



September 2022

HIGHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

An Introduction to the State's Public Colleges & Universities



Courtesy of University of California, Davis

INTRODUCTION

California's public higher education system has catapulted the state into global leadership such that, the state is the 5th largest economy in the world today.¹ A bachelor's degree, in particular, provides unrivaled economic and health benefits for the individual earning the degree and for our state.² Not surprisingly, there is growing demand for a college education and the state needs an increasingly more educated citizenry to maintain its economic standing. To better understand how our public colleges and universities contribute to the state's success, this brief provides an introduction to higher education in California and the state budget investments and policies that shape college opportunity and success for millions of California college students.

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION AT A GLANCE



Enrollment³

2,524,209 students attend a public college or university in California.



Coordination

The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education defines each segment by its mission and admission criteria, but there is currently no oversight body that ensures our higher education systems work together or with K-12.



Governance

Accomplished through separate boards with various levels of autonomy.

California Community Colleges (CCC)⁴

116 Colleges
(including one fully online college*)

Open access enrollment

Governed by Governor-appointed Board of Governors; Board-selected Chancellor; locally elected Board of Trustees; subject to legislative control

California State University (CSU)⁵

23 Universities

Admits the top 1/3 of high school graduates

Governed by Governor-appointed Board of Trustees; Board-selected Chancellor; subject to legislative control

University of California (UC)⁶

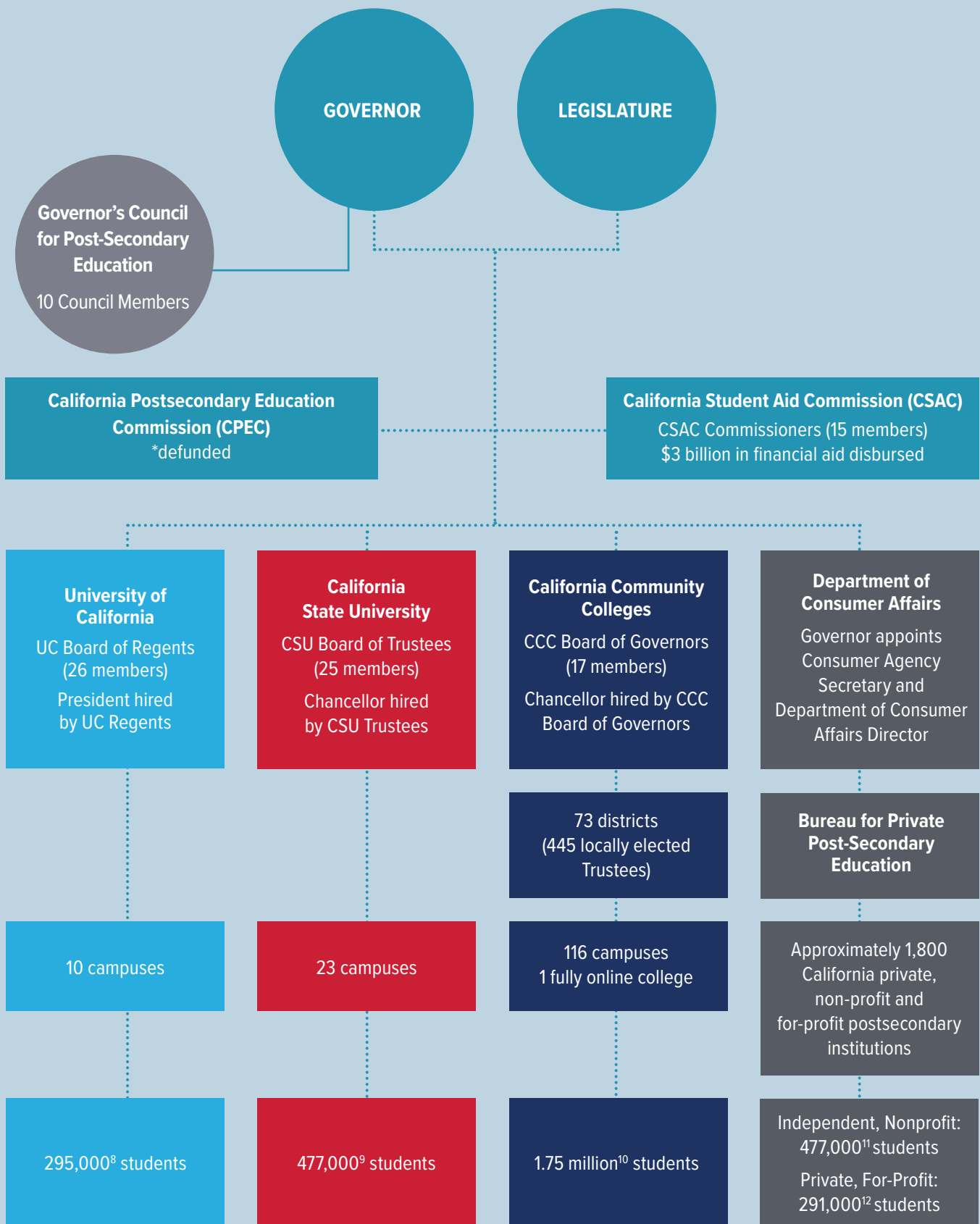
10 Universities

Admits the top 1/8 of high school graduates

Governed by Governor-appointed Board of Regents; Board-appointed President; **not** subject to legislative control

**Calbright, California's fully online community college, offers certificate programs in Medical Coding, Information Technology Support, CRM Platform Administration, and Cybersecurity to students who have a high school diploma, but no post-secondary degree.⁷*

CALIFORNIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM





STATE POLICY LEADERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION

The **California Master Plan for Higher Education of 1960** is credited as building two of the best public university systems in the nation, if not the world. Most notably, it clarified the roles of our public universities and community colleges and established the principles of universal access and choice, and specified that the UC would draw its freshmen class from the top one-eighth of California's high school graduates, while the CSU would draw from the top one-third. While California's vision for higher education in the 1960s was revolutionary for its time, the state currently lacks a comprehensive new roadmap necessary to ensure California remains the economic powerhouse that it is, including the necessary formal coordination and planning to make progress toward state goals. Equally important, our state has not revisited a bolder expansion of admission to the university at a time when more educated Californians are needed to meet workforce demands.

The **California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC)** was established in 1974 as the state planning and coordinating body for higher education and as the successor to the Coordinating Council for Higher Education. Part of the state's 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education, funding for the CPEC was eliminated in 2011 by former Governor Brown, leaving California as one of a handful of states nationwide without statewide oversight or coordination of its higher education system.¹³ The primary statutory purposes of the CPEC were to develop an ongoing statewide plan for a coordinated system of post-secondary education; identify and recommend policies to meet the educational, research, and public service needs of

the state; and advise the Governor and Legislature on policy and budget priorities that best preserve access to high quality post-secondary education opportunities.

Governor Newsom established the **California Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education** in August 2019 to serve as an “independent consultative resource to the Governor regarding the economic and social impact of education in the state.” The council comprises leaders from public and private higher education institutions, K-12 education, and leaders from business and the labor community. While a step in the right direction, the Council is not a substitute for an independent entity that advises the Governor and Legislature on higher education planning and uses cross-sector data to assess progress toward state goals and carries out implementation of the structural and policy changes needed to best meet the broad public interest associated with higher education.¹⁴ The Council does not have statutory authority, state funding, and serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

The state has made significant progress on its ability to provide accountability for student success by recently concluding a multi-year effort to design a longitudinal data system – the **Cradle-to-Career Data System**. California was one of a handful of states without such a system, which is an essential tool for monitoring access, success, and equity across California’s education pipeline, and for assessing options for changing higher education structures and policies. Under Governor Newsom’s leadership, California state legislators passed the California Cradle-to-Career Data System Act in 2019, which set forth an extensive planning process that included 15 state agencies and many educational institutions, research and policy organizations, and community groups. Funding for the system was approved in the 2021-22 state budget. The data system will be implemented by the Government Operations Agency.

