

# Making Free College Permanent in San Mateo County

## Fact Sheet & Impact Summary

### SB 968 (Becker)

#### What Is SB 968?

Senate Bill 968 (Becker) would make permanent the San Mateo County Community College District's (SMCCCD) Free College program by removing the sunset date established under SB 893 (Becker, 2022).

SB 893 authorized a five-year pilot allowing SMCCCD to use existing local revenues to eliminate tuition and registration fees for San Mateo County residents attending:

- Cañada College
- College of San Mateo
- Skyline College

SB 968 ensures students and families can plan for the future with confidence by making this proven model permanent.

#### No Cost to the State

Free College is funded through SMCCCD's existing local unrestricted general funds. The program does not require additional State General Fund dollars. SB 968 simply removes the pilot's sunset date and maintains local flexibility.

#### Improved student outcomes

- Higher persistence rates
- 2x higher associate degree completion
- 3x higher two-year completion rates

#### Who Is Being Served?

Free College is expanding access for students who face the greatest barriers:

- 54% First-generation college students
- 75% Students of color
- Significant enrollment growth in East Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Half Moon Bay

#### Why It Matters

San Mateo County has one of the highest costs of living in the nation. While annual tuition for a full-time community college student is approximately \$1,500, total cost of attendance—including books, transportation, food, and housing—can exceed \$15,000 per year.

For many students, even modest tuition costs can deter enrollment. Free College removes that first barrier.

#### Documented Results

*(Since Launch in 2023)*

**33,500+**  
students served

**24%**

increase in enrollment

*(Three times the statewide average)*

**~70%**

of enrolled students  
participate each semester

Learn More: [smccd.edu/FreeCollegeImpact](https://smccd.edu/FreeCollegeImpact)

#### Community-Wide Support

The original SB 893 pilot was supported by:

- Students
- Faculty and staff
- Employee associations
- Local governments
- Chambers of commerce
- Community organizations

SB 968 continues that collaborative, locally funded model.

#### Why Permanent Authorization Is Needed

The current pilot is scheduled to sunset on July 1, 2028. Without legislative action, SMCCCD would lose the authority to continue the Free College program beyond that date. SB 968 ensures stability, predictability, and long-term access for future generations.

#### Contact:

David McLain, Executive Director  
Community & Government Relations  
San Mateo County Community College District  
[mclaind@smccd.edu](mailto:mclaind@smccd.edu)  
(650) 358-6851



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