

Date of Hearing: June 9, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

SCR 82 (Niello) – As Introduced May 15, 2025

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: Public higher education: artificial intelligence usage

SUMMARY: Encourages the President of the University of California (UC), the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU), and the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC) to create a workgroup of faculty, staff, and administrators to review the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Encourages the President of UC, the Chancellor of CSU, and the Chancellor for the CCCs to create a workgroup of faculty, staff, and administrators to review the use of AI in higher education.
- 2) Resolves that the workgroup should do all of the following:
 - a) Discuss strategies and best practices that lead to the acceptable use of AI in higher education while emphasizing academic honesty and ethical academic standards;
 - b) Discuss strategies and best practices for acceptable use of AI across the three segments of California public higher education;
 - c) Discuss strategies and best practices for the use of AI in academic studies, including, but not limited to, mitigating plagiarism and ethically using AI in academic assignments;
 - d) Discuss strategies and best practices for using AI as it relates to providing student academic support;
 - e) Discuss and strategize on ways to provide professional support to professors on using AI in student and faculty work;
 - f) Discuss and strategize on ways to provide professional support to professors on recognizing the use of AI in student work, including reliable technologies for checking student work, and how to work with students to appropriately inform students when professors believe AI was improperly used; and,
 - g) Discuss best practices for responding to violations of AI usage standards, with student participation in these discussions for relevant feedback.
- 3) Encourages the workgroup to do all of the following:
 - a) Collaborate with faculty, administrators, and students at the higher education segments, as well as individuals who work in higher education outside of California and experts in AI;

- b) Collaborate with liaisons from the statewide associated student bodies of the three segments of California public higher education; and,
- c) Create a report and make public the strategies and best practices for AI usage agreed upon by the workgroup.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CSU, under the administration of the Trustees of the CSU, the University of California (UC), under the administration of the Regents of the UC, the California Community Colleges (CCC), under the administration of the Board of Governors of the CCC, and independent institutions of higher education as four segments of postsecondary education in the state. (Education Code (EDC) Sections 66010, 70900, 66600, and California Constitution, Article IX, Section 9)
- 2) Defines “artificial intelligence” or “AI” to mean an engineered or machine-based system that varies in its level of autonomy and that can, for explicit or implicit objectives, infer from the input it receives how to generate outputs that can influence physical or virtual environments. (Government Code Section 11546.45.5)
- 3) Defines “GenAI” or “generative artificial intelligence” to mean an artificial intelligence system that can generate derived synthetic content, including text, images, video, and audio that emulates the structure and characteristics of the system’s training data. (Government Code Section 11549.64(b).)
- 4) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to convene a working group on AI, and requires that working group to develop expanded guidance and a model policy on AI for use by local educational agencies (LEAs). (EDC Section 33328.5)
- 5) Requires the Secretary of Government Operations, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to evaluate, among other things, the impact the proliferation of deepfakes has on state government, California-based businesses, and residents of the state, and the risks, including privacy risks, associated with the deployment of digital content forgery technologies and deepfakes on state and local government, California-based businesses, and residents of the state. (Government Code Section 11547.5 et seq.)

FISCAL EFFECT: This Resolution is keyed non-fiscal.

COMMENTS: *Purpose.* According to the author, “as we know, [AI] is an emerging technology. The Legislature is working diligently on how California can be at the forefront of using AI, and that includes thinking through the impact this technology is having on our daily lives and how that may need to be limited in some instances. In the case of higher education, it is important to discuss the impact and best practices to be sure students can thrive in their educational journeys. Since AI can be used to do almost anything, including helping students cheat by allowing the student to pass off work created by AI as their own, it is vital our education systems are prepared and communicating on how to deal with these situations.

The author continues that, “in addition, professors/faculty are on the front lines trying to assess student mastery of the subject, and many are having a hard time catching work that was created

by AI. In some classes, the use of AI is encouraged, while in others it is punished. It is time that they have access to the best practices and tools that will help ensure that students are applying what they learned in the classroom, and not just copying and pasting what an AI bot wrote for them. While each institution is working on the issue on their own, it is imperative they be communicating as a group due to California's connected system. SCR 82 encourages dialogue amongst the CA higher education systems to help promote the best approaches in teaching, as well as regulations around the allowable usage AI. This is important not only for the student, but also faculty who are in uncharted waters. Convening a workgroup is in the best interest of all parties involved to work towards clear guidelines for usage."