The Governor and Legislature took a critical step in setting a new vision for higher education better suited to today’s students and economy in the 2022-23 state budget when they established **multi-year compacts** with the University of California and California State University, and a **multi-year roadmap** with the California Community Colleges. Governor Newsom has also called for reaching a goal of 70% postsecondary attainment by 2030.¹⁵ The compacts and roadmap focus on increasing access to the UC and CSU, improving student success, advancing equity, increasing affordability of higher education, increasing intersegmental collaboration to benefit students, and supporting workforce preparedness and high-demand career pipelines, while receiving substantial ongoing investments to their base funding.¹⁶



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The Largest System of Higher Education in the Nation

The **California Community Colleges (CCC)** serve approximately 1.75 million¹⁷ students at 116 colleges organized into 73 districts.¹⁸ The California Community Colleges provide a variety of educational and career opportunities, including earning an associate degree, completing a training/certificate program, transfer preparation for a four-year university, adult education, and community service coursework. In 2014, a pilot program was established to authorize up to 15 California Community Colleges to establish a baccalaureate degree program in a field of study not offered by the California State University or University of California. The pilot program was extended indefinitely in 2021, allowing community colleges to establish up to 30 baccalaureate programs annually.¹⁹

Eligibility & Admissions

The California Community Colleges are open access institutions, accepting all applicants who are high school graduates, as well as any other adults who can benefit from attendance. In 2018, a fully online community college was established – Calbright College – to serve working adults between the ages of 25 to 34 who have a high school diploma, but no post-secondary degree, and is focused on short-term certificates not offered online by existing community colleges.²⁰ Calbright currently offers programs in Medical Coding, Informational Technology Support, CRM Platform Administration, and Cybersecurity.²¹

Governance

Responsibility for the California Community Colleges system is vested in a 17-member Board of Governors (BOG). All members of the board are appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate confirmation, and serve six-year terms. The BOG includes two local community college district trustees, two tenured faculty members appointed by the Governor from nominees proposed by the CCC Statewide Academic Senate, two student trustees appointed by the Governor from nominees proposed by the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, and one classified employee member from nominees proposed by exclusive representatives of classified employees of the CCC. The faculty, student, and classified employee members serve two-year terms.²² The BOG is responsible for setting statewide policy, providing guidance for districts, and selecting a Chancellor to serve as CEO of the system. The BOG is currently undergoing a search process to select a new chancellor by early 2023, following the departure of Eloy Ortiz Oakley. The Chancellor's duties include leadership, policy development, fiscal and administrative oversight, statewide community relations, and legislative advocacy. The Chancellor brings policy recommendations to the BOG through a formal process of consultation made with the Consultation Council, which is composed of 18 representatives of institutional groups such as trustees, executive officers, students, administrators, and student services officers and representative organizations, such as faculty and staff unions and associations.

In a governance structure modeled after K-12 school districts, each of the California Community College districts is governed by a locally elected Board of Trustees, which oversees the operations and budgets of the college(s) within the district and is responsible for the hiring/firing of campus presidents and chancellors. The BOG of the California Community Colleges serves as the Trustees for Calbright Colleges until 2025, when a district-specific Board of Trustees will be established for the college.²³

Unlike the UC and CSU, the statewide community college Chancellor lacks the authority necessary to enforce common policies or practices to unify the 73 districts and 116 colleges in pursuing statewide goals.

To learn more about the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and its diversity by race/ethnicity and gender, read the report [*Left Out: California's Higher Education Governing Boards Do Not Reflect the Racial and Gender Diversity of California and its Student Body.*](#)



Student Success

Under the leadership of Chancellor Oakley, the system has taken on significant and ambitious transformation in support of improving student outcomes. The 2017 systemwide strategic plan known as the [Vision for Success](#), articulates ambitious goals for improving student success and a set of commitments to achieve those goals by 2022. The goals include growing the number of students who successfully complete college with an associate degree, credential, certificate, or skillsets that prepare them for an in-demand job; increasing the number of students transferring annually; reducing racial equity gaps, as well as regional achievement gaps; decreasing units accumulated; and increasing the employability of existing Career Technical Education students.²⁴ To achieve the goals, the CCC system is implementing [Guided Pathways](#) – a highly structured framework for student success that provides all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns towards their academic goals that promotes better enrollment decisions, prepares students for future success, and integrates support services in ways that make it easier for students to get the help they need during every step of their community college experience. The [California College Promise](#) (AB 19, Santiago) provides a framework for colleges to improve student outcomes by incentivizing best practices in support of student enrollment, persistence, and completion.²⁵ Some of the key policies supporting the system’s ambitious success agenda include:

- **Student Centered Funding Formula for California Community Colleges (SCFF).** Established in 2018, the SCFF moves beyond providing funding to colleges only for student enrollment but also for improved student outcomes and closing equity gaps. Under the new formula, the majority of funding is still based on enrollment (70%), but now includes funding based on the number of low-income students a college serves (20%), and whether students meet key momentum points and successful student outcomes aligned with the *Vision for Success* goals (10%).²⁶ As colleges transition to the new funding formula, a hold harmless provision remains in place to ensure that college funding does not decrease from 2017-18 funding levels.²⁷ The 2024-25 budget year will now serve as the new funding floor that



community college districts will be held to.²⁸ This ensures fiscal stability for districts in recognition of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, while also maintaining focus on funding for improved student outcomes.

- **Placement and Remedial Education Reform.** In 2017, the Legislature unanimously passed **AB 705 (Irwin)**, which prohibits community colleges from requiring students to enroll in remedial courses and requires 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. Previously, inadequate placement tests resulted in a majority of students, disproportionately Latinx and Black students, being placed into ineffective remedial courses. As a result of AB 705, access to transfer-level coursework has dramatically increased. While only 30% of Black students and 24% of Latinx students enrolled directly into transfer-level English prior to AB 705, 96% of Black student and 94% of Latinx students enrolled directly into transfer-level English following the law's implementation. Furthermore, the percentage of Black and Latinx students completing transfer-level English within one year of their first English course has roughly tripled—from 20% to 55% for Black students and 15% to 45% for Latinx students.³⁰ Efforts to strengthen this policy continue: legislation moving in 2022 (**AB 1705, Irwin**) seeks to ensure that students are enrolled in college-level courses with appropriate support and is supported by a \$64 million investment in the 2022-23 state budget to provide colleges with resources to scale up high-impact student supports and provide faculty professional development.
- **Transfer.** The system continues to improve transfer for its students through the **Associate Degree for Transfer** – a streamlined pathway that makes it easier for CCC students to earn a degree and transfer to the CSU via an admission guarantee with junior standing. Initially established in 2010, it now provides pathways to institutions outside of the CSU, including 39 Historically Black Colleges and Universities across the country³¹ and over 30 private, non-profit colleges and universities.³² Since the creation of the ADT, 286,492 ADTs have been awarded by the California Community Colleges, and

the share of graduates who are earning an ADT has continued to grow. While UC does not guarantee admission or junior standing to ADT earners, UC's [Transfer Pathways](#) provides a list of courses that prepare students for a major at UC and informs students where the ADT aligns with the UC Transfer Pathway.

Following over a decade of the ADT's expansion and significant progress to create a streamlined pathway to transfer for CCC students, policymakers passed a package of transfer reforms in 2021 designed to further strengthen the ADT and improve access to timely transfer for students. **The Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act of 2021** established an intersegmental committee to provide state-level coordination, accountability, and recommendations to further strengthen the ADT program and creates a **singular general education pathway**, allowing students to take one consistent set of courses to be eligible for transfer to both the CSU and UC. Companion legislation requires that community colleges adopt a student-facing **common course numbering system**, which will help prevent unnecessary credit loss and repetition of the same course content, and so transfer students know that they are meeting the requirements of the receiving institution. These policies seek to remedy persistent racial inequities in access to an ADT, considering that only 37% of Black community college students who earn associate degrees are awarded ADTs. The STAR Act of 2021 and implementation of a common course numbering system will directly address excess credit accumulation, with students earning an ADT still completing an average of 84 semester credits at community colleges, despite the typical associate degree requiring only 60 semester units.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.** In 2022, the Chancellor's Office commissioned a [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Integration Plan](#) and identified the need for the system and campuses to establish the conditions for local districts and colleges to embed [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility \(DEIA\)](#) competencies and criteria for all CCC employees through employee evaluation and tenure review processes. Passed by the BOG unanimously in 2022, the Chancellor's Office DEIA criteria outline a clear standard and performance expectations for all CCC employees, centered around





CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The Country's Largest Four-Year University System

Serving approximately 477,000 students at 23 campuses, the **California State University (CSU)** offers undergraduate degrees and graduate education primarily through master's degree programs, with a limited number of doctoral degree programs in educational leadership, physical therapy, audiology, and nursing practice.

The CSU system is also known as “The People’s University” and is deeply committed to serving California’s diverse student population across the state. As a result of this commitment, numerous CSUs have received national designations for serving and supporting large numbers of minoritized communities. 16 CSUs meet Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation (meaning 25% or more full-time students are Hispanic/Latinx), and five of those also meet Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) criteria (10% or more undergraduates are Asian American, Native American, or Pacific Islanders) under the United States Department of Education. These designations qualify campuses for special Minority Serving Institution (MSI) funding to support unique student populations in completing their college goals.

In 2022, Humboldt State University was designated a polytechnic university and is supported by a \$458 million investment to support 27 new high-demand academic programs over the next seven years. Humboldt joins the San Luis Obispo and Pomona campuses as CSUs with this designation.

