COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

The Campaign for College Opportunity

Set Up to Succeed

Meeting California's Postsecondary Education Attainment Goal

Spring 2026

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Contents

Executive Summary

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With a nominal gross domestic product that ranked fourth in the world in 2024, California has long been an economic powerhouse, driving innovation that shapes the way people live and work not only in the state but also across the globe.[1] As industry continues to evolve, maintaining this success will require an educated workforce with the knowledge and skills to meet ever-changing needs on the job and engage in civic life and democracy.

To ensure California's continued economic prosperity and provide opportunity for its more than 39 million residents, in the FY 2023 budget, Governor Gavin Newsom set a state goal of 70 percent postsecondary attainment by 2030.[2] Reaching that goal will require restructuring the existing higher education system to set up students, and therefore industry and the state, to succeed. It will involve changing policy, perspective, and practice to expand opportunity by better serving current students so they can complete their credentials and degrees, better recruiting high school students, and better reaching additional populations of potential students.

Strategies to Meet the State Goal

This playbook, created by Complete College America (CCA) and The Campaign for College Opportunity, provides an overview of where California stands in relation to its ambitious attainment goal and outlines specific strategies the state can implement and scale to meet the 70 percent goal by 2030. The playbook builds on focus areas established by the governor and legislature in multiyear compacts with the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) and a multiyear roadmap with California Community Colleges (CCC).

The strategies include the CCA Core Strategies, which are part of CCA's four Pillars of Transformation that work together to create higher education systems that work for every learner on every campus. They also build on the deep expertise of The Campaign for College Opportunity in scaling evidence-based policy transformation and maximizing statewide investments to ensure that more students access and succeed in college.

Improving Intersegmental Collaboration and Standardization to Benefit Students

While the compacts and roadmaps have common focus areas and call for the systems to collaborate on certain issues, they do not update the current higher education master plan, which has largely allowed the state's higher education systems to operate in isolation. They also do not create a formal structure to facilitate collaboration.

California has taken some critical steps in this direction with the passage of Assembly Bill 1098 and Senate Bill 638, which establish the venue and bold priorities to convene the state's Transitional Kindergarten (TK)–Grade 12 system, CCC, UC, CSU, private colleges, and workforce systems to be accountable to students and support their ability to go to college and succeed for a stronger state economy.[3, 4] With these bills, California is working to reimagine a more connected higher education system that responds to students' needs through shared decisionmaking and partnership across TK–12 and workforce partners. To succeed, the state needs to further these steps by:

- Updating the higher education master plan, which was created in 1960, to reflect the realities of today's higher education landscape;
- Building a strong foundation and guiding principles for the coordinating body, including a targeted mission and vision, dedicated leadership and support staff, and balanced representation among its members; and
- Fostering collaboration across regions and sectors to address the unique needs of different regions and populations across the state.

Expanding Access to Public Postsecondary Institutions

Despite declining enrollment trends, the UC and CSU compacts require the systems to increase annual Californian undergraduate enrollment by 1 percent each year between 2023 and 2026. With almost two-thirds of public postsecondary students in California enrolled in community college, the system will play a key role in not only meeting the overall statewide goal but also increasing access to UC and CSU to meet their enrollment goals. Key strategies to implement and scale include:

- *Dual Enrollment:* Provide high school students opportunities to take college classes while they are still in high school so they can get an early start on college.
- *First-Year Experience:* Develop structures to connect students with resources that foster their academic and career goals.
- *Active Academic Support:* Provide students with programs and services to help them develop the academic skills needed to be successful.
- *Multiple Measures:* Consider a variety of placement options that include high school grade point average to provide more ways for students to take a college-level class in their first semester.
- *Math Pathways:* Identify the appropriate gateway math course that is aligned with the skills students need for their chosen program of study.
- *Corequisite Support:* Design structures and pedagogical approaches for students needing or requesting additional support to succeed in college-level foundational math and English courses, allowing students to complete requirements in a single academic term.
- *Student Engagement:* Proactively communicate the benefits of a degree or other credential of value to address the unique needs and goals of students.
- *Credit for Prior Learning:* Recognize the prior learning, skills, and knowledge that students possess and establish mechanisms to award appropriate credits.

Increasing the Affordability of Higher Education

Even as a postsecondary credential or degree is increasingly required for a job that pays a family-sustaining wage and offers opportunities for advancement, students are faced with rising costs for higher education. These financial barriers prevent many students from enrolling in college. Some believe they cannot afford it and choose not to enroll, while others attempt to work while attending school, often leading them to stop out or drop out if their income or class schedules cannot support continued attendance. Recent congressional actions related to Pell Grant eligibility threaten to exacerbate these challenges.

Many of the strategies discussed throughout the playbook will lead to fewer excess credits and faster completion of degrees and credentials, reducing overall costs. But specific key strategies to implement and scale include:

- *Funding for Transformational Change:* Structure the higher education budget to return to funding stability and predictability while maximizing investments in college access and success.
- *Student Basic Needs Support:* Ensure that students have access to food, housing, child care, physical and mental health services, financial assistance, and transportation.

Supporting Workforce Preparedness and High-Demand Career Pipelines

The purpose of the postsecondary attainment goal is to enable all Californians to secure a job that pays a family-sustaining wage and offers opportunities for advancement and to ensure that California continues to be an economic powerhouse. Therefore, in addition to the overall postsecondary attainment goal, the CCC roadmap and the UC and CSU compacts include specific goals around workforce preparation. Many of the strategies discussed in other sections will support workforce preparation, but additional action steps and strategies that California can take include:

- *Career Exploration:* Create a structured, intentional process to help students discover, investigate, and connect with potential career pathways aligned with their broader sense of purpose—including their interests, values, skills, financial goals, and civic aspirations.
- *Academic and Career Alignment:* Align academic programs with workforce needs and career opportunities to ensure that students graduate with the skills, credentials, and experiences required to thrive in today's job market.
- *Meta Majors:* Group related academic programs into broad categories or "families" of majors that share common foundational coursework, career pathways, and skill sets.
- *Academic Maps and Milestones:* Create term-by-term course schedules that reformat degree requirements from institutional catalogs into clear, sequential roadmaps for graduation.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

- *Smart Schedules:* Use data analytics, predictive modeling, and student-centered design principles to optimize course scheduling and improve student access to required coursework.
- *Stackable Certificates and Credentials:* Create sequences of certificates, certifications, badges, and degrees that are designed to build on one another, allowing students to accumulate qualifications over time as they advance toward higher-paying employment opportunities.
- *15 to Finish/Stay on Track:* Invest in coordinated communications efforts, institutional policy changes, adviser engagement, and financial incentives to match student credit loads with the credits needed for on-time graduation for both part-time and full-time students.
- *Proactive Advising:* Require advisers to take the initiative to reach out to students, monitor their academic progress, and provide timely interventions rather than waiting for students to seek help.
- *360° Coaching:* Provide students with a designated coach to contact whenever issues arise in and outside of the classroom.
- *Degree Reclamation and Targeted Reengagement Efforts:* Ensure that colleges use and improve upon existing student information database systems to audit student progress toward degrees and credentials as well as retroactively award those credentials to students if they are no longer enrolled.

Funding for Transformational Change

When implemented comprehensively and at scale, the strategies described in the playbook will lead to the transformational change California needs to meet its postsecondary attainment goal. But implementing and scaling them comes with a cost, which is challenging at any time, much less when budgets are shrinking and uncertain.

To meet the 70 percent postsecondary attainment goal by 2030, California must structure its higher education budget investments to:

- Ensure funding stability and predictability by maintaining strong implementation of the Student Centered Funding Formula for CCC and honoring state commitments to pay outstanding funding deferrals;
- Invest to fuel economic mobility by streamlining access to financial aid and targeting state resources to students with the most unmet need; and
- Continue to invest in targeted intersegmental coordination efforts.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Using Metrics to Drive Action

The success of any transformational reform effort rests on continuously monitoring progress toward the goal to uncover areas of success that can be shared and scaled to benefit more students—or to make adjustments in areas in which progress is slower. While the UC and CSU compacts and CCC roadmap laid out some goals and metrics, most were based on each individual system's plans. They lacked definitive, explicit expectations that these goals should work in tandem and ultimately drive progress toward the overall 70 percent attainment goal.

The new California Cradle-to-Career Data System will provide a central source of information that can serve as a starting point for developing a measurement system that can truly monitor progress across all three systems and drive action. Best practices for developing this system include:

- Selecting 6–10 student-centered key performance indicators that align with the postsecondary attainment goal and reform strategies and then identifying related leading indicators and real-time metrics to monitor progress;
- Disaggregating data by student characteristics, including academic factors, support service use, and cohort tracking for specific interventions, to uncover and address institutional performance gaps;
- Starting with data that is available and refining the metrics over time; and
- Remaining focused on the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes and closing institutional performance gaps.

Ensuring that 70 percent of California residents have a postsecondary degree or credential by 2030 will not be easy. It will require urgent, comprehensive action; continued focus; and sustained investment. But reaching the goal is critical to power California's economy and provide all of its residents the opportunity to secure good jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and provide opportunities for advancement.

Implementing and scaling the strategies in this playbook in California will help the state create public higher education systems that work in tandem. Taken individually, the strategies will move the needle, but the real power of the strategies lies in how they work together to address changes at the state, system, regional, and institutional levels. The strategies build on one another and, when implemented and scaled in tandem with a focus on students' realities and needs, have a multiplier effect in their positive impact.

Ultimately, implementing these strategies and reaching the postsecondary attainment goal is about more than making sure a certain percentage of adults in the state have a credential or degree. It is about ensuring that California residents have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workplace and to engage in civic life and democracy. It is about ensuring that businesses have the workforce they need to thrive and fuel the economy. And it is about ensuring that California continues to drive innovation and function as an economic powerhouse.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Increasing Postsecondary Education Attainment to Meet the Needs of California and Its Residents

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

With a nominal gross domestic product that ranked fourth in the world in 2024, California has long been an economic powerhouse, driving innovation that shapes the way people live and work not only in the state but also across the globe.[5] As industry continues to evolve, maintaining this success will require an educated workforce with the knowledge and skills to meet ever-changing needs on the job and engage in civic life and democracy.

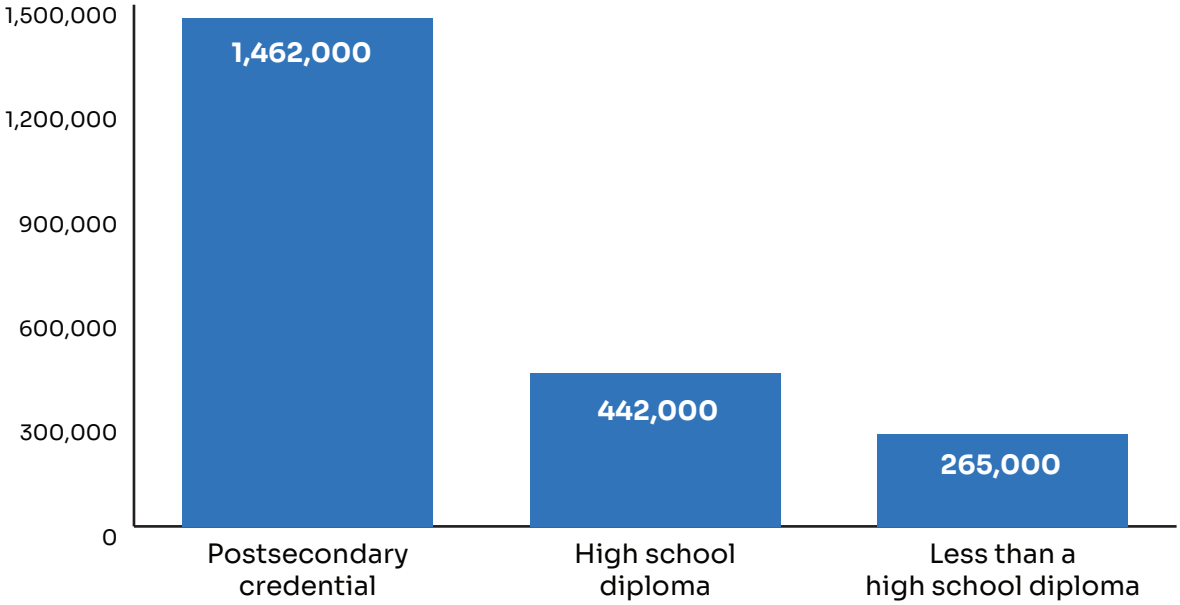
To ensure California's continued economic prosperity and provide opportunity for its more than 39 million residents, in the FY 2023 budget, Governor Gavin Newsom set a state goal of 70 percent postsecondary attainment by 2030.[6] Reaching that goal will require restructuring the existing higher education system to set up students, and therefore industry and the state, to succeed. It will involve changing policy, perspective, and practice to expand opportunity by better serving current students so they complete their credentials and degrees, better recruiting high school students, and better reaching additional populations of potential students. Potential students include those from populations that historically have been underserved by the higher education system and adult learners who may have gone directly into the workforce after high school or may have started college but not earned a degree or credential of value.

This playbook, created by Complete College America (CCA) and The Campaign for College Opportunity, provides an overview of where the state stands in relation to its attainment goal and outlines specific strategies the state can implement and scale to meet the 70 percent goal by 2030. While the playbook focuses on the state's three public higher education systems—California Community Colleges (CCC), California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC)—private colleges and universities will be essential for meeting the attainment goal, and many of these strategies can be leveraged by private institutions as well.

Postsecondary Education Is Key to Success

The 70 percent goal is ambitious, but reaching it is critical to the success of industry as well as the state and its residents. According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, between 2021 and 2031, the number of net new jobs in California requiring postsecondary education and/or training will increase by 1,280,000 while the number for workers with a high school education or less will increase by 519,000.[7] During the same time frame, an average of 2,169,000 job openings will be created in the state each year, including both new jobs and jobs that come open because of retirement and other reasons. More than two-thirds of those openings will be for workers with a postsecondary credential.[8]

Annual Job Openings in California by Education Level, 2021–31



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/projections2031/

Filling those jobs by increasing the number of Californians who complete postsecondary education will have a significant impact on the economy and will quickly result in a return on investment. According to the National College Attainment Network, for each college graduate, California's gross domestic product will increase on average by $2.3 million over their lifetime; the tax base will increase by $5,835 annually, paying back the state portion of postsecondary expenses within 4.8 working years; and 8.5 additional support jobs will be created in the state's economy.[9]

California's Education System Is Not Meeting the Need

California's higher education system is among the largest and most diverse in the nation, but it has not kept pace with changing demographics and increasing demand for college education. Too many Californians do not pursue higher education or, once there, stop out or drop out before they earn a degree or credential of value. Reasons students do not complete postsecondary education or training vary, but they include academic barriers, lack of access, the high cost of postsecondary education, competing priorities, and more. With its vast size and diversity,

California presents unique challenges and requires innovative solutions to meet the needs of ***all*** its residents by providing opportunities for economic mobility and improved outcomes.

The following sections provide a brief overview of where the state stands in relation to the goal. The playbook outlines a simultaneous and intersectional approach to improving attainment rates, removing the systemic barriers that have denied both California learners the life-changing benefits of a complete college journey and the state the economic benefits of having an educated workforce. The strategies are derived from the combined expertise of CCA, which has been building the movement for scaled systemic change and transforming institutions nationwide to improve college completion rates for more than 15 years, and The Campaign for College Opportunity, which for the past two decades has led efforts to ensure that all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college to build a vibrant workforce, economy, and democracy.

ABOUT

Complete College America

Complete College America (CCA) builds movements for scaled change and transforms institutions. Since its founding in 2009, CCA has paired bold, innovative thinking with practical actions that colleges and policymakers can implement across every level of higher education. CCA's work centers on researching and refining education reforms, providing coaching and support, and advocating for change. Across these areas, CCA uses data to identify barriers and design successful strategies; aligns policy, perspective, and practice so complex systems operate effectively; connects experts to amplify their insights; and builds shared accountability. The organization is at the center of the broad CCA Alliance, which is driving change that works for every leader, every campus, and every system. To find out more, visit completecollege.org.

ABOUT

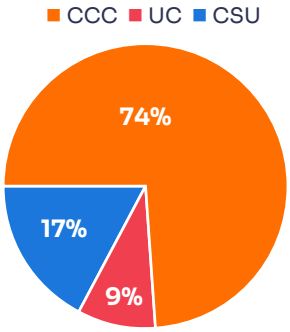
The Campaign for College Opportunity

The Campaign for College Opportunity is a nonpartisan policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college and achieve economic prosperity. By bringing together a broad-based coalition of business, education, and civil rights leaders, the Campaign works to build a strong workforce, vibrant economy, and thriving democracy. The organization is at the forefront of championing student-centered higher education policies and the dismantling of inequitable systems to advance racial equity and economic justice across California. To find out more, visit collegecampaign.org.

