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## Assembly Bill 1831: CSU Executive Salaries

### SUMMARY

AB 1831 would set limits on the compensation of non-union administrators, managers, contractors, and other employees in the California State University (CSU) system.

### BACKGROUND

The California Legislature passed the Donahoe Higher Education Act in 1960, creating a framework for the state's higher education system. This included the creation of what is now the California State University System, which is governed by a Board of Trustees. Although the California Legislature has oversight over the Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees is responsible for the governance of the CSU's 22 campuses and for adopting regulations and policies for the system at its six annual meetings.

In November 2025, the California Board of Trustees adopted a [resolution](#) that paved the way for significant salary increases for top executives of 5 to 20 percent and repealed a prior policy that limited a president's pay to no more than 10 percent of their predecessor's. It also created bonuses of up to 15 percent of an executive's base pay and increased retirement benefits and housing stipends.

In January 2026, the CSU Board of Trustees approved another [resolution](#) to increase the salaries of vice chancellors. These increases range from 4 to 17 percent.

### PROBLEM

In September 2023, the CSU Board of Trustees approved a [multi-year tuition increase](#). Beginning in 2024-25, this plan increased tuition at all 22 campuses by 6% for five consecutive years. By the 2028-29 academic year, tuition will be 30% higher than it was in 2023.

During this same period, CSU engaged in collective bargaining with the California State University

Employee Union (CSUEU), promising [salary step increases](#) for its employees in 2025.

The Governor's initial budget proposal in 2025-26 contained a \$375.2 million cut to CSU funding. In response, students, faculty, and unions mobilized to advocate for the restoration of this funding, and the Governor's revised budget in May reduced the cut to a one-time \$143.8 million reduction. After additional activism, the final budget included an interest-free \$143.8 million loan to offset the one-time reduction in funding.

Nonetheless, CSU denied the promised salary step increases to CSUEU members in 2025, citing state budget conditions that made implementing these raises impossible. At the end of the same year, they approved significant pay increases for their executives.

During the same period that the CSU system raised tuition for students and denied pay increases to its workforce, the Board of Trustees agreed on exorbitant pay increases for its top-paid executives. To ensure that the CSU Board of Trustees can manage its finances and maintain its mission to support students and faculty, it is in the best interest of Californians to impose reasonable parameters on executive salary determinations.

### SOLUTION

AB 1831 would establish specific parameters for how the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees sets compensation for administrators, managers, contractors, and other non-union employees. The bill would cap executive salaries at 125 percent of the Governor's salary, currently limiting annual pay to [\\$307,411.25](#), subject to adjustment by the California Citizens' Compensation Commission. Additionally, the legislation would prevent salary increases for these employees during any fiscal year in which student tuition is raised and require the repeal of the November

2025 resolution authorizing significant pay raises for CSU executives.

By instituting these limits, AB 1831 aims to ensure that CSU's focus remains on student success rather than executive compensation. The bill encourages the hiring of qualified leaders from within the CSU system, valuing those with direct experience in teaching and administration. By shifting the emphasis from attracting the highest-paid executives to prioritizing student-centered leadership, AB 1831 seeks to strengthen student services, lower college costs, and promote leadership that reflects the values and mission of the state's largest four-year higher education system.

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