Eligibility & Admissions

As outlined in the Master Plan, admission to the CSU is available to the top one-third (33.3%) of public high school graduates and all qualified California Community College transfer students.³³ Among the requirements for eligibility to the CSU is completion of the A-G curriculum with a C or better—a set of courses California high school students must complete to apply to four-year public universities, in addition to minimum GPA requirements. GPA requirements for admission are also higher for nonresident applicants. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSU temporarily suspended the use of SAT/ACT examination in determining admission eligibility for all CSU campuses for the 2021-2022 academic year. As of March 2022, the **CSU has permanently removed the SAT and ACT** in evaluating a student's application for admission,³⁴ instead establishing a [multi-factor index](#) that campuses may utilize in evaluating a student's application. Additionally, many campuses have other supplemental or heightened admission criteria due to **impaction**. A campus or major is considered impacted when there are more eligible applicants than there are available seats. As of 2022, seven CSU campuses have full impaction designation for all undergraduate programs. Of the remaining sixteen campuses, CSU Dominguez Hills is the only campus without at least one impacted major or program.³⁵

The CSU proposed changes to eligibility requirements for high school students in 2019. This proposal would have required students to complete an additional year of **quantitative reasoning coursework** to be eligible for a CSU, and would have had disparate impacts on high school students without access to such courses, such as rural and minoritized communities. As of 2022, the CSU has paused the proposal as it conducts an impact study and engages stakeholders on the proposal.

Governance

A 25-member Board of Trustees adopts the rules, regulations, and policies governing the CSU. The Board consists of 16 members appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate confirmation, who serve for eight-year terms; one faculty trustee appointed by the Governor from nominees proposed by the CSU Statewide Academic Senate; two student trustees appointed by the Governor from nominees proposed by the California State Student Association; and one trustee selected by the CSU Statewide Alumni Council. The faculty, student, and alumni trustees serve two-year terms. In addition, five members serve ex officio: the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the Assembly, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the CSU Chancellor. The Governor is designated as the President of the Board. The Chancellor is appointed by the Trustees and serves as the system's CEO, and the Trustees also appoint the 23 campus presidents.³⁶ Dr. Jolene Koester is the Interim Chancellor of the system, pending the appointment of a new chancellor by 2023.

To learn more about the Cal State University Board of Trustees and its diversity by race/ethnicity and gender, read the report [Left Out: California's Higher Education Governing Boards Do Not Reflect the Racial and Gender Diversity of California and its Student Body.](#)

Student Success

Launched in 2016, [Graduation Initiative 2025](#) is the CSU's systemwide initiative to increase graduation rates for all CSU students while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps. This initiative sets specific goals for each campus, but also includes systemwide goals of raising the freshman four-year graduation rate from 19% to 40% and the two-year graduation rate for transfer students from 31% to 45%.³⁷ Over the last few years, the CSU has made important progress to reach their 2025 goal, including **streamlining general education requirements and eliminating remedial education** in 2017, using high school GPA to place students in courses rather than standardized tests.³⁸ In 2021, the CSU launched a plan to further escalate the elimination of equity gaps by implementing student-centered student supports and a re-enrollment plan. Over the last seven years, the CSU has seen a steady increase in student success for all students as a result of their efforts, but racial equity gaps in degree completion still remain.³⁹

The 2022-23 state budget established a **multi-year compact** with the CSU that includes substantial and sustained funding increases, in exchange for clear commitments to expand student access, equity, and affordability, and to create pathways to high-demand career opportunities.⁴⁰





UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The State's Premier Research University

The **University of California (UC)** provides undergraduate, graduate, and professional education to over 295,000 students at 10 campuses (including UC San Francisco, which offers only graduate/professional degrees). An 11th campus, UC Hastings College of the Law, is affiliated with the UC but is overseen by a separate board of directors.

A key part of the UC is its immense diversity of students from across California and the world. Six UC campuses are designated as Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). Three UC campuses are both Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), another two campuses are HSIs, and one is designated as an AANAPISI.⁴¹

Eligibility & Admissions

As specified in the Master Plan, the UC is to draw its freshman class from the top one-eighth (12.5%) of high school graduates and all qualified California Community Colleges transfer students. Similar to the CSU, minimum eligibility requirements to the UC include completion of the A-G curriculum with a C or better and a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher, with greater requirements for nonresident students. At seven of the nine UC undergraduate campuses, the average high school GPA of admitted students was at least a 4.0. The UC admissions process has become increasingly competitive and restrictive as evidenced by rising

GPA requirements. In 2021, the UC Board of Regents voted to **permanently remove the SAT and ACT** from the admissions evaluation process. This followed a temporary suspension of standardized tests as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UC has no plans to implement a replacement test for admissions to the system, focusing instead on ways to further improve equity in admissions. Similar to the CSU, the UC utilizes a **multi-factor admissions system** in which they approach applicants through a holistic review process.

Increasing student demand and enrollment capacity challenges have resulted in a focus by lawmakers on admissions practices, in particular **admission of out-of-state and international students**. In 2021, lawmakers placed an 18% campus-level cap on non-resident student enrollment. As a result, UC Berkeley, Los Angeles, and San Diego were required to decrease non-California resident enrollment to below the 18% cap by 2026-27, resulting in a decrease of approximately 900 non-resident students across the three campuses.⁴² Systemwide, international and out-of-state students made up 17.9% of all undergraduate students in fall 2021, with these three campuses holding higher shares.⁴³ In 2022, the state budget further required that the UC admit a greater share of California resident students by 6,230 students and limit out-of-state enrollment. Combined, these changes will result in an increase of 7,132 additional California residents by 2023-24.⁴⁴

In 2018, the UC also proposed admissions changes that included increased science requirements for high school students. After commissioning an impact study in 2019, the UC ultimately decided against such admissions changes, citing the disproportionately negative impact on Black, Latinx, and low-income students.

Transferring to a UC from the California Community Colleges remains a popular option for students seeking to gain access to the UC system, with the system admitting over 28,000 California transfer students in 2021. The UC has utilized a number of approaches to support the transfer pathway, including the following transfer options: the [UC Transfer Pathway program, Transfer Admission Guarantee \(TAG\) program, and Pathways+](#).⁴⁵ While the UC's Transfer Pathways program recognizes the academic rigor of the ADT and uses the ADT as the framework for their 21 guaranteed transfer pathways, ADT recipients still did not have an admission guarantee to the UC system as they do at the CSU, as of 2021. Following the passage of **AB 928** (Berman, 2021) the UC, CSU, and community colleges are on a path toward establishing a coordinated transfer pathway that will make it easier for students to complete the courses required to transfer to the UC or CSU.

To learn more about increasingly competitive admissions environment at California's public universities, read [*Shut Out: The Need to Increase Access to the University of California and California State University.*](#)

Governance

Unlike the California Community Colleges and CSU, the 26-member Board of Regents is established under the California Constitution and, therefore, is not subject to legislative control. The Board is composed of 18 members appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate confirmation, who serve for 12-year terms; one UC student appointed by the Regents who serves a one-year term; and seven ex officio members including the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the Assembly, Superintendent of Public Instruction, President and Vice President of the Alumni Associations of the UC, and the UC President. Additionally, two faculty members, the Chair and Vice Chair of the UC Academic Council—the administrative arm of the Academic Senate which represents faculty—sit on the board as non-voting members.⁴⁶ The Regents have the authority to appoint the UC President—the head of the UC system—as well as the chancellors of the ten universities upon the recommendation of the President. President Michael V. Drake is the UC’s 21st President. Drake is the UC’s first Black president since its founding in 1868.⁴⁷

To learn more about the University of California Board of Regents and its diversity by race/ethnicity and gender, read the report [Left Out: California’s Higher Education Governing Boards Do Not Reflect the Racial and Gender Diversity of California and its Student Body.](#)

Student Success

In recent years, the UC has focused on improving the college readiness pipeline for California high school students and on increasing the number of students who transfer to the system each year. Through targeted state investments, the UC system provides intentional guidance and supports to minoritized communities through the **Student Academic Preparation and Education Partnerships (SAPEP)** to **LCFF+ high schools** (K-12 schools eligible for supplemental funding under the Local Control Funding Formula because of their populations of low-income or high-needs students) to ensure more students meet eligibility requirements and gain admission to the UC. In 2021, the UC received one-time funds to continue SAPEP work, with an additional infusion of ongoing funding in the 2022-23 state budget to ensure the UC can continue to develop and foster pipelines to a UC education across California high schools.