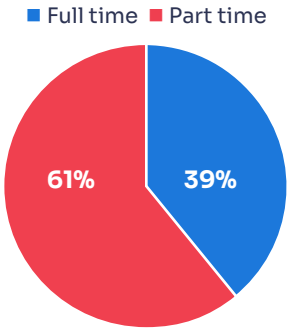
About California Public Postsecondary Undergraduate Education

OVERALL ENROLLMENT

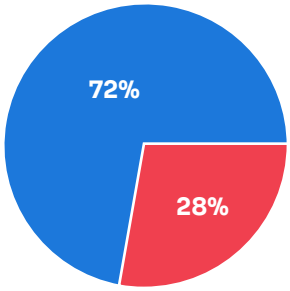
By system, 2022–23



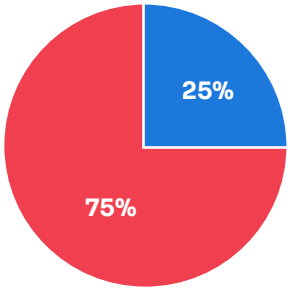
By enrollment intensity, 2022–23



By age, 2022–23



By Pell status, 2023–24

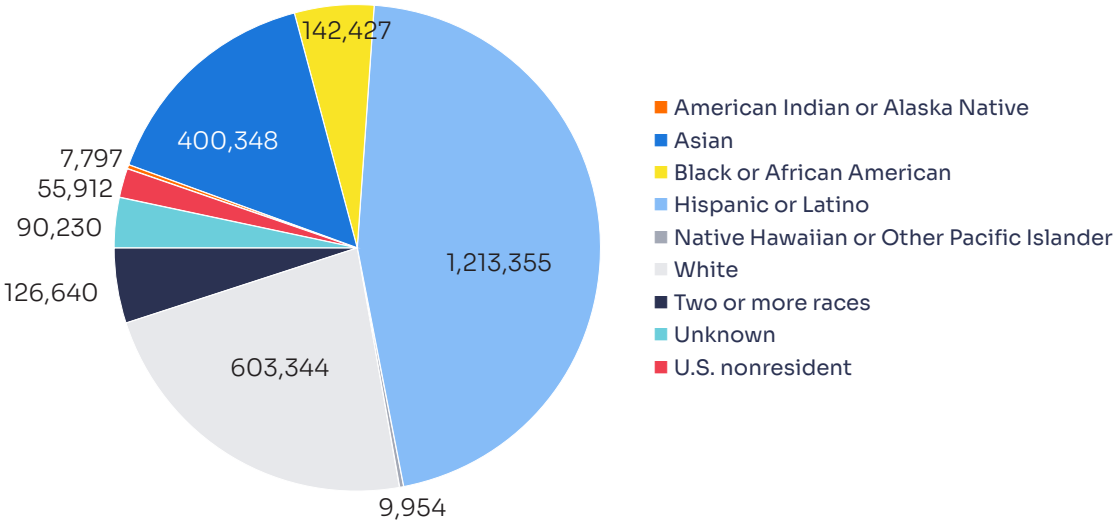


System Highlights

- California Community Colleges (CCC): 116 institutions, 1,951,249 students
- California State University (CSU): 23 institutions, 454,089 students
- University of California (UC): 9 institutions, 244,669 students

For more detail about each system, see Appendix A, page 49.

By race/ethnicity, 2022–23

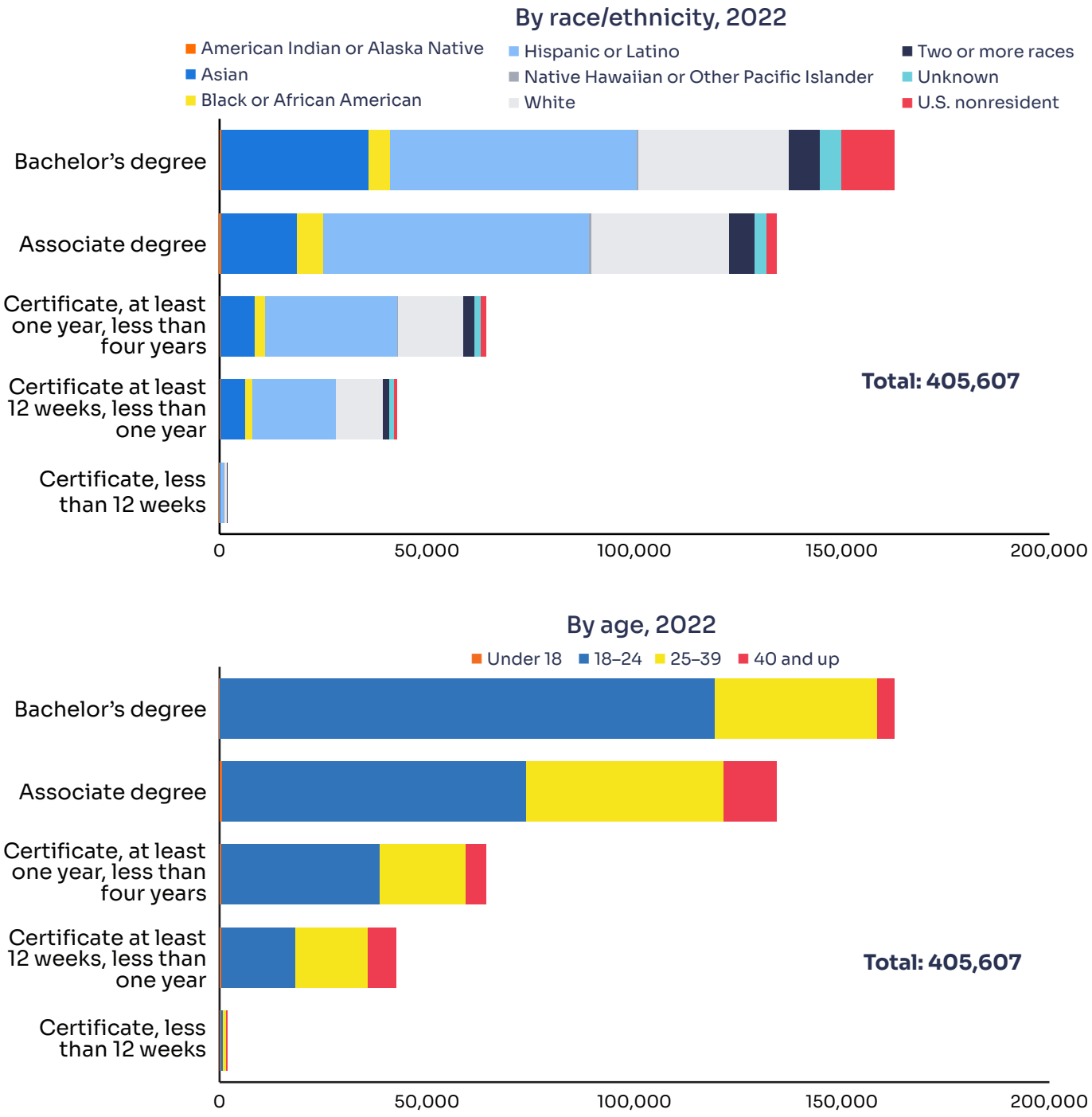


Source for all data except Pell Grant: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Source for Pell Grant data: UC Student Financial Support Data Tables, https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us/information-center/financial-support; CSU Financial Aid Programs Report and Enrollment Summary Dashboard, https://tableau.calstate.edu/views/SelfEnrollmentDashboard/EnrollmentSummary; CCC Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Data Mart, https://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/FinAid_Summary.aspx; retrieved July 15, 2025

Note: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright.

OVERALL DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED



Source for all data: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

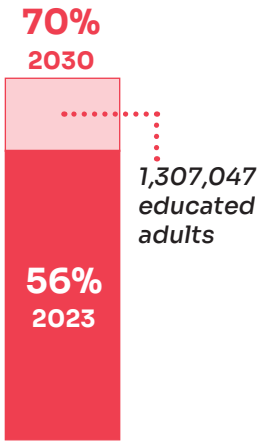
Notes: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright. Completion data by age for CSU and UC and certificate completion data are not available from IPEDS for 2023.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

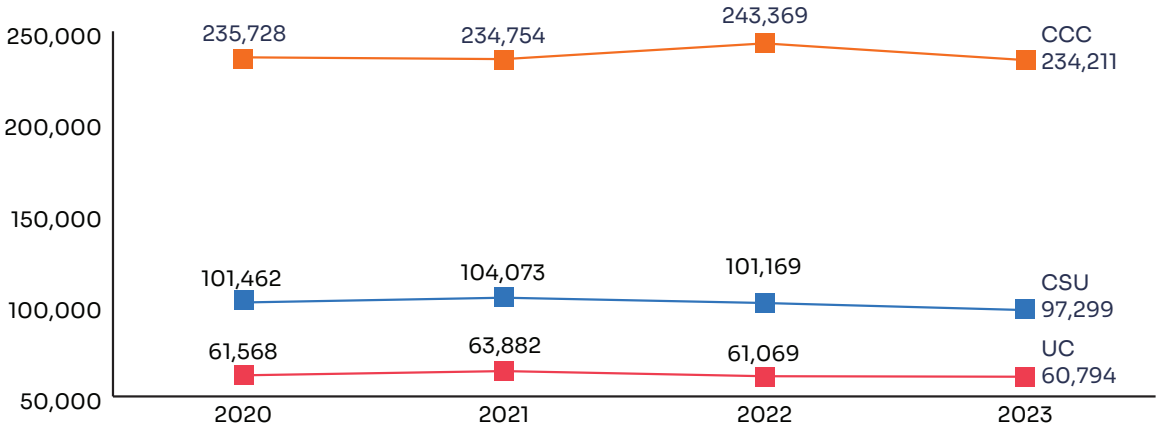
Overview of Current Postsecondary Attainment in California

In 2023, California's overall attainment rate was 56 percent, per the Lumina Foundation's *A Stronger Nation* report. To reach the 70 percent attainment goal, California will need 1,307,047 more educated adults, including 1,848 additional graduates from two-year institutions and 765,200 from four-year institutions.[10]

Meeting this goal will require significantly improving completion rates by increasing enrollment, improving student success, and closing institutional performance gaps. However, in recent years California's completion rate has been relatively flat. Furthermore, too many Californians do not go on to postsecondary education or do not complete their education once there, leaving them unable to secure jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and offer opportunities for advancement.



Undergraduate Degrees and Credentials Awarded by California Postsecondary Public Education System



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, retrieved March 27, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

For a detailed analysis of progress across systems, see *Examining the Gains, Gaps, and Road Ahead for the Higher Education Compacts and Roadmap* from California Competes.

Factors Affecting California's Completion Rates

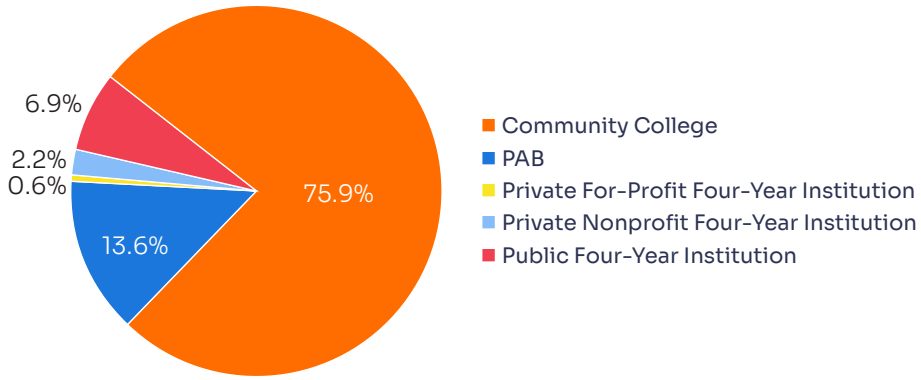
As California looks at ways to meet the goal of another 1.3 million educated adults, one population to focus on is those who enrolled in postsecondary education but did not complete a credential or degree. As of July 2023, 5.9 million California residents under the age of 65 had some college education but lacked a credential to show for it.[11] Among this population, 7.0 percent (just under 416,000 individuals) are considered potential completers, meaning that within the past 10 years they had finished at least two years' worth of full-time enrollment up until their last enrollment. The vast majority (5.8 percent of the some credit, no credential population) are recent stopouts—students who last enrolled at some point in 2021 with no further enrollment between January 2022 and July 2023.

For more information on enrollment and completion rates for CCC, CSU, and UC, see Appendix A, page 49.

Removing barriers and providing support to help potential completers and recent stopouts over the finish line presents a rich opportunity for California to work toward its postsecondary attainment goal. The reasons these learners do not complete vary:

Enrollment Intensity: More than 75 percent of the some college, no credential population last attended community college,[12] and the vast majority of California community college students (66 percent) attend part time,[13] often because they have to work while going to school or because they have outside responsibilities such as caring for children or other family members. All too often these outside pressures combined with systemic barriers lead to students stopping out or dropping out.

Percentage of Some College, No Credential Population by Last Enrolled Sector

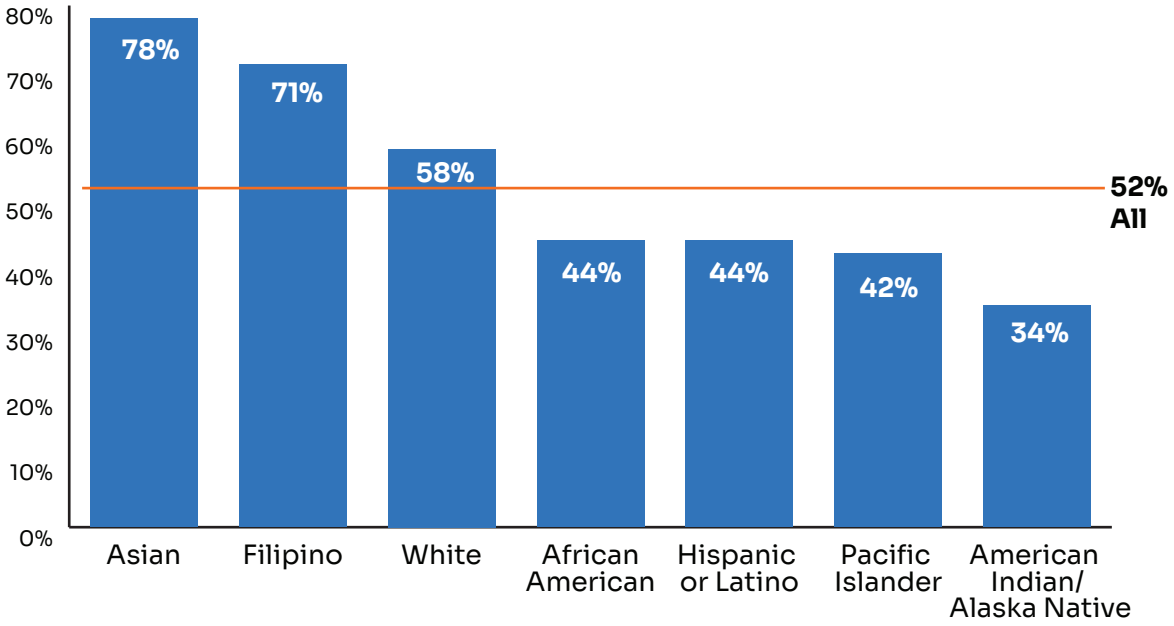


Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/researchcenter/viz/SCNC_Dashboard_2023Report/NationalDashboard

Note: PABs are primarily associate degree-granting baccalaureate institutions. While these institutions primarily educate and award degrees at the sub-baccalaureate credential level, they are classified as four-year institutions in the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Academic Preparation: Students planning to go to CSU and UC must complete college-prep courses known as the A–G curriculum, a 15-course sequence required for admission. But in 2023–24, only 52 percent of high school graduates fulfilled the A–G requirements, meaning that more than 210,000 students graduated high school without being eligible to go directly to CSU or UC.[14] The situation disproportionately affects students from historically underserved populations. Only 44 percent of Hispanic or Latino students, who make up 56 percent of the statewide Transitional Kindergarten (TK)–Grade 12 student population,[15] graduate with all their A–G requirements fulfilled.