AI in Higher Education background. AI refers broadly to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence — such as understanding language, generating text, writing code, or analyzing data. While AI has existed as a field of research for decades, recent advances in "generative AI" - tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and others that can generate human-like text, images, and other content in response to user prompts - have brought the technology into everyday use at unprecedented speed. According to Stanford University's *AI Index 2026 Annual Report*, a comprehensive, independently sourced annual assessment of global AI trends, generative AI reached approximately 53% population-level adoption within just three years of its introduction — a pace faster than the adoption of the personal computer or the internet. Globally, organizational adoption of AI tools reached 88% in 2025, and the estimated value of generative AI tools to U.S. consumers reached \$172 billion annually by early 2026.

Higher education has been one of the most visible arenas for AI's rapid adoption. The Stanford report found that four out of five U.S. high school and college students now use AI for school-related tasks, and that usage in higher education reached approximately 67% in the United States and 67% in the United Kingdom — with some countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, reporting usage above 80% among university students. The most common uses among university students include research, brainstorming, editing essays, and — most notably — understanding academic concepts. A separate analysis by Anthropic, cited in the Stanford report, found that students primarily use AI for higher-order thinking tasks: 39.8% for creating content and 30.2% for analysis. At the same time, the report cautions that students themselves have concerns — a survey referenced in the Stanford report found that 55% of U.S. college students believe generative AI tools have had a mixed effect on their critical thinking skills.

California's higher education segments has been navigating these trends. In April 2026, the CSU released findings from its first-ever systemwide AI survey, *Ahead of the Curve*, drawing on more than 94,000 responses from students, faculty, and staff — the largest survey of its kind in higher education to date. The survey found that AI use is already widespread across the CSU community, with most students, faculty, and staff reporting regular engagement with AI tools, alongside near-universal exposure to at least one AI tool. At the same time, respondents expressed a cautious approach: while many see AI as essential to future careers, they also emphasized the need for verification, ethical guidelines, and transparency. There is strong demand for formal AI training - especially among faculty and staff—and notable concern about job security and academic integrity. Importantly, most students reported discomfort with submitting AI-generated work as their own, and many faculty are actively incorporating AI guidance into their teaching, signaling a shift toward structured, responsible adoption rather than unrestricted use.

Existing workgroups and initiatives. The UC, CSU, and CCCs have each undertaken AI-related initiatives. Examples include:

- 1) The UC convened the “UC Presidential Working Group on Artificial Intelligence” in 2020, which issued a final report in 2021 titled “Responsible Artificial Intelligence: Recommendations to Guide the University of California’s Artificial Intelligence Strategy.” The recommendations included in this final report include:
 - a) Institutionalize the UC Responsible AI Principles in procurement, development, implementation, and monitoring practices;
 - b) Establish campus-level councils and support coordination across UC that will further the principles and guidance developed by this Working Group;
 - c) Develop an AI risk and impact assessment strategy; and,
 - d) Document AI-enabled technologies in a public database.
- 2) As part of their AI-Empowered Initiative, the CSU announced in February 2025 that it would be using a comprehensive strategy, which included an AI Workforce Acceleration Board. The CSU Board of Trustees Joint Committee on Educational Policy & Finance presented the CSU Artificial Intelligence Strategy during the Board’s January 2025 meeting. The Academic Senate of the CSU called for a working group on AI in higher education in 2023, and has passed subsequent resolutions regarding AI in 2024 and 2025.
- 3) The CCC has established the Digital Center for Innovation, Transformation and Equity to represent a strategic approach to supporting the CCC’s Vision 2030, including leading in innovation, harnessing the power of generative AI, public and private technology partnerships, and transforming the CCC’s ability to serve students as they move into an AI-powered workforce.

Additionally, in November 2024, the California Education Learning Lab announced the recipients of the “AI Grand Challenge: Leveraging AI for Teaching and Learning” grants, aimed at fostering innovation in the use of AI to enhance curriculum and pedagogy within California’s public higher education system. Nearly 75 institutions from the CCC, CSU and UC systems submitted 32 proposals. Five projects have been selected to receive grants of up to \$1.5 million each. The Foundation for California Community Colleges is administering the grants on behalf of the State. The awarded projects aim to create significant influence on teaching and learning experiences statewide and will strive to reach approximately 150,000 students and 13,500 faculty/instructors across California’s public higher education institutions and beyond.