The 2022-23 state budget established a **multi-year compact** with the UC that includes substantial and sustained funding increases, in exchange for clear commitments to expand student access, equity, and affordability, and to create pathways to high-demand career opportunities.⁴⁸

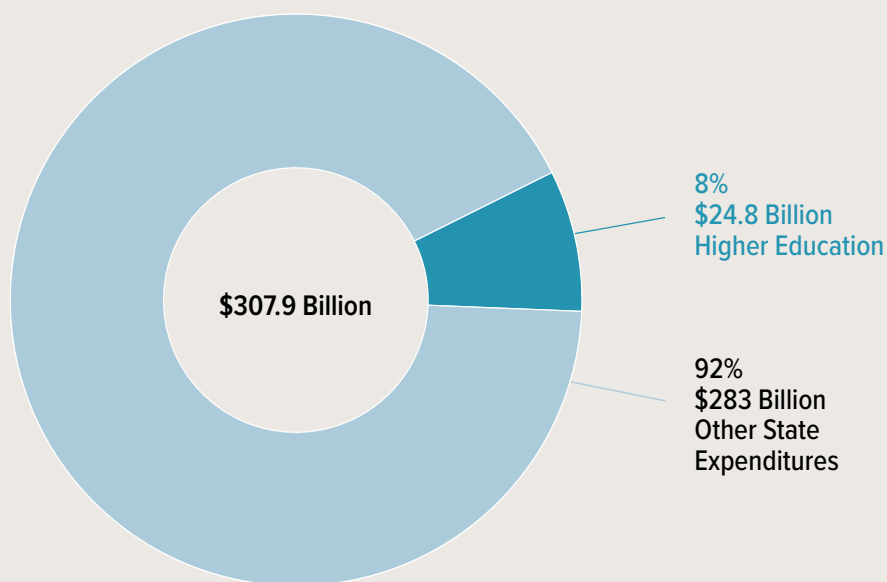


STATE FUNDING

Procedurally, the Governor outlines funding for the California Community Colleges, CSU, and UC as part of the annual state budget proposal to the Legislature. The General Fund and student tuition are the primary sources of financing undergraduate instructional costs at the UC, CSU, and CCCs. California Community Colleges rely heavily on the state General Fund and local property tax revenue whereas UC and CSU rely heavily on state General Fund and student tuition. California Community Colleges are included in a K-14 formula established by [Proposition 98](#), which guarantees a minimum level of funding for K-12 schools and California Community Colleges.⁴⁹

Higher education accounts for eight percent (\$24.8 B) of the California state budget.

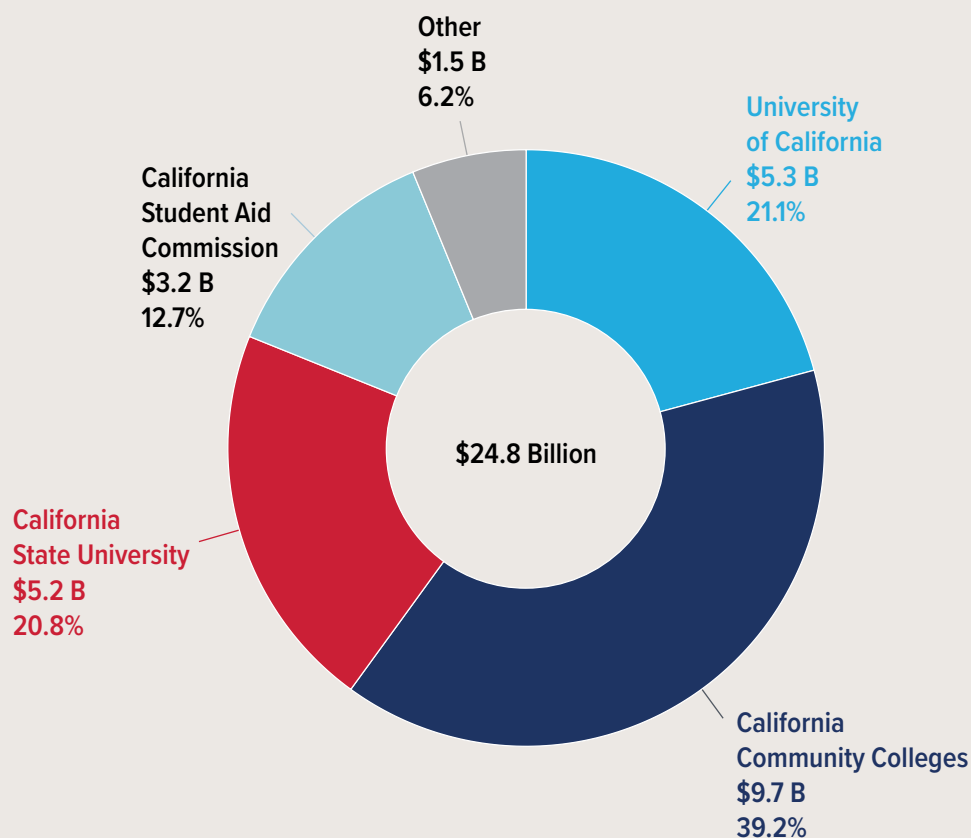
Figure 1. Higher Education Spending as a Share of California's 2022-23 State Budget.



Data Source: 2022-23 California State Budget. <https://ebudget.ca.gov/budget/2022-23EN/#/Home>

The California Community Colleges received the largest share (\$9.7B) of state higher education spending in 2022-23.

Figure 2: 2022-23 State Higher Education Expenditures



Data Source: 2022-23 California State Budget, Higher Education. <https://ebudget.ca.gov/budget/2022-23EN/#/Agency/6013>

The state is the largest source of higher education funding.⁵⁰ State funding and policy priorities are one of the most significant determinants in shaping the number of Californians who attend the UC and CSU, yet, as the Legislative Analyst’s Office notes, “the state has no consistent approach to budgeting for the universities.”⁵¹ State General Fund investments for each system have increased substantially since the Great Recession with a focus on increasing enrollment to meet demand at the UC and CSU and improving student outcomes. The 2022-23 state budget formalized multi-year funding agreements with the segments, via higher education **compacts with the UC and CSU, and the Roadmap for California’s Future for the CCC**. In exchange for continual progress toward identified goals to improve timely student success rates and improve affordability, public higher education systems are guaranteed ongoing base funding increases – representing a significant shift in the stability of funding provided to higher education in California.



TUITION, FEES, AND FINANCIAL AID

Tuition and Fees

Annual tuition and fees for California residents are currently estimated at \$14,504⁵² at the University of California, \$5,742⁵³ at the California State University, and \$46 per unit⁵⁴ (or \$1,380 for a full-time student taking 30 semester units per year) at the California Community Colleges. The UC Board of Regents and CSU Board of Trustees set systemwide tuition and state law sets the community college enrollment fee. Enrollment fees at the CCC are among the lowest in the nation and have remained flat since 2012.⁵⁵ Prior to 1984, California Community Colleges charged no fee. In 2021, the UC approved a new **cohort tuition model**, citing increased cost pressures for faculty and staff support due to rising student enrollment growth. The new tuition model ties tuition to the cost of inflation, raising tuition gradually between 2023 and 2026, and pairing tuition increases to inflation in future years. The cohort model guarantees that students will pay the same tuition and fee costs each year that they are enrolled for a maximum of six years, ensuring that students won't see increases to their tuition from year to year. **Tuition and fees represent only one element of the total cost of college.** Other nontuition costs include books and supplies, transportation, food, and housing, and represent a significant cost burden for students seeking to address the total cost of attending college. Costs related to room and board, books, supplies, and other expenses can exceed \$20,000 at all three public segments in California.⁵⁶

State Financial Aid

State-funded financial aid exists in the form of grants, scholarships, and fee waivers. California has the most robust, well-funded state financial aid system in the country, investing more than \$3 billion annually on state-based aid programs administered by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC). In addition, there are

institutional aid programs to assist low-income and middle-income students in covering part or all of their expenses at the UC (Blue & Gold Opportunity Plan), CSU (State University Grant), and CCCs (Promise Grant).