Percentage of High School Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements by Race/Ethnicity



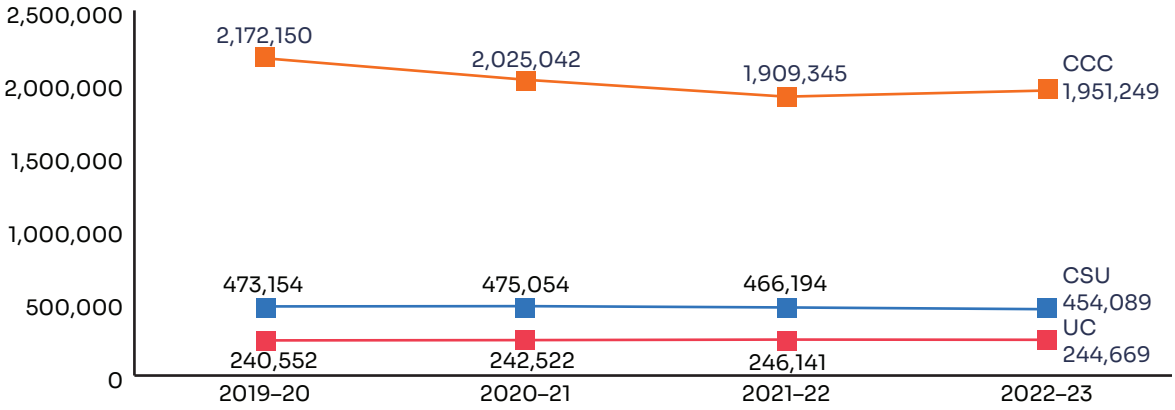
Source: Data Quest, California Department of Education, https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2023-24

One potential reason for the gaps in preparation may be lack of course access for students in some California school districts. Some districts have made A–G the default graduation requirement; the majority have not. Many of the districts that have not, particularly those encompassing smaller towns and in more rural areas, have difficulty making the curriculum a requirement because they face challenges with hiring staff, being able to provide counseling, and structuring scheduling and placement.

Enrollment Trends: Increasing attainment rates will require having more students in the higher education system. To meet the overall 70 percent goal, the state called for a 1 percent increase in enrollment at UC and CSU each year between 2023 and 2026 (about 8,000 full-time-equivalent students at UC and 14,200 at CSU over four years). CCC was tasked with supporting this increase by growing its own enrollment and increasing the rate of transfer to both systems to facilitate more students earning bachelor's degrees from the four-year systems.

After dips that affected student enrollment nationwide during the pandemic, enrollment at UC and CCC is trending up.[16] CCC experienced a nearly 10 percent increase in headcount in the 2023–24 school year. CSU enrollment had been trending down, but data from the CSU system indicates that it ticked up slightly in 2024.[17]

Undergraduate Enrollment Trends by California Postsecondary Public Education System



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

However, long-term trends will prove even more challenging. At the TK–12 level, enrollment has declined over the past seven years and is projected to decrease by an additional 585,000 students over the next 10 years, leading to more than 37,500 fewer high school graduates per year by 2033–34.[18] Fewer high school graduates will exacerbate the difficulty of meeting the goal of 1.3 million additional educated adults.

Cost of Education: Both UC and CSU have implemented multiyear tuition increases.[19, 20] Not only is the cost of postsecondary education increasing—and is projected to continue to rise—but the portion paid by students also is increasing. With tuition and fees projected to continue increasing, college will become even less affordable. Those students who do graduate often have debt.

	TUITION AND FEES	ON-CAMPUS COST OF ATTENDANCE	OFF-CAMPUS COST OF ATTENDANCE
CCC	$46 per unit for semester system; $31 per unit for quarter system	N/A	N/A
CSU	$6,817–$11,075	$24,266–$34,072	$25,064–$36,236
UC	$14,436	$42,236	$40,036

Source: UC Admissions, Tuition and Cost of Attendance, 2024–25; CSU, Campus Costs of Attendance, 2023–24; CCC Chancellor's Office

Overcoming Challenges to Meet the Goal

These factors, combined with a challenging fiscal and political environment, highlight the need for a coordinated, strategic plan involving all three sectors of California's public higher education system. The approach outlined in this playbook aims to build on the work that has been done at the state, system, regional, and local levels to improve student success and close institutional performance gaps. It also lays the foundation for California to transform how it funds and tracks progress toward the attainment goal. With this approach, California will be able to move from using system-specific, year-by-year goals and metrics that may not ultimately lead to the 70 percent attainment rate to setting intersegmental goals with aligned accountability measures and multiyear metrics as well as the funding to enact transformational change.

Strategies to Meet the State Goal

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

In 2022, the governor and legislature established multiyear compacts with UC and CSU and a multiyear roadmap with CCC around shared educational goals. The compacts and roadmap outlined specific focus areas for the systems to address in return for significant investments by the state. Together, these focus areas seek to improve student success and advance equity by:

- **Increasing intersegmental collaboration and standardization to benefit students;**
- **Expanding access to public postsecondary institutions;**
- **Increasing the affordability of higher education; and**
- **Supporting workforce preparedness and high-demand career pipelines.**

While the compacts and roadmaps have common focus areas and call for the systems to collaborate on certain issues, they do not update the current higher education master plan, which has largely allowed the state's higher education systems to operate in isolation. They also do not create a formal structure to facilitate collaboration. The following actionable strategies start with improving intersegmental collaboration to ensure that all three public postsecondary education systems are working together to set all California students up for success, no matter where they live in the state and what their personal and career goals are. The strategies then address each focus area to support the state's efforts to reach its 70 percent postsecondary attainment goal.

The strategies include the CCA Core Strategies, which are part of CCA's four Pillars of Transformation, which work together to create higher education systems that work for every learner on every campus. They also build on the deep expertise of The Campaign for College Opportunity in scaling evidence-based policy transformation and maximizing statewide investments to ensure that more students access and succeed in college. Both organizations have long focused on increasing college completion rates, particularly among students from historically underserved populations.

Implementing and scaling these strategies in California will help the state create public higher education systems that work in tandem. Taken individually, the strategies will move the needle, but meeting the state's ambitious 70 percent goal will require transformational change. The real power of the strategies in this playbook lies in how they work together to address changes at the state, system, regional, and institutional levels. The strategies build on one another and, when implemented comprehensively, have a multiplier effect in their positive impact.

Improving Intersegmental Collaboration and Standardization to Benefit Students

The current higher education master plan for California was created in 1960.[21] The plan focused on providing a distinct mission for each public higher education system and promoted universal access and choice, but it has not kept pace with an increasingly diverse student population and the needs of the global economy. Today, the three public higher education systems in California operate mostly in silos.

However, the UC and CSU compacts and the CCC roadmap include goals for all three systems to collaborate on issues such as the implementation and use of the Cradle-to-Career (C2C) Data System, common course numbering for required general education courses and transfer pathways, a single platform for admissions and transfer, and data-sharing agreements to support transfer students. All of these elements will help the state meet its postsecondary attainment goal, but the coordination also needs to extend to standardizing pathways and major requirements across the three systems, rather than the current approach of creating two-party agreements between individual campuses.

To foster that collaboration, the state needs:

- An updated master plan that reflects the realities of today's higher education landscape.
- A higher education coordinating committee that breaks down silos and brings together the public postsecondary systems to work in a coordinated fashion. Governor Newsom recently signed into law a two-bill package, Assembly Bill (A.B.) 1098 and Senate Bill (S.B.) 638, which lay the groundwork for creating the California Education Interagency Council.[22, 23] Once launched, this Interagency Council will connect and coordinate key state-level systems and agencies across the TK–12, higher education, business, labor, and finance sectors. The Interagency Council's overarching goal, as delineated in S.B. 638, is to lead strategic planning, conduct analyses to ensure alignment between education systems and workforce industries, and proactively address cross-sector issues. This coordinating body must be supported by a strong foundation and guiding principles, including:
  - » Developing and operating under the guidance of a targeted and ambitious mission and vision, including the hiring and retention of dedicated leadership and support staff;
  - » Selecting and ensuring the continued participation of balanced representation from institutional leaders alongside higher education researchers, advocates, and students;

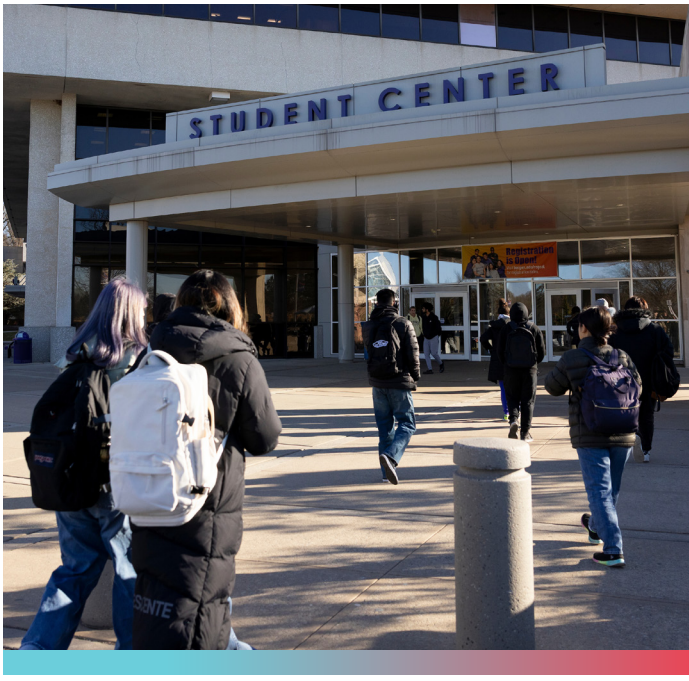


Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

- Providing timely and regular progress updates to the governor and the legislature, including written reports and recommendations around any proposed intersegmental and cross-sector issues, such as changes to TK–12 and higher education graduation requirements or CSU and UC admissions;
- Developing budget recommendations for the higher education sector for the governor and the legislature, including the development, modification, implementation, and operation of any funding formulas and outcome-based funding programs; and
- Prioritizing data analysis, review, and recommendations to strengthen proven pathways in pursuit of the 70 percent attainment goal, including opportunities to leverage and strengthen transfer pathways, improve access to gateway college coursework with student supports, and promote equitable access and credit mobility within dual enrollment programs.

- Regional collaboration to drill down further to address the unique needs of the different regions and student populations across the state.
- Collaboration across sectors, including TK–12, higher education, workforce development, and social services. Fostering this collaboration can ensure that each sector understands the needs of the others and create a seamless system for students to meet their education and career goals.

KEY FACTS

Intersegmental Collaboration in California

- The final 2025–26 state budget included a $1.5 million investment to create a higher education coordinating body in California.
- A.B. 1098 and S.B. 638 established the California Education Interagency Council and bold priorities to convene the state's TK–12 system, CCC, UC, CSU, private colleges, and workforce systems to be accountable to students and support their ability to go to college and succeed for a stronger state economy.[24, 25] With these bills, California is working to reimagine a more connected higher education system that responds to students' needs through shared decisionmaking and partnership across TK–12 and workforce partners.
- The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act of 2021 (A.B. 928) established a state-level intersegmental committee that focuses more narrowly on providing coordination, accountability, and recommendations to further strengthen the associate degree for transfer program.[26]
- The Regional K–16 Education Collaborative Grant Program brings together at least one K–12 school district, one UC campus, one CSU campus, and one community college district in each region to strength education-to-workforce pathways and ensure that education, vocational, and workforce programs work together to address the income, racial, and gender inequalities in education and employment.

SPOTLIGHT

Growing Inland Achievement

In 2015, the Inland Empire region had the lowest postsecondary attainment rate of any region with a population of more than 1 million in the nation. Growing Inland Achievement (GIA) was established to serve as a regional collaborator, bringing together educators, business, and nonprofit entities to increase educational attainment and ultimately economic prosperity in the region.

Today GIA's work focuses on four key elements:

- Convene: GIA brings together stakeholders to create action plans around a common agenda and empower individuals to create opportunity.
- Advocate: GIA serves as a voice for education, influencing policy at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Invest: GIA has promoted efforts to bring in investment to fund transformational change in the region, including providing innovation awards for small groups to facilitate change and connect that work back to larger regional activity.
- Research: GIA supports ways to use data around the student journey to inform decisions, including providing insights on how people will use the data, on data governance needs, and on how to bring new investment to the region based on data.

GIA also bases its work in the Collective Impact framework, which focuses on five conditions for success: common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, backbone coordination, and shared measurement systems. Using this framework, in 2025 GIA developed a strategic plan with a regional call to action that aligns with the state's 70 percent postsecondary attainment goal. The plan outlines strategies to meet the goal, including the role of partners, staff, and students and where GIA can provide support.

That support manifests in many ways. For example, when eight campuses in the Inland Empire region wanted to apply to participate as a consortium in the state's Californians for All College Corps, they approached GIA for support. The program is now on its fourth cohort of students. GIA also serves as the regional coordinator for the California Student Aid Commission's Cash for College program, which help students access financial aid opportunities. Other focus areas include college and career readiness, dual enrollment, and guided pathways.

By listening to partners' feedback and needs and building trust with regional partners, GIA's work is a model for supporting regional collaboration and transformation. It has also led to GIA being one of six organizations selected for the Gates Foundation's Intermediaries for Scale initiative (known as Higher Endeavor). Through the initiative, GIA will be working with Inland Empire campuses to identify critical areas where support is needed and bring in technical support and services to address those areas.

The organization's multifaceted agenda is moving the needle on postsecondary attainment in the region. In addition to bringing partners together and helping others think in more systemic ways because they are working on many different issues with GIA, the organization has brought in $17.5 million in grants and distributed $1.6 million in innovation awards. At the same time, completion rates are inching up. In 2024, 25.2 percent of Inland Empire residents earned a bachelor's degree or higher, including a 4.7 percent increase among Black residents and a 1.3 percent increase among Hispanic residents.

Expanding Access to Public Postsecondary Institutions

Despite declining enrollment trends, the UC and CSU compacts require the systems to increase annual Californian undergraduate enrollment by 1 percent each year between 2023 and 2026. With almost two-thirds of public postsecondary students in California enrolled in community college, CCC will play a key role in not only meeting the overall statewide goal but also increasing access to UC and CSU to meet their enrollment goals. Research by the Public Policy Institute of California found that 75 percent of community college students stated that they intended to transfer to a four-year institution.[27]

The following are action steps and strategies that California can take to remove systemic barriers and increase access for all students across the state.

Start in TK–12 and Provide Continuous Support

Meeting the postsecondary attainment goal and increasing access to public postsecondary institutions starts at the TK–12 level. California will need to help middle and high school students, particularly students from historically underserved populations, have access to clear information about the college-going process, opportunities to explore postsecondary options, and support to be ready for higher education. This support then needs to continue throughout students' postsecondary experience. Key strategies to implement and scale include:

DUAL ENROLLMENT

Provide high school students opportunities to take college classes while they are still in high school so they can get an early start on college.

Early exposure to postsecondary both builds momentum so students graduate high school with college credits (lowering costs and time to completion) and helps them feel confident that they will succeed in college, which is especially important for first-generation students and students from historically underserved populations.

While dual enrollment is growing in California, implementation varies across the state, and several challenges prevent students from realizing the benefits of participating:[28]

- The credit that students receive for dual enrollment differs depending on where a student lives. Even though community colleges that provide dual enrollment courses guarantee credit, some high schools do not provide credit for those same courses. At some schools dual enrollment math courses fulfill high school graduation requirements, but at others students receive only elective credit. And if a student applies to a different community college than the one they were dual enrolled in, the student might not receive credit. In addition, some districts grant grade point average bumps for dual enrollment courses; others do not.

KEY FACTS

Dual Enrollment in California

- California has invested more than $700 million in dual enrollment initiatives, including the College and Career Access Pathways Grant.[29]
- The CCC roadmap calls for increasing the percentage of TK–12 students who graduate with 12 or more college units earned through dual enrollment by 15 percent and providing guidance and practices to close access gaps.
- S.B. 1244 allows dual enrollment partnerships between community college districts and TK–12 districts to expand outside of a community college district's service area if a neighboring community college district is unable to enter into a partnership to offer dual enrollment courses.[30]

- Once in community college, if a student who participated in dual enrollment in high school attempts to transfer to CSU or UC, the dual enrollment credits may or may not transfer.
- Differing school year calendars can also lead to challenges with coordinating schedules. Dual enrollment instructors have to work around different academic breaks to meet the unit hours for a college course. Because courses are semester based for college and year long for high school, high schools are forced to find ways to fill the remaining time after students complete their college courses.

California will need to address these challenges to ensure that the students and high schools that would benefit the most from dual enrollment, including students and schools with large populations of students who would be the first in their family to attend college or who come from historically underserved communities, can take advantage of the opportunity to get a jumpstart on postsecondary education. This work goes beyond encouraging high school students to take individual college classes. Effective dual enrollment strategies include connecting those courses to defined college pathways and developing strong recruitment efforts to support students enrolling at California colleges and universities.