CSU AI-Empowered Initiative. On February 4th, 2025, the CSU system announced their AI-Empowered Initiative. In their press release, the CSU indicated that their goal was to “leverage the power of artificial intelligence to create an AI-empowered higher education system that could surpass any existing model in both scale and impact.” Among the various elements of this initiative included the systemwide deployment of an AI tool developed by OpenAI - ChatGPT Edu – that would enable “...students, faculty, and staff to use AI to accelerate learning, optimize workflow efficiency, and foster cross-departmental collaboration.” The contract for ChatGPT Edu \$16.9 million, and runs from February 2025 through July 2026.

Although “ChatGPT” has become a somewhat ubiquitous term for generative AI tools, many different technology companies have deployed AI products that are now embedded in common e-mail, word processing, and document production systems. An element of CSU’s AI-Empowered Initiative also highlights partnerships with some world’s leading tech companies, including Adobe, Alphabet (Google), AWS, IBM, Instructure, Intel, LinkedIn, Microsoft, and NVIDIA, in addition to OpenAI.

Student response. The California State Student Association (CSSA) released a whitepaper regarding the CSU’s AI-Empowered Initiative on February 24th, 2026. The whitepaper noted that, while students broadly recognize AI’s potential to enhance creativity and learning, the implementation has been rushed, inconsistent, and lacking adequate training and awareness. Many students are unaware of the tool or unsure how to use it, and there is no unified guidance across classrooms, leading to confusion about acceptable AI use. This inconsistency is compounded by conflicting faculty approaches—some encourage AI while others penalize it—along with unreliable AI-detection tools that have led to false accusations and increased anxiety.

Beyond implementation challenges, the whitepaper highlights major concerns about privacy, transparency, sustainability, and governance. Students worry about how their data is collected and used, expressing distrust in the AI system despite the availability of an official platform. Students also question the financial transparency of the initiative and its alignment with broader CSU budget cuts. Environmental concerns are prominent as well, with many students criticizing the lack of attention to AI’s energy and water consumption and its conflict with CSU’s climate goals.

Additionally, the paper raises ethical and mental health concerns, including risks from harmful AI outputs and overreliance on the technology. Across all areas, a central theme emerges: students have felt excluded from decision-making and call for greater oversight, clearer policies, and consistent inclusion in governance to ensure AI is implemented responsibly, ethically, and in alignment with student needs.

Arguments in support. The Associated Students of San Francisco State University wrote in support, noting that “...we see this workgroup as a vital complement to the Systemwide CSU Generative AI Committee and the Chancellor’s Office AI Course workgroup, ensuring that faculty, staff, administrators, and student representatives are involved in shared decision making. As students, we believe SCR 82 is necessary because it will help intersegmental leaders gain a better understanding about how the use of artificial intelligence will be utilized and implemented into higher education, with a focus on AI literacy, ethics, and best practice usage.”

The Associated Students also wrote that “...the use of AI has impacted students in the CSU and has raised a variety of questions and concerns such as environmental responsibility, academic integrity, transparency and critical thinking skills. In light of the CSU’s \$17 million partnership with Open AI – an immense investment in AI during a time of faculty layoffs and financial strain makes the role of this workforce even more essential. Ensuring awareness and promoting clearer communication on the different ways AI will be implemented throughout the CSU is important to reducing confusion and making sure students know how these tools are used.”

Committee comments. Committee staff notes that there is no inter-segmental workgroup related to the use of AI in higher education. This resolution encourages the UC President, the CSU

Chancellor, and the CCC Chancellor to create a workgroup of faculty, staff, and administrators to review the use of AI in higher education.

In 2025 the Governor signed AB 1098 (Fong & Padilla), Chapter 446, Statutes of 2025, establishing the California Education Interagency Council (Council) within the Government Operations Agency to align education and workforce systems, support adult skill development, and address the changing nature of work and the economy. The language of AB 1098 (Fong) specifically states that the Council was created to increase “collaboration across postsecondary education” and to be a “a forum for communication to discuss the impacts of proposed intersegmental and cross-sector issues.”

Moving forward, the Committee may wish to consider how the Council can convene and collaborate with stakeholders on intersegmental policy issues like the AI working group proposed by this resolution.

Committee staff also notes that AB 2392 (Fong) was developed following an August 26, 2025, Joint Oversight Hearing between the Assembly Committee on Higher Education and the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Affairs exploring the CSU’s AI-Empowered Initiative. AB 2392 (Fong) contains provisions that would require the CCC, CSU, and request the UC to jointly convene a working group to develop responsible standards for GenAI training and procurement before providing a GenAI system to students, faculty, or staff. The language of SCR 82 (Niello) appears to compliment those efforts and highlights the importance of intersegmental collaboration.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Associated Student of San Francisco State University

Opposition

None on file

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