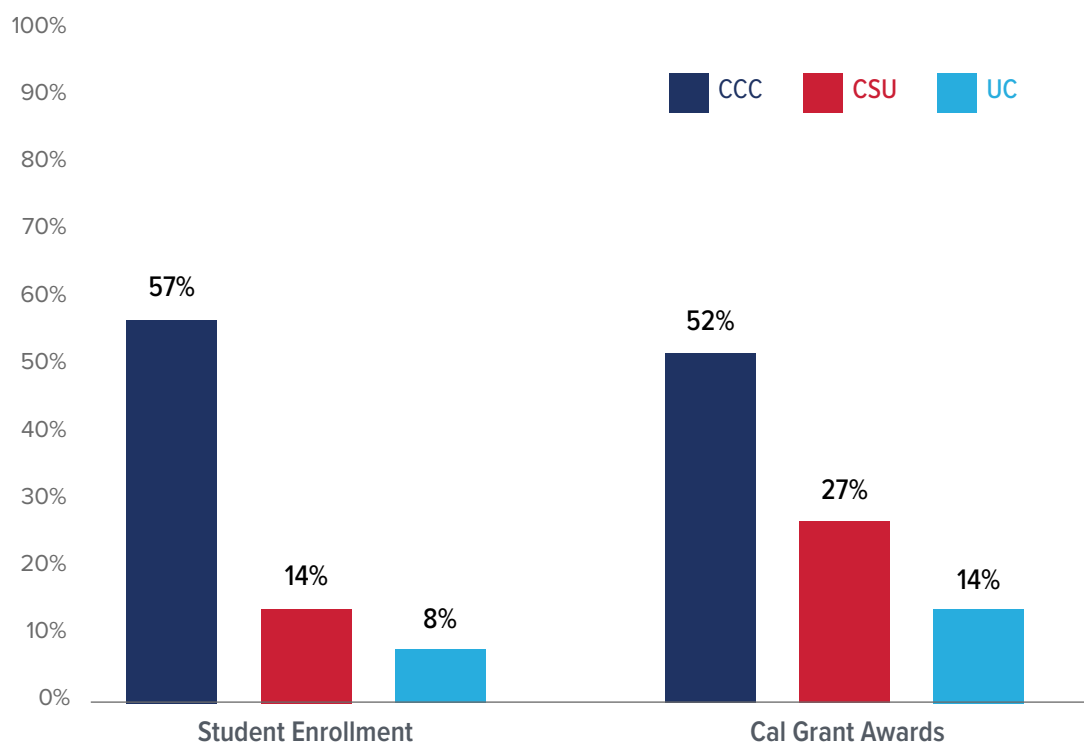
- **Cal Grants:** Need-based aid available for students enrolled at public and private schools. Administered by CSAC; awards are distributed to colleges and universities directly.
- **California College Promise Grant:** Covers tuition for community college students, formerly known as the Board of Governors Fee Waiver. Administered by the CCC Chancellor's Office. Nearly half of all California community college students pay no fees through the California College Promise Grant.⁵⁷
- **Middle Class Scholarship:** Provides undergraduate students at CSU and UC with family incomes of up to \$201,000 a scholarship to help lower tuition and fees by up to 40%.⁵⁸ Administered by CSAC.
- **Student Success Completion Grant:** Supports community college students' full-time enrollment to increase their ability to successfully complete their education in a more timely manner. For students enrolling in 12 units per term, the maximum award is \$1,298 annually. For students enrolling in 15 units per term, the maximum award is \$4,000 annually.⁵⁹ Administered by CSAC.

The state's primary form of student financial aid is the **Cal Grant program**, an entitlement program that currently requires students to meet specified income and GPA criteria to qualify for state aid. Cal Grant awards are distributed to colleges and universities directly, providing assistance to students to help pay primarily for tuition, as well as smaller awards to cover nontuition expenses, such as living expenses, textbooks, and transportation costs. Given that California Community Colleges have lower tuition and fees compared to the University of California and California State University, disproportionately fewer Cal Grant awards are awarded to community college students compared to their overall student enrollment. In recognition of the inequities of the current program, there has been a statewide effort to adopt the [Cal Grant Equity Framework](#), which would simplify the existing Cal Grant programs to expand aid and eligibility to serve more low-income students. In 2021, budget action taken by Governor Newsom and the Legislature **has removed eligibility barriers to accessing a Cal Grant**, such as age and time out of high school for community college students. Prior to this action, access to the Cal Grant was limited to students under the age of 28, and limited access for students who did not enroll in higher education immediately after completing high school. With this expanded eligibility allowing over 150,000 additional community college students to access state financial aid through the Cal Grant, adult learners and nontraditional students were given increased access to state financial aid.

PROMISE GRANTS: In 2017, the Legislature established the California College Promise, with proposals to expand the College Promise Grant moving through the Legislature in the 2022 legislative session. The goals of this program are to go beyond providing free tuition and improve college preparation, access, and completion by providing a framework that incentivizes colleges to adopt best practices in support of student enrollment and completion in order to receive additional funding. Colleges are not required to use California College Promise funds to waive some or all of the \$46 per unit fee for all first-time resident students and can use the funding for other innovative purposes to advance student success goals, such as strengthening student support services to boost outcomes or providing grants to help students cover the costs of childcare, transportation, books, or other expenses.

Though community college students account for 57% of undergraduates, they receive only 52% of Cal Grant Awards.

Figure 3. Student Enrollment and Cal Grant Awards by California Public Higher Education System.



Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2020-2021 Collection Year, 2019-2020 12 Month Enrollments. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/%20use-the-data>. And https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/2021-22_cal_grant_program_offered_awardees.pdf?1652284680

Despite these changes, the current Cal Grant program structure remains overly complex for students and their families to navigate, with separate grant programs to address tuition versus nontuition costs. Students still face outdated eligibility barriers to access a Cal Grant, with GPA verification and submission of high school transcripts as a current requirement for aid preventing students who have been out of high school for a longer period of time from easily accessing financial aid that they are otherwise entitled to. The **2022-23 state budget enacted the principles of the Cal Grant Equity Framework** but made the implementation of the new Cal Grant structure and expanded access contingent upon a future funding appropriation in the 2024-25 budget. Without dedicated resources provided in future state budgets, students will still be left to navigate a complex Cal Grant program that retains GPA verification as a barrier to aid, and risks California leaving available federal aid resources unutilized due to misalignment between Cal Grant and Pell Grant eligibility standards under the updated federal Student Aid Index. Of the approximately 150,000 qualified new students who will not receive a Cal Grant unless dedicated funding is provided, 95,000 are Latinx, 11,000 are Black, 18,000 are Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI), and 92,000 are women.

Current Cal Grant Awards*

Cal Grant A

- Helps pay for tuition and fees at public and independent four-year colleges in California
- Award amounts vary by type of college
- Minimum 3.0 high school GPA or minimum 2.4 college GPA
- Course of study must lead to an associate's or bachelor's degree

Cal Grant B

- Provides a living allowance to help cover living expenses, books, supplies, and transportation
- Assists with tuition and fees after the first year, at a two-or-four-year college
- Living allowance up to \$1,656; tuition award amount varies by college
- Minimum 2.0 GPA

Cal Grant C

- Assists with costs of a technical or career education
- Up to \$1,094 for books, tools and equipment; and up to \$2,462 more for tuition and fees at a school other than a California Community College
- Funding available for up to two-years

*In addition to the entitlement awards, a limited number of competitive Cal Grants exist for students who do not meet the entitlement criteria.

Cal Grant Awards beginning in 2024-25*

Cal Grant 2

- Consolidated aid program for California Community College (CCC) students
- Guarantees a Cal Grant award of \$1,656 for all CCC students with incomes that qualify for a Pell Grant
- Uses same income thresholds as updated Federal Student Aid Index, simplifying aid eligibility
- GPA no longer considered when determining Cal Grant eligibility

Cal Grant 4

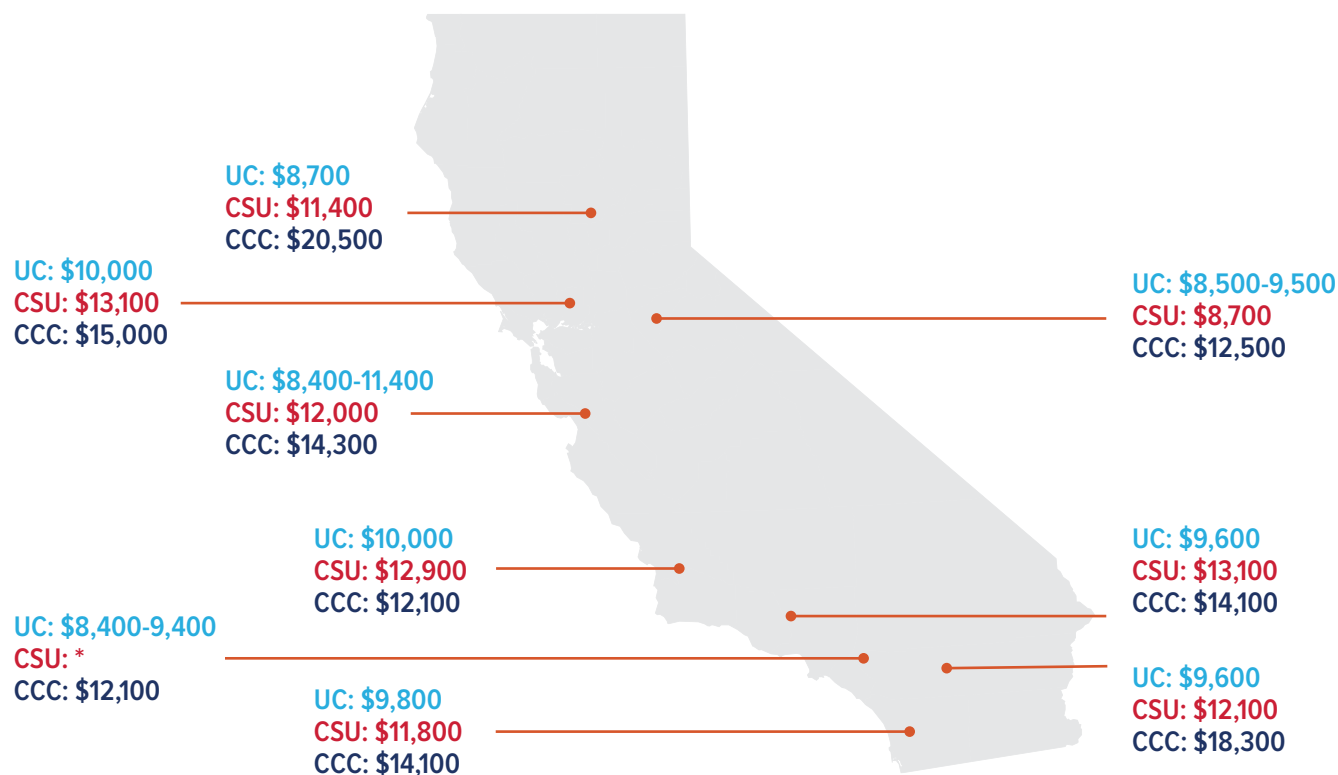
- Consolidated aid program for students attending four-year institutions
- Guarantees a Cal Grant award for all students attending University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and private institutions with incomes that qualify for a Pell Grant, and have a GPA of at least 2.0

*Pending availability of funding and an appropriation in 2024-25 State Budget.