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

Develop structures to connect students with resources that foster their academic and career goals.

Effective first-year experience (FYE) initiatives go beyond a single course or program to create an intentionally designed ecosystem of academic and co-curricular supports, experiences, and interventions that help students develop the knowledge, skills, and connections necessary for academic success, social belonging, and persistence. By integrating orientation, advising, academic support, peer connections, and early career exploration, FYE programs foster a strong foundation for degree completion and future success, particularly for first-generation students and students from historically underserved populations, who bring valuable strengths and perspectives but may not have received the preparation and support they need to navigate and succeed in higher education systems. This work starts in high school through individual and career planning; dual enrollment; career and technical education programs that continue through college; access programs such as Talent Search, Upward Bound, AVID, College Track, TRIO, GEAR UP, and other community-based programs; and more.

KEY FACTS

FYE in California

- At CSU Fullerton, students enrolled in FYE courses—including both general and major-specific options—showed higher grade point averages and improved one-year retention rates compared to peers.[31]
- Across the California higher education landscape, institutions such as UCLA, CSU Sacramento, and Contra Costa College offer structured FYE programs focused on connection, career alignment, and campus resource navigation.

ACTIVE ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Provide students with programs and services to help them develop the academic skills needed to be successful.

Active academic support refers to purposeful engagement and interaction with students to ensure that they are academically and socially successful. It goes beyond traditional academic support by being intentional, proactive, and centered on creating a culture of care and compassion. This holistic approach acknowledges that students' struggles in college stem from both academic and nonacademic factors. These struggles are addressed through both traditional supports such as tutoring or supplemental instruction and interventions for issues such as financial insecurity, mental health concerns, family responsibilities, or a student's sense that they do not belong in the institution. The connection between these interventions is a focus on relationship building rooted in an asset-based understanding of students and their unique lived experience.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Restructure Postsecondary Placement

Students' placement when they enter college plays a critical role in their eventual outcomes. To meet the postsecondary attainment goal, California will need to ensure that students are placed in and have the support they need to select a program of study that matches their interests as well as ensure that students succeed in gateway courses for that program of study. Key strategies to implement and scale include:

MULTIPLE MEASURES

Consider a variety of placement options that include high school grade point average to provide more ways for students to take a college-level class in their first semester.

Students entering college bring with them their whole personal and professional selves—their interests, learnings, longings, experiences, expertise, challenges, concerns, and aspirations. Many institutions, however, currently rely on a single test for placement, which does not fully represent students' interests, passions, and future potential. A multiple measures approach to placement allows institutions to use other methods to give them a better understanding of student readiness and place students in the appropriate courses. These other methods, which have been validated by data as better indicators of ability and likely academic success, could include high school grade point average, noncognitive assessments, guided self-placement, high school transcripts, and/or performance assessments.

MATH PATHWAYS

Identify the appropriate gateway math course that is aligned with the skills students need for their chosen program of study.

The study of mathematics involves more than learning how to solve equations—it teaches skills and habits of mind that are essential for students to succeed in further studies and in their careers. But not all students need to take the same math. Depending on their program of study, some might benefit from focusing on statistics or data analysis, while others might need to focus

on algebraic skills. Aligning the math students learn with the skills and knowledge required for their program of study helps students understand the purpose of the coursework, fostering productive academic mindsets so they can overcome challenges, build momentum, and persist to meet their goals.

COREQUISITE SUPPORT

Design structures and pedagogical approaches for students needing or requesting additional support to succeed in college-level foundational math and English courses, allowing students to complete requirements in a single academic term.

The data is clear that providing corequisite support, in which students are enrolled in credit-bearing transfer-level classes while receiving additional support, improves student outcomes, especially when combined with multiple measures placement. Between fall 2016, the year before California passed legislation requiring community colleges to place students in transfer-level courses, and the 2023–24 school year, completion rates rose 16 percentage points in English (52 percent to 68 percent) and more than doubled in math (27 percent to 62 percent).[32] Enrollment rates in transfer-level courses are now near 100 percent. However, institutional performance gaps still exist. Across the state, Black or African American students and Hispanic/Latinx students are substantially less likely than their Asian and White peers to complete transfer-level English coursework within a year of initial enrollment (14 and 12 percentage points, respectively). In math the gaps are even larger: 20 percentage points for Black or African American students and 14 points for Hispanic/Latinx students.

Closing these gaps will require the state to continue to support faculty in developing and refining corequisite courses and regularly reviewing data related to placement, different corequisite models, and completion rates to support and scale best practices.

KEY FACTS

Multiple Measures, Corequisite Support, and Math Pathways in California

- A.B. 705 and A.B. 1705 sought to ensure that California students are enrolled in college-level courses with appropriate support.[33, 34] The bills prohibit community colleges from making students enroll in remedial courses and require community colleges to consider a student's high school coursework and grade point average as primary determining factors for placement. They also require community colleges to place students into courses that maximize their likelihood of completing a transferable, college-level course within one year of their initial math or English course.
- CCA's *No Room for Doubt: Moving Corequisite from Idea to Imperative*, *Corequisite Works: Student Success Models at the University System of Georgia*, and *Formula for Success: How to Support Every Student Through Math Pathways* provide more information to guide next steps as the state continues to refine its approach to ensure that all students can benefit from corequisite support and math pathways.

Role of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a transformative general-purpose technology that, coupled with the growth in available data, will rapidly accelerate the changes in job roles, skill requirements, and workforce structures across virtually every sector of the economy.

In higher education, AI has the potential to enhance student success and improve college completion rates through personalized learning, comprehensive support, and early intervention capabilities (see sidebar on the AI Transfer and Articulation Infrastructure Network on page 29). But without intentional focus on equity, AI risks becoming yet another lever of social mobility only for students at elite institutions, creating an "AI divide" that further disadvantages students at the access-oriented institutions serving most of the college population.

To avoid creating this divide, colleges will need to develop essential AI competencies across six domains: mission alignment, resource management, responsible use, data infrastructure, talent development, and change management—tailoring adoption strategies to their unique institutional contexts. They also will need to collaborate even more with industry to prepare students for rapidly evolving workforce demands and potential industry disruption. Partnerships with industry and work-based learning provide practical pathways for institutions to integrate AI education into curricula. CSU is working to provide access to AI with its innovative public–private partnership, through which it is making AI tools and training available to all students, faculty, and staff across its 23 universities.

CCA's generative AI equity paper, co-authored with T3 Advisory, provides more detail about the potential of using AI to equalize and scale access to a college degree and the accompanying individual, economic, and societal benefits. The accompanying playbook offers specific steps that institutions and policymakers can take to use the technology to scale proven strategies that increase college attainment while closing racial and socioeconomic institutional performance gaps.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Create Seamless Transfer Processes

Increasing transfers from community college to a four-year college or university will be key for helping the state meet the postsecondary attainment goal. In 2022–23, about two-thirds of California public postsecondary students attended community college, with 33 percent of California high school graduates directly enrolling in CCC.[35] Many of these community college students (75 percent) state that their goal is to transfer to a four-year university to complete a bachelor's degree, but only one in five of this group do so within four years.[36] Overall, only 16 percent of California high school graduates who start at a community college earn a bachelor's degree within eight years, compared with 72 percent of their peers who start at CSU or UC.[37]

California's associate degree for transfer (ADT) is intended to smooth this transition. It provides generally similar curricula within each degree pathway across campuses. Students who earn an ADT are guaranteed admission and automatic junior standing at CSU, with credit for general education courses taken at their community college and no more than 60 credits required to earn a bachelor's degree at CSU.

The vast majority of students who do transfer go on to complete a baccalaureate degree. And in fall 2024, community college transfers accounted for 40 percent of new enrollees at CSU and 26 percent of new enrollees at UC.[38]

Two of the most significant barriers to successful transfer are the lack of clear transfer pathways and the lack of comprehensive transfer advising and support. The result is that students who are interested in transferring, many of whom are first-generation college students, are left to navigate confusing and daunting systems on their own, often leading to lost credits and students stopping out or dropping out.

KEY FACTS

Transfer in California

- The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act of 2021 (A.B. 928) established an intersegmental committee to provide state-level coordination, accountability, and recommendations to further strengthen the ADT program.[39] It also created one consistent set of courses in the general education pathway for students to be eligible for transfer to both CSU and UC.
- A.B. 2057 strengthened ADT by increasing access to STEM ADT pathways and setting statewide goals to close racial equity gaps in transfer attainment, as recommended by the A.B. 928 ADT Intersegmental Implementation Committee.[40]
- California is also working on a common course numbering system, which will help reduce credit loss.

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

SPOTLIGHT

Central Valley Transfer Project

In 2018, UC Merced realized it was not fulfilling one of its original missions to serve transfer students from California's central valley. To increase the number of transfers from community colleges, UC Merced partnered with Bakersfield College, Merced College, and the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC) to begin exploring an intersegmental approach to increasing transfer students from the central valley. At the time, ADT requirements were designed to fulfill general education admission requirements to CSU but not to UC, resulting in the possibility that students who transferred to UC Merced could lose credit hours. To help UC Merced meet its goal while increasing certificate and degree attainment rates in the region, CVHEC, which consists of 28 members including community college districts, public four-year institutions, and independent universities, launched the Central Valley Transfer Project in 2019 as a pilot project to explore new strategies to increase transfer rates.

Initially CVHEC brought together faculty from UC Merced, Bakersfield College, and Merced College to examine transfer requirements. They held very detailed meetings, examining syllabi and course content to determine alignment between ADT requirements and course requirements at UC for successful degree completion. The goal was to build pathways and create seamless transfer processes for students. At the conclusion of this initial phase of the Central Valley Transfer Project, multiple pathways were established between the three institutions. (CSU Bakersfield also participated in this initial project phase.)

Today, as new institutions come on board, the work proceeds in two phases, with support from CVHEC. The first phase is curricular work to create course maps. After the community college selects the ADTs it wishes to focus on, representatives from the community college and four-year institution meet to review the ADTs for alignment with four-year requirements, identifying gaps, articulation issues, and other barriers to transfer.

Key to the success of the work is identifying the right people from each institution to build the pathways. The teams typically involve an administrator (who serves as project manager), an academic leader, an adviser/counselor from the community college, faculty including curriculum chairs from both the community college and the four-year institution, and a vice provost from the four-year institution to help with the course articulation.

Once the teams have created these paths, phase two involves the technical work of putting the maps in an interactive tool called the Program Pathways Mapper (PPM). Through this tool, which is public and does not require a password, students can learn about different academic programs and how they align with expected employment outcomes. For each program of study, students, parents, counselors, and advisers are able to see an entire term-by-term plan that encompasses all general education and major requirements from the community college through the four-year institution.

With facilitation by CVHEC, including grant funding for schools to implement PPM, the project has grown. In Central Valley, 10 of 15 community colleges, three CSUs, and UC Merced are participating. And the program is showing results. At UC Merced, transfer applications increased by almost 5,000 applicants between fall 2018 and fall 2022. And since PPM was implemented, students who graduate with an ADT take almost 3.5 fewer credits on average, saving time and money.

SPOTLIGHT

AI Transfer and Articulation Infrastructure Network

As California looks at ways to increase transfer rates, the AI Transfer and Articulation Infrastructure Network (ATAIN) aims to eliminate the frustration, friction, and uncertainty of credit transfer. The project, led by Dr. Zach Pardos of UC Berkeley's Computational Approaches to Human Learning (CAHL) research lab, the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, and Sova, examines how AI can be leveraged to improve transfer policies and decrease the time to degree by increasing credit mobility.

Current articulation policies are idiosyncratic and rely on human evaluation, which can vary from person to person or even from day to day. ATAIN uses CourseWise, a software created by CAHL, to evaluate the equivalency of courses across institutions and make the process of approving credit more consistent and fairer. With CourseWise, the AI reviews student transcripts and examines what rules apply under current articulation agreements. For courses that do not exactly match, the software takes a deeper look to make sure no potential credits are missed. The system flags any courses that meet a threshold level of equivalency in learning objectives, which is generally 70 percent. The administrative team can then examine that course and go through internal workflows for approval.

Another open-source software developed by CAHL called OATutor also leverages AI to fill gaps in course content and could help students meet the 70 percent equivalency threshold. If, for example, a student took a calculus course at a community college that covers approximately 60 percent of the learning objectives required by the four-year institution, the AI identifies the missing 40 percent and provides the necessary support to get to the 70 percent threshold so the student receives credit.

The ATAIN project is in early stages. Cohort 1 launched in March 2025 with 59 institutions nationwide, including 10 California community colleges and three CSUs. Cohort 2, due to be launched in January 2026, will focus exclusively on California schools. Next steps include incorporating student-facing features so students can see both community college requirements and how those credits would articulate at various schools based on their major and current articulation policies. The project is also looking at how to incorporate credit for prior learning to remove barriers for adult learners who are seeking to return to college.

Engage Additional Populations of Students

To reach the postsecondary attainment goal, California will have to reach additional populations of students, including the 5.9 million California residents with some college but no credential as well as other adult learners who need to return to school to gain the knowledge and skills required to progress in their careers.

At CCC, more than a third of students are age 25 and older; at CSU, almost one in five are.[41] These students include working adults, parents, caregivers, veterans, and others who often have outside responsibilities and circumstances that affect their ability to pursue a degree or credential full time. Therefore, they need ways to meet their education goals as quickly as possible, including credit for their previous educational experience; flexible and consistent class schedules and supports so they can take the courses they need, when they need them; and multiple on- and off-ramps so they can enter and leave their education as needed.

See page 35 for more on smart schedules and stackable certificates and credentials that can address the needs of both adult learners and other students. Additional key strategies to implement and scale include:

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Proactively communicate the benefits of a degree or other credential of value to address the unique needs and goals of individual students.

In addition to external responsibilities that may prevent adult learners and other students from returning to complete their credential or degree, many report feeling that they do not belong on campus or may not know what options are available to accommodate their schedules. Effective student engagement requires collaborative partnerships in which students, faculty, and staff work together to create supportive learning environments and experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom, that facilitate academic, personal, and social development and a sense of belonging. This approach involves establishing intentional pathways that guide students from enrollment to completion while providing comprehensive support for diverse learners to succeed—and then working with employers and other public agencies to communicate about these pathways and supports clearly and frequently.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Recognize the prior learning, skills, and knowledge that students possess and establish mechanisms to award appropriate credits.

Credit for prior learning, also known as credit for competency or prior learning assessment, is a strategic approach that recognizes and awards academic credit for knowledge and skills students have acquired outside traditional classroom settings. Through systematic assessment methods, institutions evaluate learning gained through work experience, military service, professional training, industry certifications, volunteer work, and other life experiences.

Providing credit for prior learning significantly increases the chances that an adult learner will complete their degree or credential. Nationwide, 49 percent of adult learners with credit for prior learning complete their credential or degree, compared to 27 percent who do not receive this credit.[42] For Hispanic adult learners nationwide, completion rates are even higher (71 percent for those with credit for prior learning versus 24 percent for those without credit).[43] Ensuring that students receive this credit gives them a jumpstart on their credential or degree, saving them time and money and helping them overcome barriers to enrollment.

KEY FACTS

Credit for Prior Learning in California

- The statewide Mapping Articulated Pathways (MAP) Initiative supports processes to award credit for prior learning for military training, industry certifications, exams, and portfolios.
- One of the goals outlined in CCC's Vision 2030 is awarding credit for prior learning to at least 250,000 Californians by 2030.[44]

Increasing the Affordability of Higher Education

Even as a postsecondary credential or degree is increasingly required for a job that pays a family-sustaining wage and offers opportunities for advancement, students are faced with rising costs for higher education (see page 17). In California, CCC and CSU students from families making $30,000 or less would need to contribute approximately half of their family income after available federal, state, and institutional grant aid.[45] UC students from families in the same income bracket would need at least 30 percent of their family income to cover their net college costs.

These financial barriers prevent many students from enrolling in college. Some believe they cannot afford it and choose not to enroll, while others attempt to work while attending school, often leading them to stop out or drop out if their income or class schedules cannot support continued attendance. Recent congressional actions threaten to exacerbate these challenges.

As part of the newly enacted House Resolution 1, Congress authorized Workforce Pell Grants, a significant expansion of federal financial aid aimed at supporting students enrolled in short-term, career-focused education programs. Workforce Pell Grants authorize Pell Grants for eligible students enrolled in programs lasting between eight and 15 weeks, offering 150 to 599 clock hours. These programs must align with in-demand industries, be accredited, and meet strict performance metrics, including a 70 percent completion and job placement rate.[46]

Although the initiative aims to expand access to workforce training, the program could unintentionally direct funds to low-quality or predatory providers if oversight is insufficient. Accountability is another challenge, as many colleges may lack the infrastructure needed to track program outcomes effectively. The accelerated implementation timeline raises doubts about whether institutions and the state can prepare adequately, creating a risk of a flawed rollout that could undermine long-term sustainability. Finally, the legislation's funding mechanism, which requires wealthier institutions to reimburse the government for unpaid student loans, introduces an equity concern, discouraging these institutions from enrolling students from low-income backgrounds who rely on loans.

