means a campus of the CSU, CCC, or the UC; and,
 - b) “TCU” means a California tribal college or university that offers culturally relevant, accredited, or affiliated education that bridges the gap in postsecondary education for Native American students. “TCU” includes California Indian Nations College, California Tribal College, and Kumeyaay Community College.

EXISTING LAW: *Federal.* Defines “Indian tribal government” as the governing body of any tribe, band, community, or group of Indians, or (if applicable) Alaska Natives, as determined by the Secretary of the Interior, to exercise governmental functions (Title 26, United States Code Section 7701 (a)(40)).

State.

- 1) Establishes the Donahoe Higher Education Act, setting forth the mission of the UC, the CSU, and the CCC; and, defines "independent institutions of higher education" as nonpublic higher education institutions that grant undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, or both, and that are formed as nonprofit corporations in California and are accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. For purposes of any code or statute, a national or regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education as of January 1, 2025, shall retain that recognition until July 1, 2029, provided that the accrediting agency continues to operate in substantially the same manner as it did on January 1, 2025 (Education Code (EC) Section 66010, et seq.).
- 2) Includes TCUs in the definition of "public institution of higher education" (EC Section 94858.5(b)).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose of the measure.* According to the author, "currently, there is not a tribal college articulation process for ensuring that coursework at tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) can seamlessly transfer. Since there is no process, this leads to the duplication of coursework which does not ensure an efficient transfer process for the student. Research done by Rachel Bryan [author of *Native American Student Success: The Effect of Tribal Colleges and Universities on Native American Student Retention*] shows that Native American students who attend a TCU before a traditional four-year institution are four times more likely to earn their bachelor's degree compared to their peers who enroll directly. With that said, ensuring that we have a process in place for students is of importance for two reasons: to prevent duplication of coursework allowing for a streamlined transfer process and to prevent additional tuition costs."

The author states that, "tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) offer culturally relevant education and serves to bridge the gap in postsecondary education for Native American students. When students who are enrolled at a TCU decide to transfer to one of California's higher education institutions, they may be met with the challenge of ensuring courses they have taken are accepted at their new university."

Further, the author contends that, "to ensure these students are not burdened by duplicative courses if they decide to transfer, we must work to establish transfer agreements. This would offer a helpful tool when it comes to transferring and aim to ensure effective and efficient progression for these students as they continue their pursuit in higher education."

What are TCUs? According to California Indian Nations College (CINC), tribal colleges and universities are part of the treaty and trust responsibilities between the government and tribes. TCUs provide culturally relevant education and serve populations historically underrepresented in higher education.

According to CINC, "tribal colleges and universities do not fit into any of the segments of higher education listed in California Education Code Section 66010. They are not part of the University of California, California State University, nor the California Community College system. As TCUs are public institutions, not private, they are not part of the Independent California Colleges and Universities segment."

Further, data provided by CINC shows California has one-fifth of all federally recognized tribes and 1.4 million people who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, the largest overall population of any state. Native American students who attend a TCU before attending a mainstream four-year institution are four times more likely to earn their bachelors degree compared to their peers who enroll directly in a mainstream four-year institution.”

California currently is home to three TCUs: (1) CINC; (2) California Tribal College; and, (3) Kumeyaay Community College.

Equity in transfer pathways. While California has made significant progress in intersegmental transfer systems, TCUs have historically been less integrated into these pathways. This measure addresses a gap by formally incorporating TCUs into statewide transfer planning. By improving transfer pathways there is a high likelihood that the State will see an increase in certificate and degree attainment among Native American students; which will also support workforce participation, aligning with broader State goals related to equity and economic mobility.

Committee amendments and comments. To ensure that TCUs in California are covered by the provisions of this measure, *the Committee recommends, and the author has agreed to accept, amendments that define TCUs as institutions geographically located in California and operated by an Indian tribal government, as defined in Section 7701(a)(40) of Title 26 of the United States Code.*

66728. (2) “TCU” ~~means a California tribal college or university that offers culturally relevant, accredited, or affiliated education that bridges the gap in postsecondary education for Native American students.~~ means tribal colleges and universities geographically located in California that are operated by an Indian tribal government, as defined in Section 7701(a)(40) of Title 26 of the United States Code.

“TCU” includes, but is not limited to, California Indian Nations College, California Tribal College, and Kumeyaay Community College.

Rather than creating entirely new systems, this measure leverages existing articulation tools and transfer frameworks, which may facilitate implementation and reduce duplication. As the State continues to grapple with seamless transfer pathways, *moving forward, the author may wish to explore ensuring eligible TCUs are able to not only participate in transfer pathways, but are integrated into the California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC) (which is the singular general education pathway for CCC students to fulfill lower-division general education requirements necessary for transfer and admission to both the CSU and the UC), and Assist.org (the official course transfer and articulation system for California colleges and universities) to ease the transfer process for TCU students.*

Because TCUs provide culturally responsive education for Native American students, strengthening transfer pathways while preserving cultural elements may enhance student success and retention.

Committee Staff understands that coordination and capacity considerations exist under this measure; successful implementation may depend on institutional capacity for counseling, advising, and enrollment management, as well as effective collaboration across segments and TCUs.

Moving forward the author may wish to explore a budget request to ensure all stakeholders have adequate funding to fully implement the provisions contained in this measure.

Arguments in support. According to the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, “the Nation believes it is important to facilitate the articulation and seamless transfer of courses for students attending TCUs to California’s postsecondary institutions. Tribal students attending TCUs should no longer be concerned about whether the coursework they are spending their time on will seamlessly transfer, which results in more time for students to focus on their studies and career paths. AB 1769 is a practical and thoughtful solution to a long-standing issue.”

Related legislation. AB 1641 (Jackson and Ramos), which will be heard by this Committee on April 14, 2026, expands the definition of California’s public higher education system to formally include TCUs located in California and operated by a federally recognized tribal government.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Jeanice Warden / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960