To learn more about the various grant aid programs in the state in greater detail, read [**Financial Aid in California – Ensuring Funding for College Opportunity**](#)

After accounting for the total cost of attendance, which includes tuition, room & board, books, supplies, and other expense, as well as the financial aid available, UC and CSU campuses often have lower net costs for students than the nearby community colleges.

Figure 4. Net Prices for the Undergraduate-Serving UC Campuses and Nearby CSU and Community College Campuses After Subtracting Available Grant Aid.



*We excluded the net prices produced by CSU Fullerton net price calculator because it yielded negative net prices, indicating errors.
Source: TICAS. (2020). What College Costs for Low-Income Californians: 2020. Retrieved from <https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/what-college-costs-for-low-income-californians-2020.pdf>





FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid in California and elsewhere in the country is built atop a foundation of federal support that is critical to millions of low-income students. The most important federal program in support of low-income students is the **Pell Grant**. These grants are awarded federally, and currently utilize an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) calculation to determine the amount of aid that students would be eligible for. In 2022, the Biden administration approved a \$400 annual increase to the maximum Pell Grant award amount, bringing the maximum grant total to \$6,895 beginning in the 2022-23 aid year.⁶⁰ In addition to an increased maximum grant ward amount, the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** will be simplified beginning in October 2022, requiring significantly fewer application questions, shifting away from the EFC to the **Student Aid Index (SAI)**, and restoring access to the Pell Grant to system impacted students.⁶¹ The SAI will more accurately reflect what a student's family is able to pay for college costs, with a minimum SAI of -\$1,500, compared to a minimum EFC of \$0. As federal income thresholds to access financial aid shift in the coming year, California maintains separate eligibility criteria for state financial aid – risking confusion for students and their families in determining their eligibility for multiple different federal and state aid programs available.



UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA

California is home to over 2.7 million undocumented immigrants.⁶² Approximately 133,000 of these individuals are under the age of 18 and attend California public schools,⁶³ and about 139,000 students aged 18 to 24 are enrolled in California higher education institutions.⁶⁴ This includes students at California Community Colleges, the California State University, the University of California, private colleges, and other adult programs. Although no official enrollment numbers exist, it is estimated that 50,000 to 70,000 students attend a community college,⁶⁵ 9,500 attend a CSU, and 4,000 attend a UC.⁶⁶ Accurate counts of undocumented students in the state are difficult to produce due to protections on student privacy and hesitancy in disclosing one's status.

California public higher education institutions are committed to protecting undocumented students and providing a safe space for them to attend and succeed in college. California has also invested significantly in campus-level supports to help ensure that once undocumented students access a California college or university, they have the support and guidance necessary to succeed. All California public colleges and universities have [campus-level resources available to students](#) in some form, though the level to which resources exist vary across campus and system. Under **AB 1645** (Rubio, 2019) each CSU and community college is required to designate a **Dream Resource Liaison** on their campus to provide undocumented students with access to academic and social supports to help them pursue a college education. Under the policy, it is recommended that the UC do the same and all nine undergraduate campuses and UCSF have established on-campus resource centers for undocumented students. Additionally, the **UC Immigrant Legal Services Center** serves nine UC campuses and provides students and staff with legal assistance related to immigration, financial aid, DACA, and other undocumented student needs.

Undocumented students face unique challenges, including a lack of access to federal aid and other barriers due to residency status. Since 2001, California has led the nation in supporting college opportunity for undocumented immigrants through key state policies that facilitate college-going and affordability for undocumented students.

- **Access to In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students** (AB 540, Firebaugh, 2001; AB 2000, Gomez, 2014; SB 68, Lara, 2017).

AB 540 is a landmark policy allowing qualified undocumented students with established California residency to receive in-state tuition rather than significantly higher out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities. Follow-up legislation, AB 2000 and SB 68 further expanded eligibility for undocumented students across the state.

- **California Dream Act** (AB 130 & 131, Cedillo, 2011)

Allows students who meet AB 540 criteria to apply for and receive state and institutional financial aid.

- **California DREAM Loan Program** (SB 1210, Lara, 2014)

Provides AB 540 students with access to DREAM Loans, a subsidized loan program with interest rates that are consistent with those for the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program.

- **California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program** (2019-21 State Budget; AB 540, Limon, 2019)

Provides undocumented students at a California four-year university the opportunity to conduct community service for the campus or community in return for grant aid to be used to cover college expenses.

- **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)**

Established by President Obama in 2012, DACA made it possible for undocumented young adults to receive deferred deportation status, allowing these individuals to live, work, and attend school in the U.S. without fear of deportation. However, DACA was intended to be a temporary solution as undocumented individuals awaited permanent residency pathways. Ten years later, fewer students are eligible to receive DACA status and under current federal rulings, no new applications for DACA may be processed. In August of 2022, the Department of Homeland Security released their [decision](#) on DACA regulations with a promise to preserve and fortify DACA. With this decision, DACA will be codified into official federal regulation. This is an attempt to protect the policy from future litigation and challenges and a step forward in protecting DACA recipients. This ruling is not official unfortunately and does not protect DACA from existing litigation. Due to the Texas/5th Circuit case challenging DACA's legality, new applications still may not be processed and the fate of DACA remains unknown. Without a permanent solution, future generations of undocumented students will no longer be able to continue to live and work in the United States without fear of deportation.

To learn more about undocumented students in California and the key policies listed here, read the report [In Their Voices: Undocumented in California Public Colleges and Universities](#)



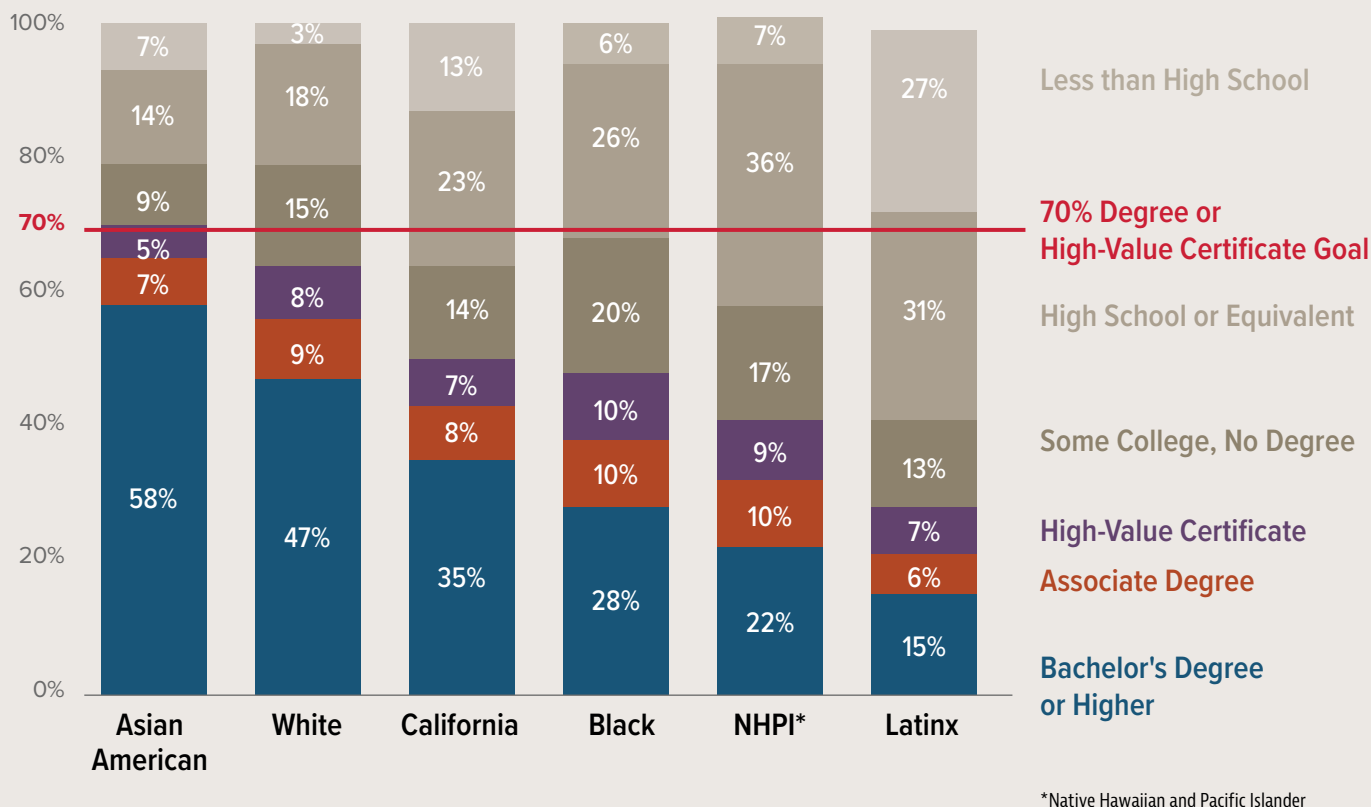
Courtesy of University of California, Davis

STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

The future of California – and our economic standing in the world - will be defined by whether we ensure better educational opportunity for the state’s increasingly diverse student population and address longstanding racial disparities in college enrollment and completion (see Figure 5). While higher education has been a key driver of California's economic growth, it has not been keeping pace with the growing demand for a college education and skilled workers. Ensuring that at least 60 percent of the state’s workforce holds a college credential, and that at least 60 percent of the state’s Latinx, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) residents hold a college credential will generate an additional [2.5 million credentials over the coming decade, and net almost \\$63 billion in state revenue over the coming decade.](#)

While just over one-third of Californians have a bachelor's degree or higher, there is significant variation by racial/ethnic background. Only 15% of Latinx Californians, ages 25-64, hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

Figure 5. Educational Attainment, Californians ages 25-64.



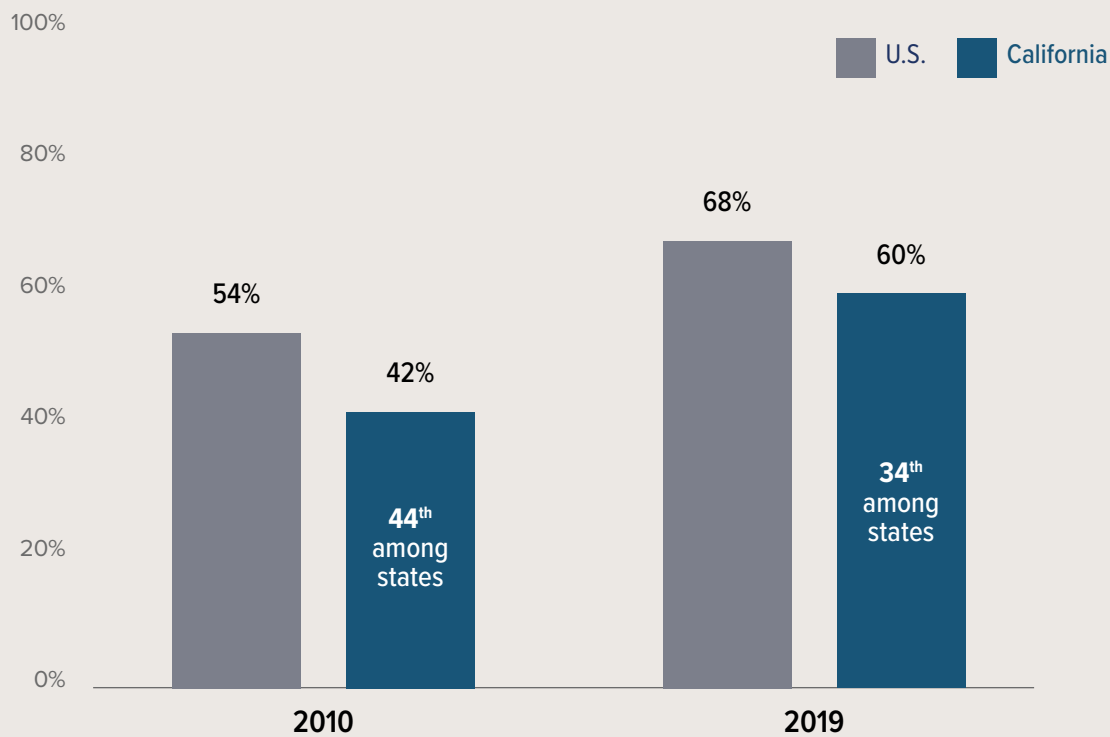
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2016-2020 Public Use Microdata Sample



Despite the widespread recognition in California of the importance and value of a college education, educational attainment levels were stagnant in California, while other nations and states moved aggressively to increase college attainment, particularly among younger adults.⁶⁷ Increases in funding for the UC and CSU over the last few years have allowed for increased enrollment of both first-time freshmen and community college transfer students, which, combined with increased student persistence and graduation rates, have improved the outlook for closing the degree gap. This higher enrollment and completion **has led to improvement in bachelor's degrees awarded per person over the last decade, but California still ranks fairly low in degrees awarded per person** (see Figure 6).

Over the last decade, California has improved but still ranks fairly low in degrees awarded per person.

Figure 6. Number of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded Per Population Ages 18-24.

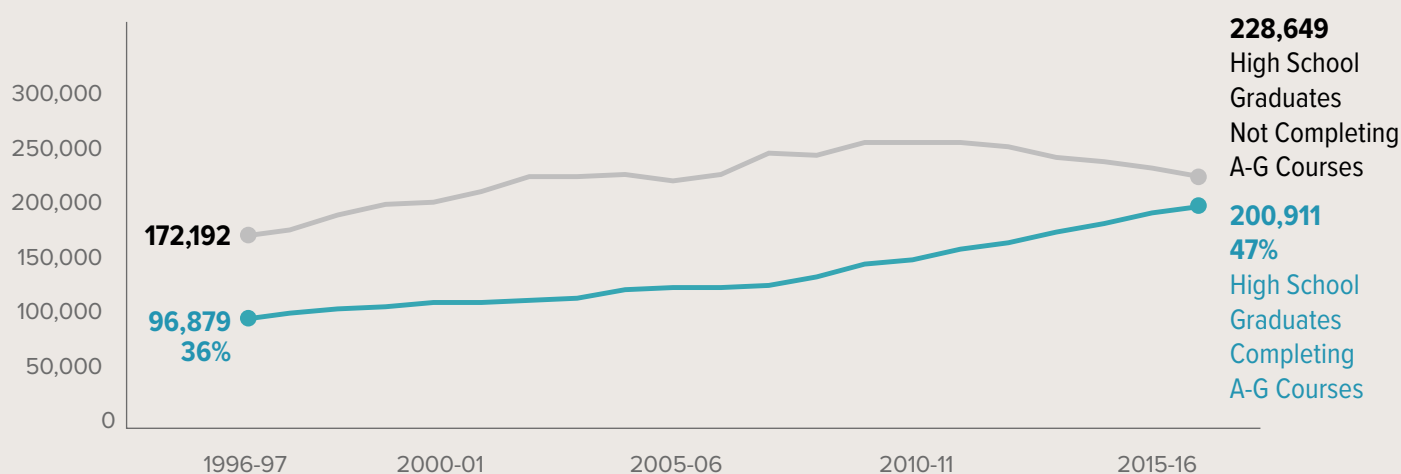


Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics (2011 version for 2009-10 and 2020 version for 2018-19) and U.S. Census Bureau. Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Selected Age Groups by Sex.

About half of California's high school graduates are now completing the sequence of courses known as A-G that are required for admission to the UC and CSU (see Figure 7). The share of high school graduates completing A-G courses has been steadily increasing over the last decade, after remaining fairly constant, at about one-third of graduates, for many years. This is occurring in the context of unchanged policies about what share of graduates should be eligible for freshman admission to the state's public universities.

About half of California's high school graduates are completing the A-G requirements, with the increase in share occurring in the last decade.

Figure 7. California High School Graduates with UC/CSU Required Courses Completed, 1996-97 to 2016-17.