The first negotiated rulemaking session in late 2025 began the establishment of a framework for Workforce Pell Grants, which included discussions on state and governor roles, program eligibility criteria, limits on outsourcing, requirements for programs to align with high-skill job definitions, the secretary's role in the process, eligibility loss conditions, and stronger safeguards against low-quality instruction. Because the negotiated rulemaking process, which will provide institutions implementation guidelines and rules, is still in progress, the uncertain timeline and outcomes present concerns for strong institutional implementation and equitable student access.

Many of the strategies discussed in other sections will lead to fewer excess credits and faster completion of degrees and credentials, reducing overall costs. But specific key strategies to implement and scale include:

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FUNDING FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Structure the higher education budget to return to funding stability and predictability while maximizing investments in college access and success.

With higher education funding less stable and less predictable, tuition and the portion of higher education costs borne by students are rising. The state also lacks the intersegmental collaboration needed to coordinate the individual systems' plans to work toward long-term tuition stability. Page 41 describes the actions the state needs to take to ensure funding for stability and predictability, invest to fuel economic mobility, and provide funding to support intersegmental coordination.

STUDENT BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT

Ensure that students have access to food, housing, child care, physical and mental health services, financial assistance, and transportation.

Being able to afford to go to college is about more than paying for tuition and expenses. Many of today's students are working and caring for dependents while attending college. A growing number also may be facing food and housing insecurity; physical and mental health care needs; or challenges accessing technology, child care, and transportation. One unaffordable car repair can derail some students' education. For undocumented students, the hurdles are even greater. The California Student Aid Commission has identified key roadblocks to improving the affordability of higher education for this population.[47]

Even when institutions provide support, it is often through siloed, difficult-to-navigate programs that can be unreachable for students who need the assistance the most. Providing additional supports for all students will help them overcome external pressures that may otherwise lead them to stop out or drop out.

KEY FACTS

Student Basic Needs Support in California

- A.B. 1326 requires the human services agency in each county to designate at least one employee to serve as a point of contact for academic counselors and other professional staff at every community college, CSU, or UC in the county.[48] The goal is to ensure that students are connected to all benefits for which they are eligible.
- As of January 2024, 100 percent of California community colleges offered services such as food, housing, mental health care, transportation, child care, and technology access.[49] These efforts are supported by a $43.5 million annual investment, which established Basic Needs Centers and campus coordinators at each college. In spring 2023 alone, more than 68,000 students accessed services, with nearly half receiving food assistance. The UC system was also aiming to cut basic needs insecurity in half by 2025, with all 10 UC campuses hosting Basic Needs Centers open to all students.
- The California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition is composed of more than 80 organizations representing educators, community allies, and students working to strengthen California's workforce and economy by ensuring college access, affordability, and success for undocumented students in the state. In 2025, the coalition is co-sponsoring S.B. 323, a two-year bill that would ensure the California Dream Act Application can be used by any student eligible for state financial aid programs.[50]
- The California Alliance for Student Parent Success leads efforts in California to drive policy changes, backed by data, that improve holistic access to basic needs and student support services for parenting students and their families.

Supporting Workforce Preparedness and High-Demand Career Pipelines

The purpose of the postsecondary attainment goal is to enable all Californians to secure a job that pays a family-sustaining wage and offers opportunities for advancement and to ensure that California continues to be an economic powerhouse. Therefore, in addition to the overall postsecondary attainment goal, the CCC roadmap includes goals around increasing the percentage of students who earn a living wage by 15 percent and offering more credit for prior learning (discussed on page 31), which is reinforced and expanded in CCC's Vision 2030.[51]

According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the occupations that will see the most growth in California between 2021 and 2031 will be in health care (29 percent increase) and science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM (16 percent increase).[52] Therefore, the workforce goals outlined in the CSU and UC compacts focus on these areas:

- Increasing the number of students with STEM degrees or credentials by 25 percent by 2026–27;
- Increasing the number of graduates entering the fields of other high-need disciplines (health care, climate action, and education); and
- Increasing partnerships supported by the regional Community Economic Resilience Fund to strengthen employment pathways for each region's in-demand industries that produce high-quality, accessible jobs.

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Many of the strategies discussed in other sections will help improve workforce preparation, but following are additional action steps and strategies that California can take to meet these workforce goals.

Provide Support to Help Students Select a Program of Study

Students often do not know the full range of career options available to them, and current placement processes may steer them away from programs of study that would lead to careers that match their interests. This situation is particularly prevalent for students from historically underserved groups, such as BILPOC (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, People of Color) students, who often do not receive the preparation colleges expect for credit-bearing coursework. Based on placement results, they may be guided away from STEM and technical fields, compounding the problem of lack of diversity in these areas, where BILPOC students and women already are underrepresented.

Revising the placement process (see page 24) is a significant step toward removing these barriers, but additional key strategies to implement and scale include:

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CAREER EXPLORATION

Create a structured, intentional process to help students discover, investigate, and connect with potential career pathways aligned with their broader sense of purpose—including their interests, values, skills, financial goals, and civic aspirations.

Rather than a single program or event, effective career exploration is an ongoing journey that starts early but is integrated throughout the student experience, providing students with the tools, information, and experiences needed to make informed academic and career decisions. Through assessments, experiential learning, and industry exposure, students are empowered to explore careers, helping to develop career readiness, build professional identity, and create meaningful connections between their education and future aspirations.

ACADEMIC AND CAREER ALIGNMENT

Align academic programs with workforce needs and career opportunities to ensure that students graduate with the skills, credentials, and experiences required to thrive in today's job market.

Through partnerships with employers, institutions can integrate career competencies into the curriculum and provide work-based learning opportunities throughout the student journey. This approach creates clear and intentional pathways that guide students from enrollment to employment while responding to both current and emerging workforce demands.

META MAJORS

Group related academic programs into broad categories or "families" of majors that share common foundational coursework, career pathways, and skill sets.

Rather than requiring students to declare a specific major immediately, meta majors allow students to explore related fields while making progress toward degree completion through shared prerequisite courses. This approach helps undecided students make informed academic and career decisions while reducing excess credit accumulation and improving completion rates.

Create Structures to Facilitate Completion

Supporting students to help them select a program of study that aligns with their interests and career goals puts them on the right path. Institutions also need to put in place structures so both part-time and full-time students know what classes they need to take and can get the classes they need, when they need them to earn their degree or credential on time. Key strategies to implement and scale include:

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ACADEMIC MAPS AND MILESTONES

Create term-by-term course schedules that reformat degree requirements from institutional catalogs into clear, sequential roadmaps for graduation.

Academic maps translate complex degree requirements into practical registration plans that help students understand exactly what courses to take each semester to graduate in 100 percent or 150 percent time. Creating academic maps begins with identifying requirements that are established by faculty and published in institutional catalogs and then organizing them into structured pathways that address the challenges of undecided students, major changes, complex general education requirements, and transfer pathways. By providing clarity and sequence, academic maps eliminate excess credits and reduce time to graduation while ensuring that students are exposed to their major field early in their academic journey.

SMART SCHEDULES

Use data analytics, predictive modeling, and student-centered design principles to optimize course scheduling and improve student access to required coursework.

This strategy moves beyond traditional scheduling practices by leveraging institutional data, student success patterns, and enrollment analytics to create schedules that support timely degree completion. For example, this work may involve creating a schedule with all classes before 2 p.m. every semester or shorter academic terms so students can balance academics, work, and family obligations. Smart scheduling encompasses multiple approaches including block scheduling, predictive analytics for course demand, AI-driven course planning, and flexible delivery models that accommodate diverse student populations.

STACKABLE CERTIFICATES AND CREDENTIALS

Create sequences of certificates, certifications, badges, and degrees that are designed to build on one another, allowing students to accumulate qualifications over time as they advance toward higher-paying employment opportunities.

Through partnerships with industry employers, institutions can design flexible pathways that accommodate the realities of today's students—many of whom need to work while enrolled and may start and stop their education multiple times. This approach establishes clear, intentional pathways that guide learners from initial skill development to advanced career opportunities while encouraging lifelong learning and the attainment of degrees of value.

15 TO FINISH/STAY ON TRACK

Invest in coordinated communications efforts, institutional policy changes, adviser engagement, and financial incentives to match student credit loads with the credits needed for on-time graduation for both part-time and full-time students.

Too many students take too long to graduate, increasing the likelihood that they will stop out or drop out. 15 to Finish helps full-time students earn the credits they need to complete a bachelor's degree in four years or an associate degree in two years while Stay on Track focuses on students completing an associate degree in three years. A 2024 report from Ad Astra shows that students who complete 18–23 credits per year are two times more likely to be retained and seven times more likely to complete their degree or certificate than students completing 11 credits or fewer per year.[53]

Provide Resources to Overcome Challenges

Beyond academic structures, students often face internal and external challenges and responsibilities that may cause them to stop out or drop out. To mitigate these challenges, key strategies to implement and scale include:

PROACTIVE ADVISING

Require advisers to take the initiative to reach out to students, monitor their academic progress, and provide timely interventions rather than waiting for students to seek help.

This model shifts from reactive, appointment-based advising to an engaged, data-driven approach that anticipates student needs and removes barriers to success. Proactive advisers use real-time data analytics, early warning systems, and regular check-ins to identify at-risk students and provide personalized support that addresses both academic and nonacademic challenges.

360° COACHING

Provide students with a designated coach to contact whenever issues arise inside and outside of the classroom.

In this model, coaches are trained to work with students to find answers, identify appropriate resources, and advocate or intervene on their behalf. This holistic approach addresses the interconnected barriers to student success by supporting the whole student, including their academic progress, personal well-being, career goals, and life circumstances, to help them stay on track to graduate and achieve their goals.

STUDENT BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT

Ensure that students have access to food, housing, child care, physical and mental health services, financial assistance, and transportation.

In addition to advising and coaching, many students need access to specific resources and services to help them address basic needs so they are not forced to stop out or drop out. See page 32 for more information.

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DEGREE RECLAMATION AND TARGETED REENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

Ensure that colleges use and improve upon existing student information database systems to audit student progress toward degrees and credentials, and retroactively award those credentials to students if they are no longer enrolled.

Despite more than a decade of national research and exemplars, efforts to institute a comprehensive degree reclamation policy for CCC have failed in the California legislature as recently as 2025.[54] However, having this type of policy could potentially help reengage learners and ensure that they realize the benefits of credentials they may have completed but do not have on their transcripts.

SPOTLIGHT

UNITE-LA

For more than 27 years, UNITE-LA has championed equitable economic mobility via cradle-through-career education and workforce development efforts that strengthen systems, policies, and practices.

In Los Angeles County in 2023, more than 123,000 young people ages 16–24 were not in school or working.[55] To create talent pipelines that help these individuals obtain jobs that pay a living wage and provide opportunities for advancement as well as support employers and the local economy, UNITE-LA serves as an intermediary. The organization bridges the gaps between TK–12 and two- and four-year postsecondary institutions and between the education systems and the real world of work.

Bridging these gaps requires building trusted relationships. Through its work as part of the LA Area Chamber of Commerce for 16 years and now as a separate entity, UNITE-LA has worked collaboratively with local employers, engaging them as advocates and thought leaders to support policies and inform the organization's work.

UNITE-LA has built on these relationships in numerous ways, including launching the L.A. Compact in 2008. The L.A. Compact, which is a cross-sector commitment by Los Angeles leaders to close the education and workforce gaps caused by systemic inequities and racism, initially formed to provide a collective response to a dropout crisis within Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and to streamline student pathways between LAUSD, the Los Angeles Community College District, and regional four-year institutions. The partnership has since grown in regional representation and scope, launching numerous systems change initiatives focused on school readiness, digital equity, and more.

UNITE-LA also serves as the convener of the L.A. Region K–16 Collaborative, one of 13 collaboratives funded by a grant from the state to unite higher education segments and institutions, TK–12 districts and schools, employers and business organizations, local government, and community partners to close postsecondary attainment and workforce gaps for BIPOC students. Working with county workforce development agencies and employers, the collaborative is focusing on improving transitions and strengthening pathways for students in the high-priority areas of engineering, computer science, and health care. UNITE-LA serves as the convener to help scale implementation and share successful strategies in and among the county's five subregions. The state grant for the grant program was extended to 2028, allowing time for the systems change work to have an impact.

At the programmatic level, UNITE-LA works to ensure that young people who are transitioning out of high school are prepared for college and work. Since 1998, the organization's workforce development programs have supported more than 600,000 young people, including 5,301 in 2025 alone. While the workforce development programs are evaluated and adjusted annually, the current pathway programs focus on the high-priority areas of cleantech, health care, and technology.

Each program is developed differently, but all provide opportunities for young people to learn and earn. The My Pathway to Health program goes even further. Because careers in the health care field require extensive career training and testing, the program provides a stipend during training and pays for all associated testing/exam fees, removing potential barriers for participants, 100 percent of whom are from low- or moderate-income backgrounds.

In addition, the programs in all three priority areas foster opportunities for participants to connect with other young people. They also receive mentoring from professionals in the related field to develop the essential soft skills employers often cite as lacking in employees.

The programs are showing results. In 2025, participants earned 621 industry certifications, badges, and certificates. With support from nearly 60 employer partners, the programs also placed 209 participants in paid internships and job. Specific results for the high-mobility industry career programs include:

- The LA Regional Cleantech Career Academy, a 12-week, paid work-based learning program, served 100 students ages 18–24 and placed 34 academy graduates in paid internships with employer partners such as Big Energy Group, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and UPS. The academy had a 93 percent graduation rate.
- My Pathway to Health, a three-part, paid work-based learning program aimed at 18- to 24-year-olds who are disconnected from school and work, served 30 students, with 28 earning their basic life support certification and 24 advancing to paid clinical training.
- The Tech Pathway Academy, a 9.5-week afterschool program that focuses on high school students, served 97 students and had a 86 percent completion rate. Most students earned at least one certification in generative AI, software development, or cybersecurity, giving them tangible credentials and a competitive advantage before high school graduation.
- Step into Tech, launched in partnership with Cisco Networking, is a two-part, paid program for 18- to 24-year-olds who are justice impacted. In 2025, the program supported 65 participants, 59 of whom completed the career education and technical training, earning certifications in networking, cybersecurity, and data science.

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SPOTLIGHT

Accelerated College Education at Shasta College

As the only public postsecondary education institution within a 10,000-square-mile area, Shasta College in Redding serves a three-county region with parts so remote they are considered frontier. Over time the local economy has changed from one focused on resource extraction to one in which industries with living-wage jobs—primarily education, health care, and government—require postsecondary education. In 2015, 31 percent of adults over the age of 25 in the region had some college but no credential. To support the local workforce and help adult learners earn a degree or credential that will lead to a good job, in 2016 Shasta established the Accelerated College Education (ACE) program.

The ACE program features compressed, eight-week schedules for most courses to enable a student to finish a certificate in nine months or less and an associate degree in 24 months or less. Unlike some schools or programs that provide course mapping only for general education requirements or majors, all ACE programs are laid out end to end but are flexible to meet student needs.

The compressed courses are intense and are designed for working adults who need to return to their education to advance in their career or switch jobs. Because many of these individuals already have completed some coursework, ACE's intake form asks new students about their education, work experience, and personal life and how these factors align with their goals. The ACE counselor then helps the student customize the course plan to meet their needs.

Beyond this initial counseling, ACE provides continuous one-stop support to ensure that students in the program do not fall through the cracks and do not have to figure out which offices to go to for different services. For example, the ACE staff receive daily reports on student enrollment so they can follow up and help find a solution if a student has to drop a course they need to meet their goal. Similarly, the staff check grades after every eight-week course and look at who has applied for financial aid so they can make sure students stay on track and get the resources they are eligible for.

ACE is also part of the Institute for Higher Education Policy's Degrees When Due initiative, which mines data to identify students who either finished their coursework but did not apply for their degree or certificate or stopped out before they finished. With this information, ACE reaches out to eligible students to help them finish their coursework or get the degree or certificate on their record.

Over time, ACE has grown, increasing from 50 students in 2016 to 290 students in fall 2025. After starting with psychology and business, which are the most popular majors at Shasta, the program has grown to include nine associate degrees, eight transfer associate degrees, and eight certificates, based primarily on local labor market information and what degrees are in demand. In all, as of December 2025, 415 ACE students have earned a combination of 750-plus certificates and degrees.

The Role of Impaction

Impaction at CSU will play a critical role in California's ability to meet its postsecondary attainment goal. Per the California higher education master plan, admission to CSU is available to the top one-third of high school graduates and all qualified CCC transfer students. But when a particular program or campus receives more eligible applicants than it can accommodate, it can be designated as impacted, meaning it can raise eligibility requirements.

These expanded requirements can differ among campuses but typically involve a higher grade point average, higher scores on standardized tests, and additional measures for high-demand programs. Because the school cannot know if demand outpaces supply until applications are submitted, the additional requirements are not determined until after the initial application period. The result is that some students are not accepted into their first-choice campus and are redirected to their second choice, but in reality, few students then go on to enroll at the second choice.

An April 2025 analysis by The Campaign for College Opportunity shows that impaction has declined from nearly half (46 percent) of the programs across the system being impacted in 2012–22 to just under a third (32 percent) of all programs being at least partially impacted for the 2025–26 school year. While declines were seen across the state, the CSU system still contains five campuses that are impacted across all majors: Long Beach, San Luis Obispo, San Jose, San Diego, and Fullerton.

As the state looks to increase enrollment to meet the postsecondary attainment goal, reducing the effects of impaction will be critical. Key steps to take include:

- **Prioritize strategic investments to address regional demand and expand capacity.** CSU can also continue to develop partnerships such as the ones that are already being formed between CSU campuses and community colleges. These partnerships expand capacity by allowing students to earn a bachelor's degree at a community college through CSU courses taught there.
- **Strengthen guaranteed admissions for ADT pathways** so that students transferring from a community college to CSU are not redirected to another campus.
- **Leverage best practices** from colleges that have lifted their impaction status and maintained stable enrollment, even in the face of declining enrollment trends.
- **Evaluate institutional policies** to ensure consistency and transparency across campuses.
- **Strengthen industry and workforce relationships** to build capacity and streamline pathways in high-demand majors aligned with workforce needs.

For more information about impaction, see *The Declining Impact of Impaction at the California State University*.

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Funding for Transformational Change

When implemented comprehensively and at scale, the strategies described in the previous section will lead to the transformational change California needs to meet its postsecondary attainment goal. But implementing and scaling these strategies comes with a cost.

While the compacts with CSU and UC and the CCC roadmap call for investments from the state in exchange for meeting goals such as increasing enrollment of Californians and students from historically underserved populations, shrinking federal funding and state budget constraints mean that higher education funding is less stable and less predictable. The final 2025–26 state budget defers a 3 percent base funding reduction to the CSU and UC systems to the next fiscal year, while simultaneously deferring the 5 percent systemwide base funding increase outlined under the compacts to a 2 percent increase in 2026–27 and a 3 percent increase in 2028–29.

Implementing transformational change to advance access, affordability, equity, and success for all students at any time is challenging, much less when budgets are shrinking and uncertain. In general, California's funding approach is more attuned to student success than those of many other states. For example, under CCC's Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), 70 percent of funding is based on enrollment; 20 percent on the number of students from low-income families that a college serves; and 10 percent on whether students reach key momentum points and have successful outcomes, including whether they earn a regional living wage within a year of completion.[56]

However, institutions across systems are pitted against each other in a race to enroll the same students, undermining the broader goal of inclusive higher education. Furthermore, the state currently has no mechanism to ensure coordination and oversight among individual systems' plans to work toward long-term tuition stability, such as proposals to revise cohort-based tuition models at UC. A coordinated, intersegmental approach, including intersegmental goal setting and strategic cross-sector budget investments, is crucial for making higher education accessible to all.

To meet California's 70 percent postsecondary attainment goal by 2030, California must structure its higher education budget investments to return to funding stability and

predictability, set appropriately ambitious goals for maximizing investments in college access and success to fuel economic mobility, and leverage opportunities for intersegmental partnerships and coordination.

Ensure Funding Stability and Predictability

To ensure that funding is stable and predictable, the state must:

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- **Maintain strong implementation of the SCFF.**
  - As of FY 2021–22, 98.6 percent (or 71 of 72) of community college districts saw greater funding under the SCFF than under the previous funding model—an increase from 88.9 percent (or 64) community college districts in FY 2018–19.[57] While the previous funding model was entirely contingent upon enrollment, the SCFF shifted to focus on supporting students from low-income backgrounds and rewarding progress toward key attainment benchmarks for persistence and success. The SCFF subsequently served as a critical lifeline during periods of enrollment decline in the years following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - After the jump in headcount in 2023–24, enrollment projections for CCC indicate modest and slow growth, with enrollment unlikely to exceed prepandemic levels.[58] As a result, a commitment to the full and continued implementation of the SCFF will be necessary to achieve the 70 percent postsecondary attainment goal—including state funding decisions that ensure that funding for the SCFF grows commensurate with Proposition 98 funding and that funding for the SCFF receives cost of living adjustments in future budget years. These commitments will simultaneously drive not only fiscal stability and predictability for the state's community colleges but also culture shifts at individual community college districts. Ultimately, it will increase revenues over time to prioritize improvements in both student access and success.
- **Honor state commitments to pay outstanding funding deferrals.**
  - Beginning with the 2024–25 state budget, the UC and CSU systems have been held in a period of limbo, as multiple budget cycles have proposed systemwide funding deferrals or cuts, ultimately resulting in two consecutive years of relative fiscal stability overshadowed by large systemwide funding deferrals proposed for the following fiscal year's budget. This perpetual cycle, and the underlying instability it creates, means that the CSU and UC systems have difficulty reliably establishing and maintaining multiyear operating budgets for their central system offices and individual campuses. The result has lasting negative implications for their ability to maintain or grow enrollment capacity or adequately resource key student support services to improve persistence and graduation rates.
  - Sixty percent of CSU's funding and 43 percent of UC's budget come from California's state budget.[59, 60] For both the CSU and UC systems, funding instability and unpredictability has direct ties to efforts to improve college affordability. UC has increasingly relied on increased tuition revenue to provide systemwide funding, and both CSU and UC implemented tuition increase plans beginning in 2022.[61, 62] The UC system is

currently weighing proposals to change its cohort tuition model that would put increased fiscal pressure on students, potentially raising periodic tuition increases from 5 percent to 7 percent.

- Community colleges are not exempt from increased state budget pressures and the unpredictability brought about by significant funding deferrals. Under the most recent budget agreement, California's community colleges are now also facing a $408 million funding deferral.[63] To continue to grow enrollment and double down on efforts to improve affordability and student supports to raise completion rates, California must be resolute in its commitment to provide stable funding to support those students for the duration of their college journey. With stable funding returned and repaid, the state can expect systems to avoid passing costs on to students in the form of significant tuition increases.

Invest to Fuel Economic Mobility

To maximize investments in college access and success to fuel economic mobility, the state must:

- **Prioritize investments to streamline access to financial aid and target state resources to students from the lowest income backgrounds who have the most unmet need.**
  - College affordability, and access to financial aid to offset the rising costs of attending college, is one of the most significant factors in determining if students will enroll in college and persist to reach their educational goals. In California, the cost of attending college is rising at a rate that outpaces inflation growth, with some of the most significant increases for students coming in the form of nontuition expenses such as housing, food, and other basic needs expenses.[64] In response, California has sharply increased the number of students served by state financial aid programs, including removing age and time-out-of-high-school eligibility limits for community college students to access Cal Grant awards. It has also expanded the Middle Class Scholarship program, serving approximately 308,000 students in 2023–24, which is a sharp increase from approximately 55,000 students in 2021–22.[65]
  - To support students from low-income backgrounds so they enroll and persist in college, California must ensure that existing state aid programs target aid to the students with the greatest amount of unmet need and prioritize investments in financial aid reform that will simplify and streamline existing aid programs to ensure that students are ultimately able to receive critical aid.[66]

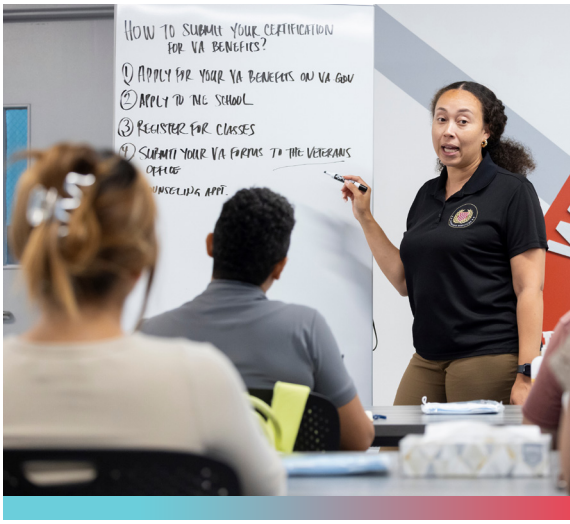


Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Provide Funding to Support Intersegmental Coordination

To maximize resources and capitalize on intersegmental partnerships, the state must:

- **Launch and continue investment in the California Education Interagency Council.**
  - As discussed on page 19, California recently established a statewide coordinating body to integrate and align its education and workforce systems. In the absence of such a coordinating body, higher education leadership has been driven by institutional interests

and short-term political considerations that have not necessarily served the broader interests of the state—or allowed the state and higher education systems to strategically assess progress and advance targeted interventions in service of reaching California's 70 percent attainment goal.

- The final 2025–26 state budget included a $1.5 million investment to create a higher education coordinating body in California, laying the foundation for this critical intersegmental coordination, goal setting, and oversight of progress toward key attainment benchmarks function to inform statewide policy development and implementation. Dedicated, ongoing funding to support this intersegmental body will be critical.
- 2026 will be a critical year for establishing a strong foundation for the Interagency Council's efficacy and strategic focus. Setting this foundation includes securing strong leadership and instituting focused and intentional advisory committees; developing a strategic plan, mission, and vision to guide how this diverse group of partners will work together; and establishing a data-sharing/partnership agreements with the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency.

COMPLETION-GOALS FUNDING

A New Approach to Meet California's Education Goals

As California looks at ways to provide stable and predictable funding while advancing access, affordability, equity, and success for all students, a new approach to consider is completion-goals funding.

With the state's current incentive-driven funding model, institutions face unfunded mandates. They are required to increase completion rates, but they do not receive essential funding until after improvements have made an impact. Transitioning to the completion-goals funding model would enable the state to allocate funding based on the actual cost of educating the number of students required to meet the goal.

Through completion-goals funding, colleges would receive funds up front, with requirements for how they are used, including the time frame for using them. To determine funding levels:

- California and institutions would work together to determine the actual cost of giving every student the highest chance of earning a credential.
- The state would establish clear completion targets for each institution based on the 70 percent attainment goal.
- The state would allocate enough per-student funds for each institution to meet its goal.

Transitioning to a new model would require detailed planning and time. But the benefits, including encouraging colleges to adopt proven reforms, enabling colleges to implement those reforms at scale, and better meeting the needs of historically under-resourced institutions, would more than outweigh the challenges.

To find out more about completion-goals funding, see CCA's *Ending Unfunded Mandates in Higher Education: Using Completion-Goals Funding to Improve Accountability and Outcomes* and view the accompanying online modeling tool.

Using Metrics to Drive Action

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

The success of any transformational reform effort rests in continuously monitoring progress toward the goal to uncover areas of success that can be shared and scaled to benefit more students—or to make adjustments in areas where progress is slower. While the UC and CSU compacts and CCC roadmap laid out some goals and metrics, most were based on each individual system's plans. They lacked definitive, explicit expectations that these goals should work in tandem and ultimately drive progress toward the overall 70 percent attainment goal.

The new California Cradle-to-Career Data System will provide a central source of information that can serve as a starting point for developing a measurement system that can truly monitor progress across all three systems and drive action. Best practices for developing this system include:

1. Start by selecting 6–10 key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the postsecondary attainment goals and reform strategies. The KPIs should be student centered and should encompass access and enrollment, in-college progress, completion, post-completion success, and efficiency.

2. For each KPI, select:

    - Leading indicators, such as fall-to-fall retention rates and first-year English and math pass rates, which roll up into KPIs. These indicators change more frequently than KPIs and can provide insight into the likelihood of future success or challenges and can inform semester-by-semester activities.
    - Real-time metrics, such as student grades at various points in the semester, that roll up into leading indicators and offer a continuous and current snapshot of performance, allowing for immediate adjustments when necessary.

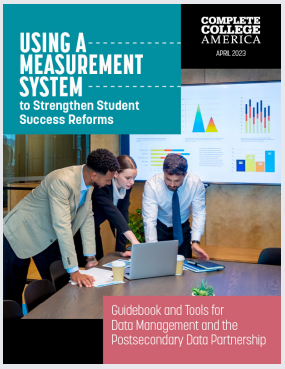
3. Disaggregate data by student characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, English as a Second Language status, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity to identify institutional performance gaps. The state should also consider disaggregating the data in additional ways such as by academic factors, support service use, and cohort tracking for specific interventions to uncover and address institutional performance gaps.
4. Start with data that is available and refine the metrics over time.
5. Remain focused on the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes and closing equity gaps, rather than getting bogged down in debates over data validity or attempting to isolate the impact of individual interventions.

See Appendix B on page 55 for potential metrics associated with the strategies in this playbook.

California Mobility Index

The California Mobility Index, produced by the College Futures Foundation based on an original index created by the HEA Group, provides a way to assess the economic value and impact of higher education in California. It ranks California institutions on the proportion of students they serve from low- and moderate-income families and how long graduates take to earn enough to pay down their educational costs quickly. In 2024, 87 percent of top 15 four-year institutions were CSU, and 95 percent were Hispanic Serving Institutions. California should identify and invest in taking to scale the practices that catalyzed this degree value.

For more on creating a structure for collecting, sharing, and acting on data, see CCA's *Using a Measurement System to Strengthen Student Success Reforms* and download the accompanying workbook.



Conclusion

Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Ensuring that 70 percent of California residents have a postsecondary degree or credential by 2030 will not be easy. It will require urgent, comprehensive action; continued focus; and sustained investment. But reaching the goal is critical to power California's economy and provide all of its residents the opportunity to secure good jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and provide opportunities for advancement.

The strategies outlined in this playbook, combined with stable, predictable funding and metrics that are implemented and used to continuously monitor progress, offer a clear path to meet that goal. California has already made progress in some areas, and the launch of the Cradle-to-Career Data System holds promise for providing a centralized source for the data needed to ensure that the state is on track—or to make adjustments along the way. But while many of the pieces are in place, the state has only just begun to lay the foundation to make meaningful progress toward its college attainment goal with a coordinated, intersegmental approach.

The true power of these strategies lies in how they work together to build on one another, multiplying their individual effects. To enact the necessary transformational change and help the state reach its goal, the strategies must be implemented and scaled holistically and in tandem with a focus on students' realities and needs. The work also must be coordinated and aligned across all sectors at the state, system, regional, and institutional levels. For example, a well-designed academic path at a community college that clearly lays out the steps needed to reach graduation and transfer to a four-year university can only truly support student success if the gateway math course in the program is aligned to the meta major, with corequisite support offered based on multiple measures placement strategies. As they proceed on their academic path, students should have structured schedules that meet the needs of their complicated lives and be supported by proactive advising that is built on academic maps that are aligned to the ADTs that were created out of policy reforms at the state level.

Ultimately, implementing these strategies and reaching the postsecondary attainment goal is about more than making sure a certain percentage of adults in the state have a credential or degree. It is about ensuring that California residents have the skills and knowledge they need

to succeed in the workplace and to engage in civic life and democracy. It is about ensuring that businesses have the workforce they need to thrive and fuel the economy. And it is about ensuring that California continues to drive innovation and function as an economic powerhouse.

Working with partners at the state, system, regional, and institutional levels to implement and scale the strategies in this playbook will lead to the transformational change the state needs to build on its progress. The end result will be a higher education system that not only achieves the postsecondary attainment goal and the related benefits but also works for every student on every campus.

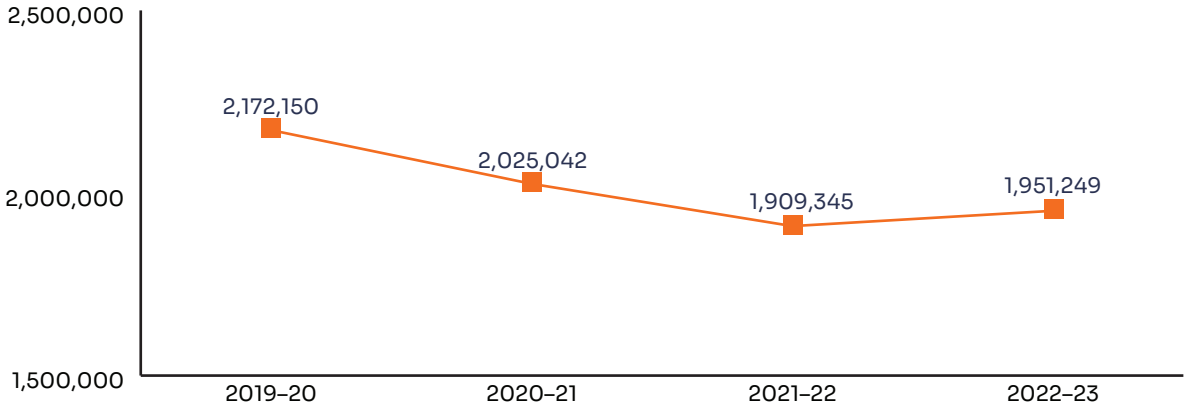
Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Appendix A: Closer Look at the California Public Postsecondary Undergraduate Education Systems

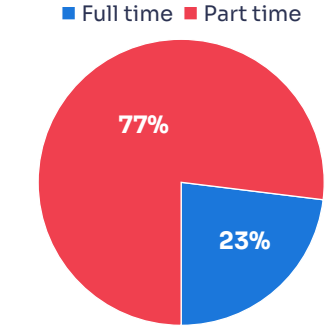
California Community Colleges — 116 institutions | 1,951,249 students

CCC UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

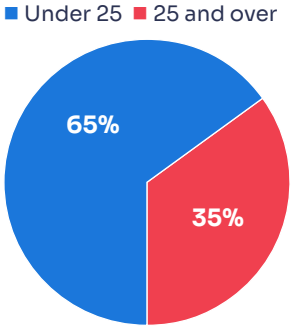
By year, 2019–20 to 2022–23



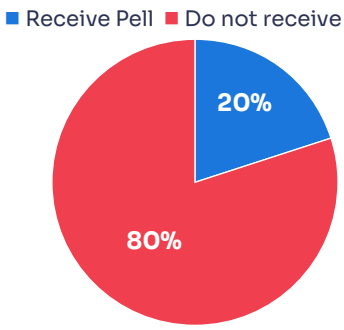
By enrollment intensity, 2022–23



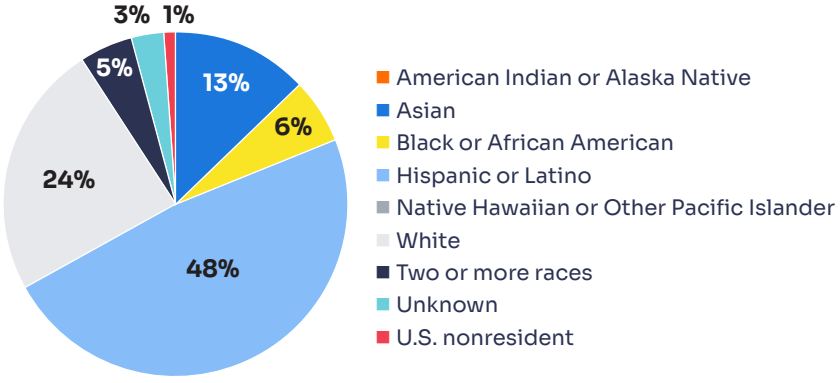
By age, 2022–23



By Pell status, 2023–24



By race/ethnicity, 2022–23

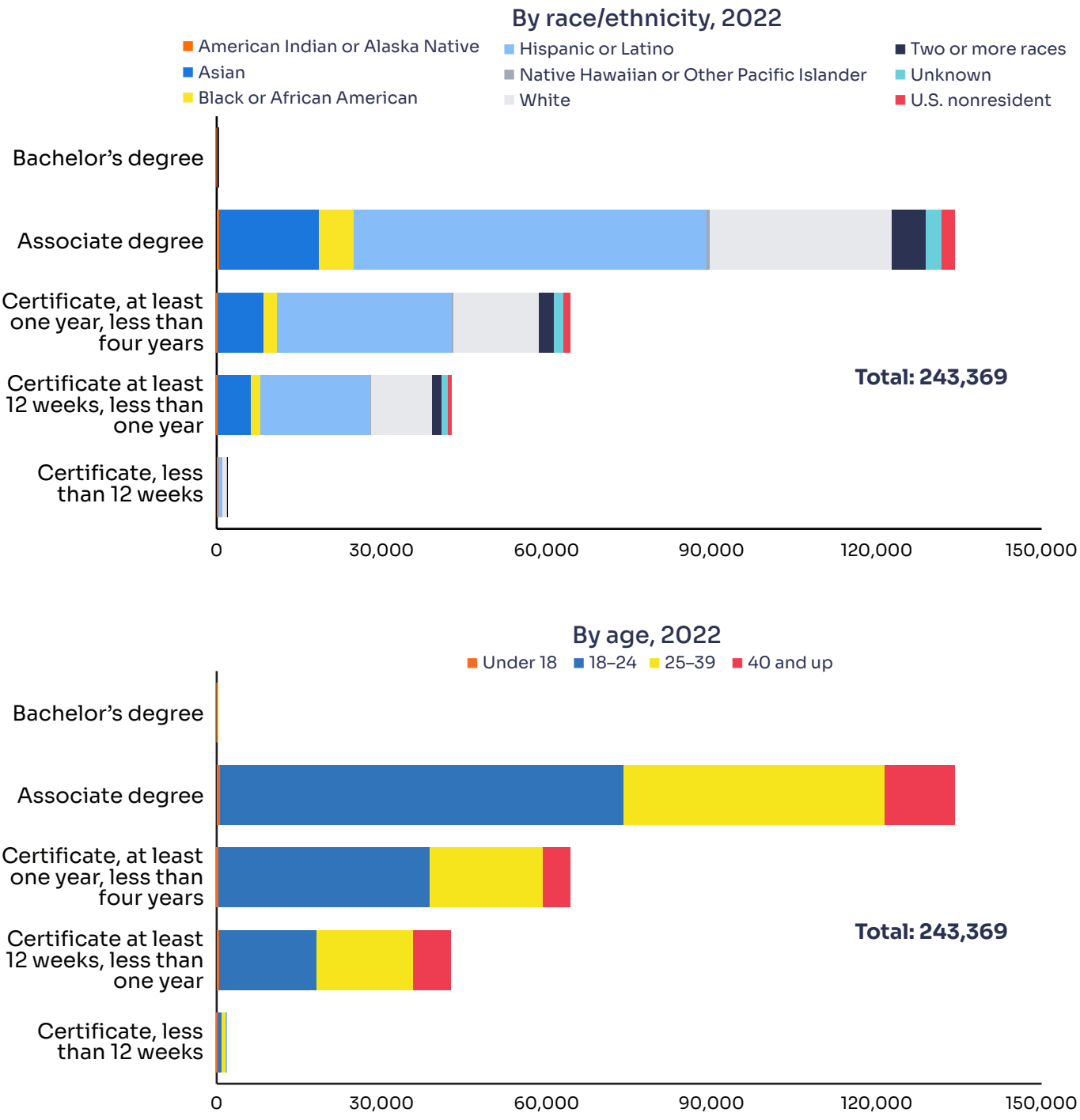


Source for all data except Pell Grant: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Source for Pell Grant data: CCC Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Data Mart, retrieved July 15, 2025, https://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/FinAid_Summary.aspx

Note: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright.

CCC DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED



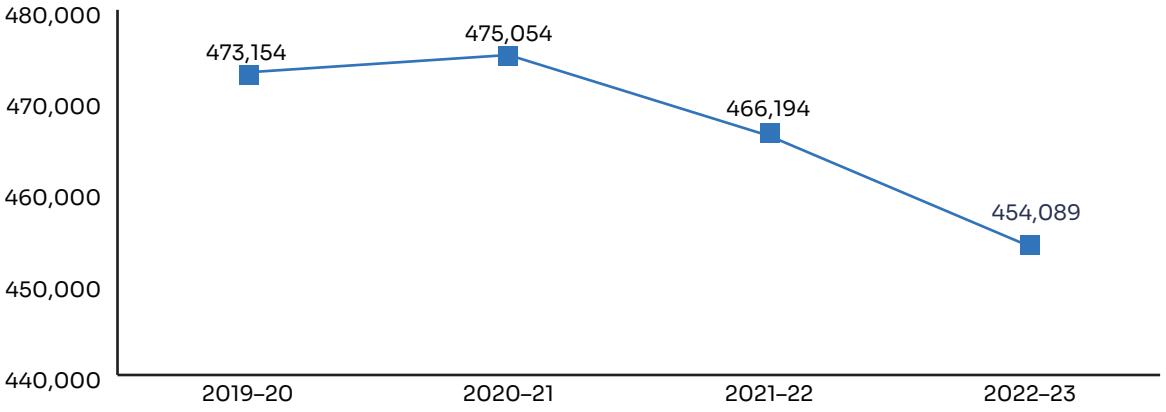
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Notes: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright. Certificate completion data is not available from IPEDS for 2023.

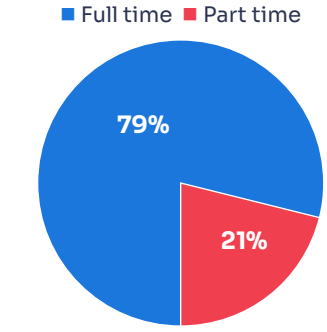
California State University — 23 institutions | 454,089 students

CSU UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

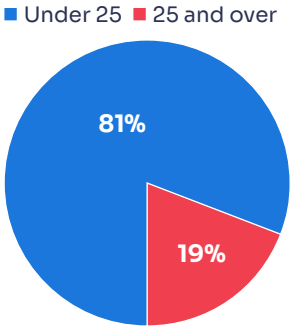
By year, 2019–20 to 2022–23



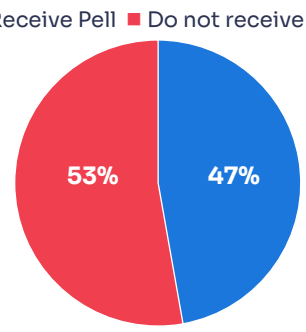
By enrollment intensity, 2022–23



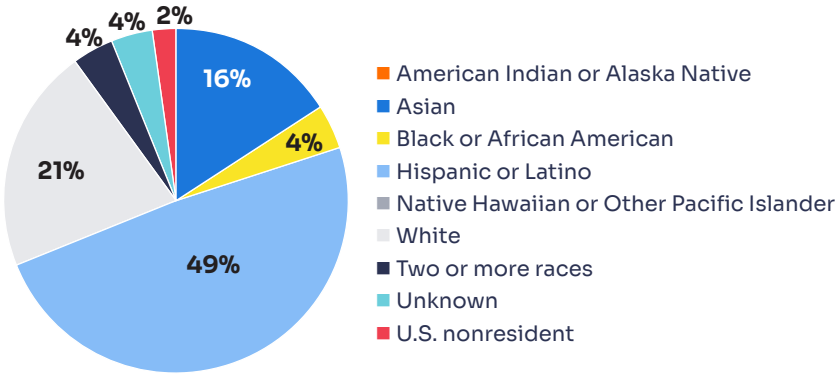
By age, 2022–23



By Pell status, 2023–24



By race/ethnicity, 2022–23

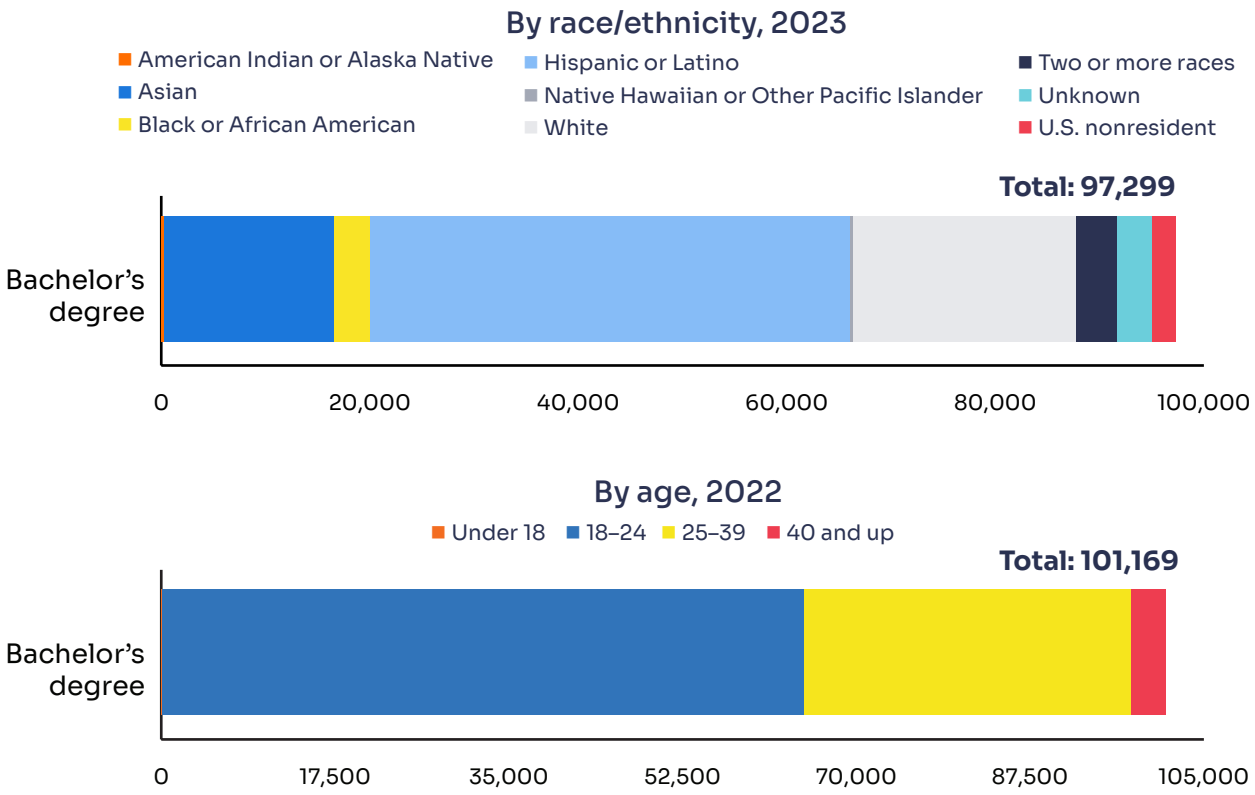


Source for all data except Pell Grant: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Source for Pell Grant data: CSU Financial Aid Programs Report and Enrollment Summary Dashboard, retrieved July 15, 2025, https://tableau.calstate.edu/views/SelfEnrollmentDashboard/EnrollmentSummary

Note: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright.

CSU DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED



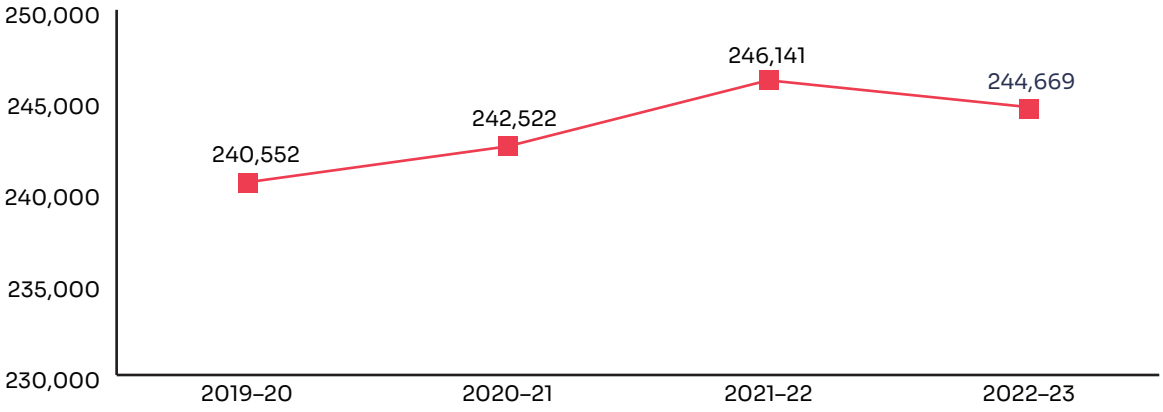
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Notes: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright. Completion data by age is not available for 2023 for CSU from IPEDS.

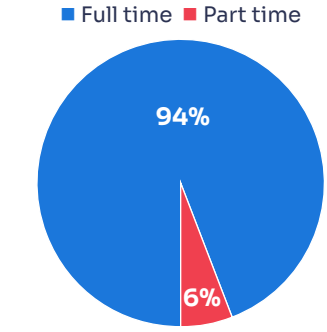
University of California — 9 institutions | 244,669 students

UC UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

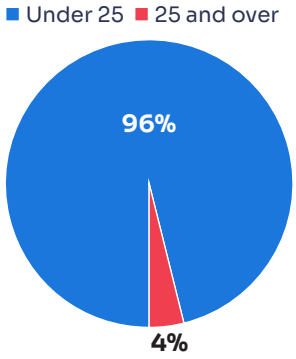
By year, 2019–20 to 2022–23



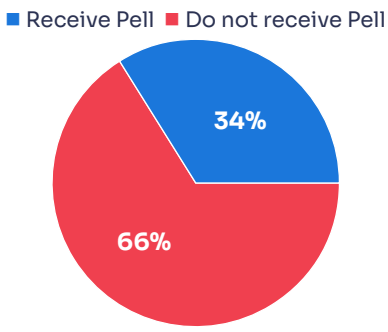
By enrollment intensity, 2022–23



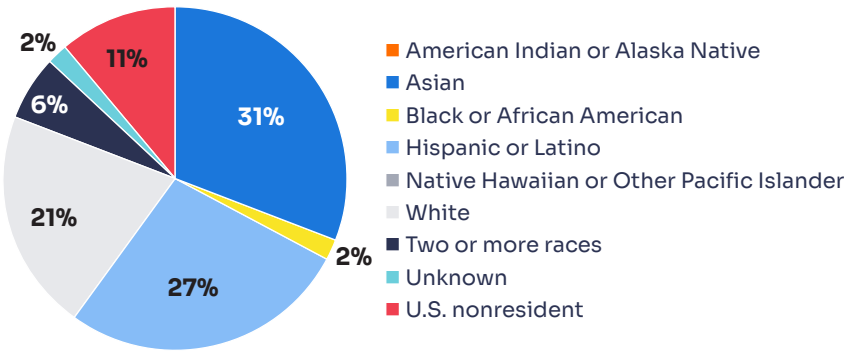
By age, 2022–23



By Pell status, 2023–24



By race/ethnicity, 2022–23

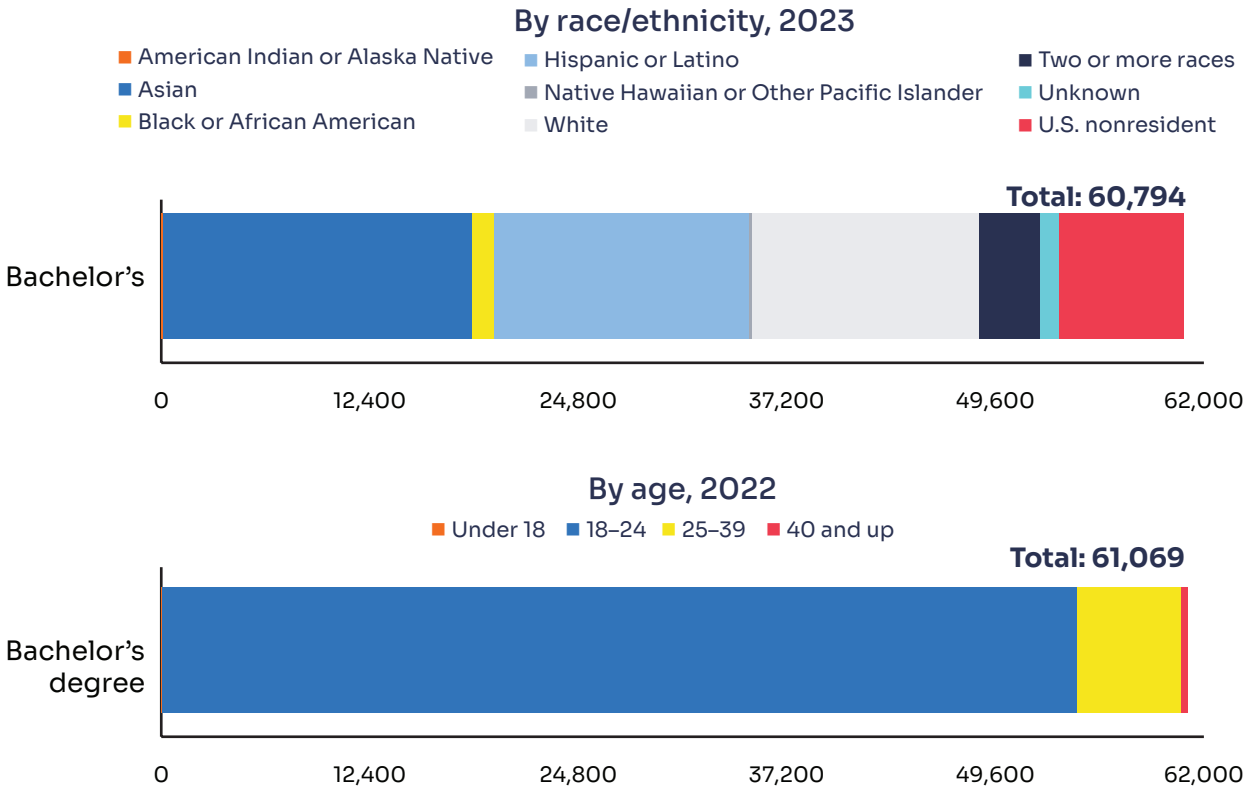


Source for all data except Pell Grant: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Source for Pell Grant data: UC Student Financial Support Data Tables, retrieved July 15, 2025, https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us/information-center/financial-support

Note: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright.

UC DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), retrieved July 23, 2025, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

Notes: Data includes all undergraduate students but does not include North Orange Continuing Education, San Diego College of Continuing Education, and Calbright. Completion data by age is not available for 2023 for UC from IPEDS.

Appendix B: Metrics Associated With the Strategies

The following metrics can be used as a starting point to define and develop a system for measuring California's progress on implementing and scaling the strategies in this playbook to reach the postsecondary attainment goal. The descriptions in the following table assume that the state, systems, and institutions will look at each metric using the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity. While critical, these disaggregations are not enough. The "Additional Disaggregations" column includes measures that are essential to better understand each specific metric.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION OR PURPOSE	WHAT TO MEASURE	ADDITIONAL DISAGGREGATIONS‡
POST-COMPLETION SUCCESS			
Median earnings	The middle annual income of individuals who completed a credential, three full years after that completion	Earnings of students after completion	▪ Base additional disaggregations on the college's reforms and the disaggregations used to monitor the success of these reforms. (See subsequent pages of this table.)
Percentage of students employed in their area of occupational training	Rate at which students are employed in occupational classifications that match the field of study in which they earned a credential, as measured three full years after that completion	Percentage employed in their area of occupational training after graduation	
Default rate	Percentage of students who took out a loan, entered repayment, and did not make a payment for a full year or more	Average percentage of total borrowers who default	
COLLEGE COMPLETION			
Graduation rate	Number of students who completed their program within a specified period of time, divided by the total number of students in a given cohort (e.g., first-time, full-time students) Note: CCA prefers, for full-time students, a 100 percent of expected completion time rate (e.g., two years for a two-year student who starts full time, four years for a four-year student who starts full time) and 200 percent of expected completion time for part-time students.	Number of graduates expressed as a percentage of the cohort	▪ Base additional disaggregations on the college's reforms and the disaggregations used to monitor the success of these reforms. (See subsequent pages of this table.)
Total graduates	Unduplicated number of students receiving a credential (can include noncredit students)	Total number of graduates	
Time to credential	Time accumulated from first entry to college to credential attainment	Average across all students	
Credits to credential	Credits accumulated from first entry to college to credential attainment		

‡Additional disaggregations are not exhaustive, and they do not replace the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity (full time/part time). They represent priorities for additional disaggregations for a given metric.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION OR PURPOSE	WHAT TO MEASURE	ADDITIONAL DISAGGREGATIONS‡
LEADING INDICATORS FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION			
Enrollment	Total, unduplicated number of students	Unduplicated total number of students	▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE ▪ Intentional academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Mini-semester enrollment ▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
Average credit load	Insight into average course load—as an alternative to full-time-equivalent enrollment measure	Average hours enrolled by a student	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE ▪ Intentional academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Mini-semester enrollment ▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
Credit accumulation rate by year	Average credits earned by enrolled students per year	Credits that count toward graduation, accumulated	▪ Adult learners ▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Awarded credit for prior learning ▪ FYE ▪ Prior or current dual enrollment participation
Count of full-time starters who accumulate 30 credits in their first year	Insight on the number of full-time students on pace to graduate a two-year program in two years or a four-year program in four years	Number of full-time students who attain 30 credits, combined, across all semesters or quarters in a year (can include summer)	
Count of part-time starters who accumulate 15 credits in their first year	Insight on the number of part-time students on pace to graduate a two-year program in four years or a four-year program in eight years	Number of part-time students who attain 15 credits, combined, across all semesters or quarters in a year (can include summer)	

‡Additional disaggregations are not exhaustive, and they do not replace the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity (full time/part time). They represent priorities for additional disaggregations for a given metric.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION OR PURPOSE	WHAT TO MEASURE	ADDITIONAL DISAGGREGATIONS‡
LEADING INDICATORS FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION			
Year-to-year persistence rate	Year-to-year retention rates showing how many students who start in a given semester (e.g., fall 2022) are still enrolled in the same semester the following year (e.g., fall 2023); also can be expressed as a composite year-to-year rate by adding numerators and denominators for fall, spring, and summer	Enrolled students who are enrolled in subsequent year, same semester	▪ Adult learners ▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Awarded credit for prior learning ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE ▪ Intentional academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Mini-semester enrollment ▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation ▪ Year enrolled
Credit completion ratio	View of how successful students are at completing enough credits out of those attempted	Passed credits in attempted courses	▪ Adult learners ▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Awarded credit for prior learning ▪ FYE ▪ Prior or current dual enrollment participation
Gateway course completion rate	How many students complete gateway English or math	Total students who complete gateway English or math in their first year	▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
REAL-TIME METRICS			
Grade point average	Measure of academic achievement across individual courses	Average of total grade points received	▪ FYE
Career exploration rate	Percentage of students who completed a career exploration activity (self-assessment, FYE curriculum requirement) by the end of their first 30 credit hours	Students who completed a career exploration activity by end of their first 30 credit hours	▪ Career service/adviser caseload
Career advising rate	Percentage of students who met with career counselors/academic advisers to discuss career/program choices	Students who met with career counselors/academic advisers to discuss career/program choices	▪ Career adviser caseload

‡Additional disaggregations are not exhaustive, and they do not replace the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity (full time/part time). They represent priorities for additional disaggregations for a given metric.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION OR PURPOSE	WHAT TO MEASURE	ADDITIONAL DISAGGREGATIONS‡
REAL-TIME METRICS			
Program selection rate	Percentage of students who selected a program of study by end of their FYE program	Students who selected a program of study by end of their FYE program	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ By major, especially those program codes that represent general or undecided
Rate of experiential learning offerings	Percentage of programs that integrate experiential learning in the curriculum	Programs that integrate experiential learning in curriculum	▪ Experiential learning type (e.g., apprenticeship)
Rate of experiential learning participation	Percentage of students who participated in an experiential learning activity	Students who participated in an experiential learning activity	▪ Experiential learning type (e.g., apprenticeship)
Survey of confidence in program choice	Insight into how confident students are in their career choice	Average survey result on a prespecified scale	▪ By major, especially those that represent general or undecided
Survey of learner satisfaction	Insight into whether learners feel that the program caters to their needs and facilitates progression	Learners who believe that the institution is catering to their needs and supports their success	▪ Adult learners ▪ FYE
Percentage of credits completed as awarded for prior learning	Hours awarded by credit for prior learning	Total hours awarded for credit for prior learning	▪ Adult learners ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
Rate of credit for prior learning leading to subsequent course success	Percentage of students awarded credit for prior learning who satisfactorily completed subsequent coursework in the prior learning assessment course subject area	Students awarded credit for prior learning who enrolled in and passed a course in same subject area as the one for which they received credit	▪ Adult learners ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
Rate of ongoing English and math course success for students who take prerequisite remediation courses or corequisite courses	Percentage of students previously enrolled in corequisite support who completed subsequent coursework in the gateway course subject area	Corequisite support students who enrolled in and passed subsequent courses in the same subject area as the one for which they received corequisite support	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
Dual enrollment success rate	Percentage of high school students who complete a college course through dual enrollment	High school students who enroll in and complete college courses through dual enrollment	▪ Per course

‡Additional disaggregations are not exhaustive, and they do not replace the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity (full time/part time). They represent priorities for additional disaggregations for a given metric.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION OR PURPOSE	WHAT TO MEASURE	ADDITIONAL DISAGGREGATIONS‡
REAL-TIME METRICS			
Rate of algebraic offerings	Percentage of programs that are not STEM that require college algebra	Non-STEM programs that require college algebra	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ By math pathway (e.g., literacy, statistics, STEM)
Program momentum rate	Percentage of students who enrolled in at least nine hours associated with their program of study in their 30 credit hours	Students who enrolled in at least nine hours associated with their program of study in their first 30 credit hours	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown
Rate of major change	Percentage of students who changed major before a prespecified number of credit hours (e.g., 30)	Students who changed major before a prespecified number of credit hours (e.g., 30)	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown
Meta-major relationship validation	Insight into whether students understand how meta majors introduced them to their major and associated careers	Students who understand how activities and assignments in meta majors introduced them to their majors and careers	▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown
Percentage of academic programs depicted through default pathways	Percentage of programs with a comprehensive semester-by-semester academic plan	Programs with a comprehensive semester-by-semester academic plan	▪ STEM vs. non-STEM
Enrollment rate onto comprehensive, semester-by-semester plans	Percentage of students enrolled who have a comprehensive academic plan	Degree-seeking students enrolled in a program with an academic plan	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ STEM vs. non-STEM
Program plan alignment rate	Percentage of students on track based on their academic plan	Students enrolled in courses aligned with their academic plan	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE ▪ Intentional academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Mini-semester enrollment ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation

‡Additional disaggregations are not exhaustive, and they do not replace the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity (full time/part time). They represent priorities for additional disaggregations for a given metric.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION OR PURPOSE	WHAT TO MEASURE	ADDITIONAL DISAGGREGATIONS‡
REAL-TIME METRICS			
Withdrawal rate	Percentage of student withdrawal from courses	Number of withdrawals per semester	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE ▪ Intentional academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Mini-semester enrollment ▪ On semester-by-semester academic plan vs. unknown ▪ Prior dual enrollment participation
Stackable credentials per program	Percentage of programs that integrate stackable credentials	Programs with stackable credentials integrated into the curriculum	▪ STEM vs. non-STEM
Adoption rate	Percentage of students using a given academic resource (e.g., student service, activity, or technology tool)	Students using the resource	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE
Adoption rate (hours)	Average hours of use for students who use a given resource	Number of hours students availed themselves of resources	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE
Tool/service satisfaction rate	Insight into whether students understand how using academic resources supports their success	Average survey score compared with the range of possible values	▪ Adviser caseload ▪ Evening/weekend course enrollment ▪ FYE
Average caseload size	How many students are assigned, on average, to each student adviser	Average number of students assigned across all advisers or a given advising segment (e.g., professional advisers vs. faculty advisers)	▪ Adviser type (e.g., faculty vs. professional adviser) ▪ By credit-hour band or academic year
Student contacts average	For students who see an adviser, duration and number of visits	For students who see an adviser, average number of visits/ hours per visit	▪ Adviser type (e.g., faculty vs. professional adviser) ▪ By credit-hour band or academic year
Advising satisfaction score	Student satisfaction with advising	Average survey score compared with the range of possible values	▪ Adviser type (e.g., faculty vs. professional adviser) ▪ By credit-hour band or academic year

‡Additional disaggregations are not exhaustive, and they do not replace the standard disaggregations of race/ethnicity, Pell Grant status, gender, age, and enrollment intensity (full time/part time). They represent priorities for additional disaggregations for a given metric.

Endnotes

1 Governor Gavin Newsom. (2025, April 23). *California is now the 4th largest economy in the world*. https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/04/23/california-is-now-the-4th-largest-economy-in-the-world/

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5 Governor Gavin Newsom. (2025, April 23). *California is now the 4th largest economy in the world*. https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/04/23/california-is-now-the-4th-largest-economy-in-the-world/

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10 Complete College America calculations based on data from the Lumina Foundation's *A Stronger Nation* report, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education System.

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12 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2023). *Some college, no credential: State profile*. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/researchcenter/viz/SCNC_Dashboard_2023Report/NationalDashboard

13 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (n.d.). *Data explorer*. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved March 21, 2025, from https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds

14 Data Quest. (n.d.). *2023–24 four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate: Statewide report*. California Department of Education. https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2023-24

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