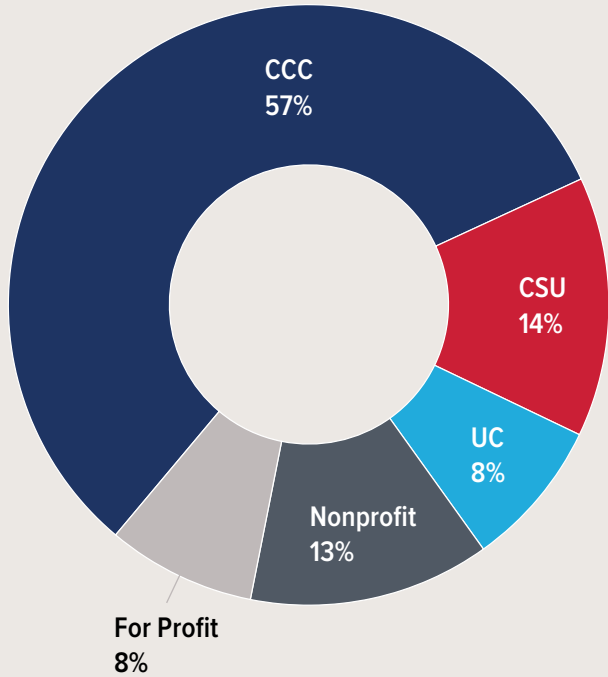


Data Source: California Department of Education Data Reporting Office, One-year Graduation Data

California Community Colleges play a critical role in providing access to higher education for over two million Californians seeking an educational foundation that will prepare them to transfer to a four-year university or to participate in the workforce (Figure 8). A critical feature of the California Master Plan for Higher Education is its focus on an alternative pathway to the UC and CSU through transferring from a community college. Policymakers envisioned the transfer process as a means to provide efficient access to the baccalaureate, but transfer rates today are low.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of California undergraduates are enrolled in the California Community Colleges.

Figure 8. Undergraduate Enrollment by Higher Education Sector.



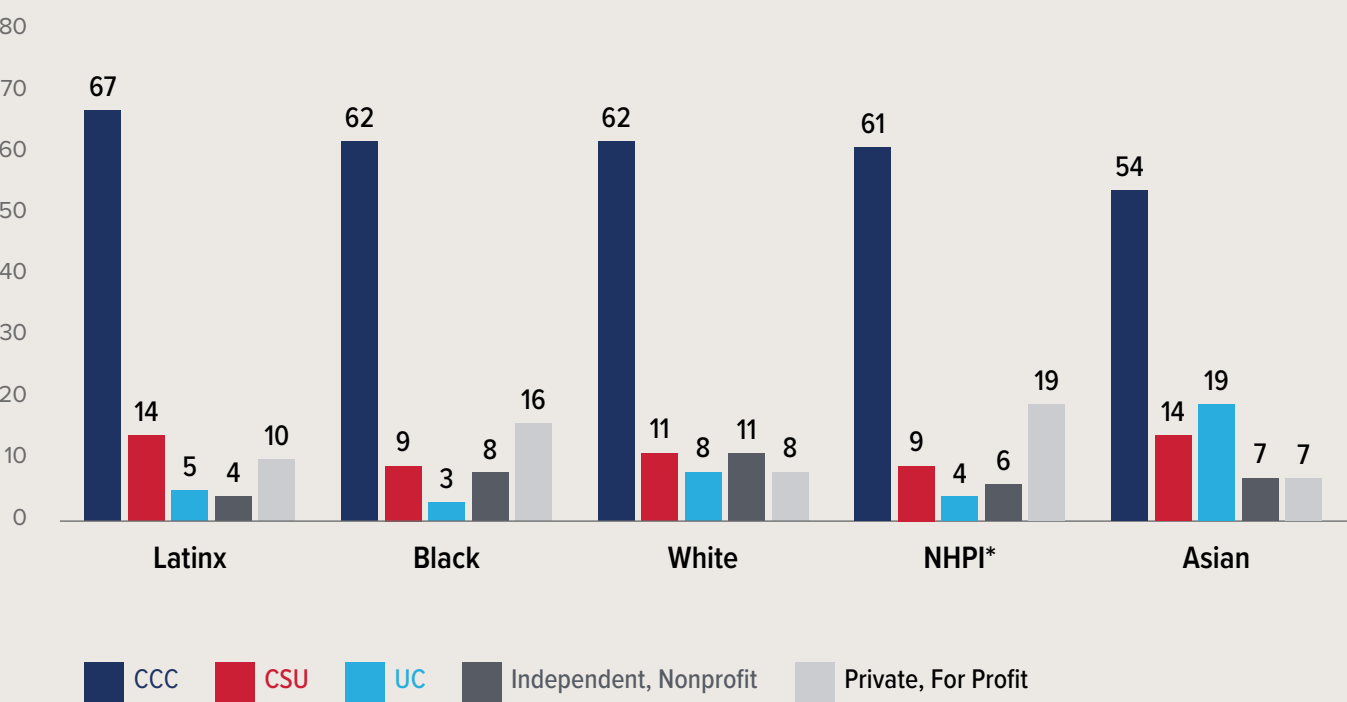
Note: These numbers exclude Ashford University's reported enrollment totals due to potentially inaccurate data and sector misclassification.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2020-2021 Collection Year, 2019-2020 12 Month Enrollments. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/%20use-the-data>.

California’s large and growing Latinx population has historically been underrepresented at the state’s public universities, and Black students are also underrepresented in both university systems (see Figure 9). The state’s Black students are also far more likely than other students to enroll in private, for-profit institutions, which have higher costs and lower completion rates, leaving many students with loan debt and a lower return on their investment.⁶⁸

More than half of first-time students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds in the state enrolled in the California Community Colleges.

Figure 9. California Freshmen Enrollment by Higher Education Sector.



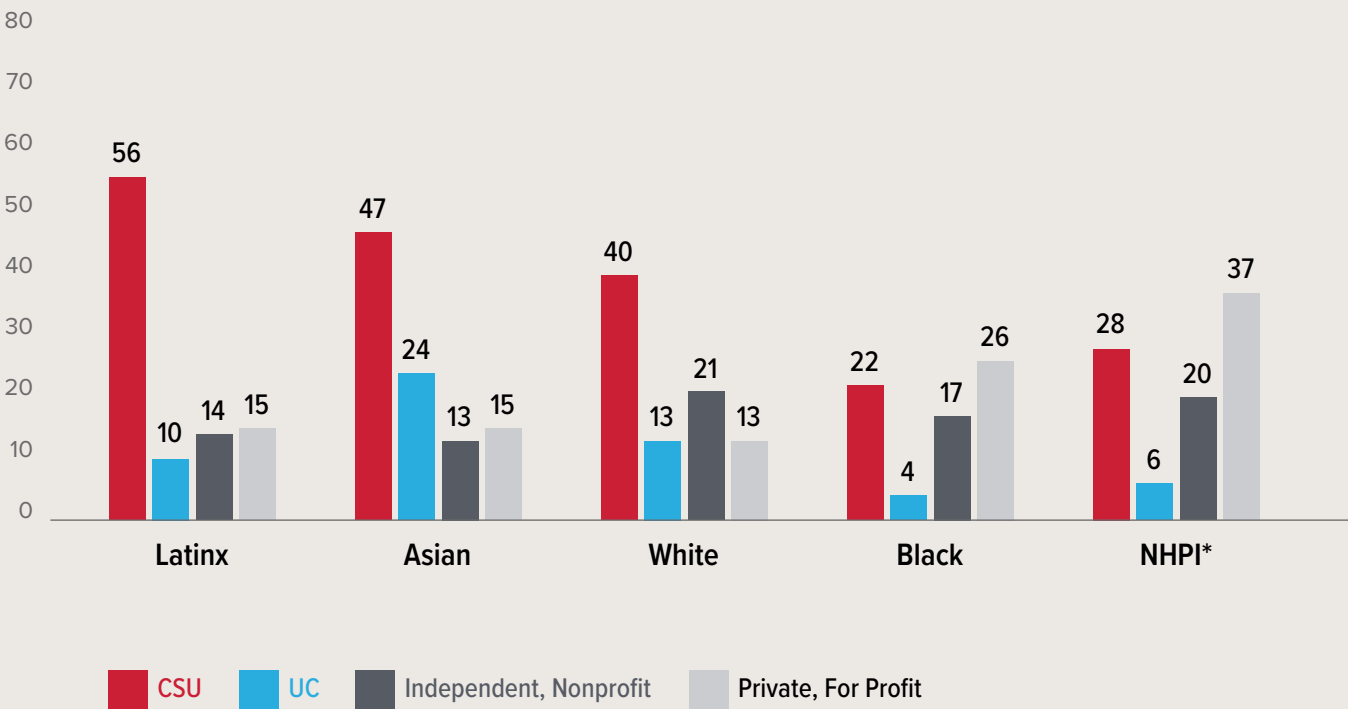
*Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

Note: These numbers exclude Ashford University's reported enrollment totals due to potentially inaccurate data and sector misclassification.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2020-2021 Collection Year, 2019-2020 12 Month Enrollments. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/%20use-the-data>

More Black transfer students enroll in a private, for-profit college than in the CSU.

Figure 10. California Transfer Student Enrollment by Higher Education Sector.



*Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

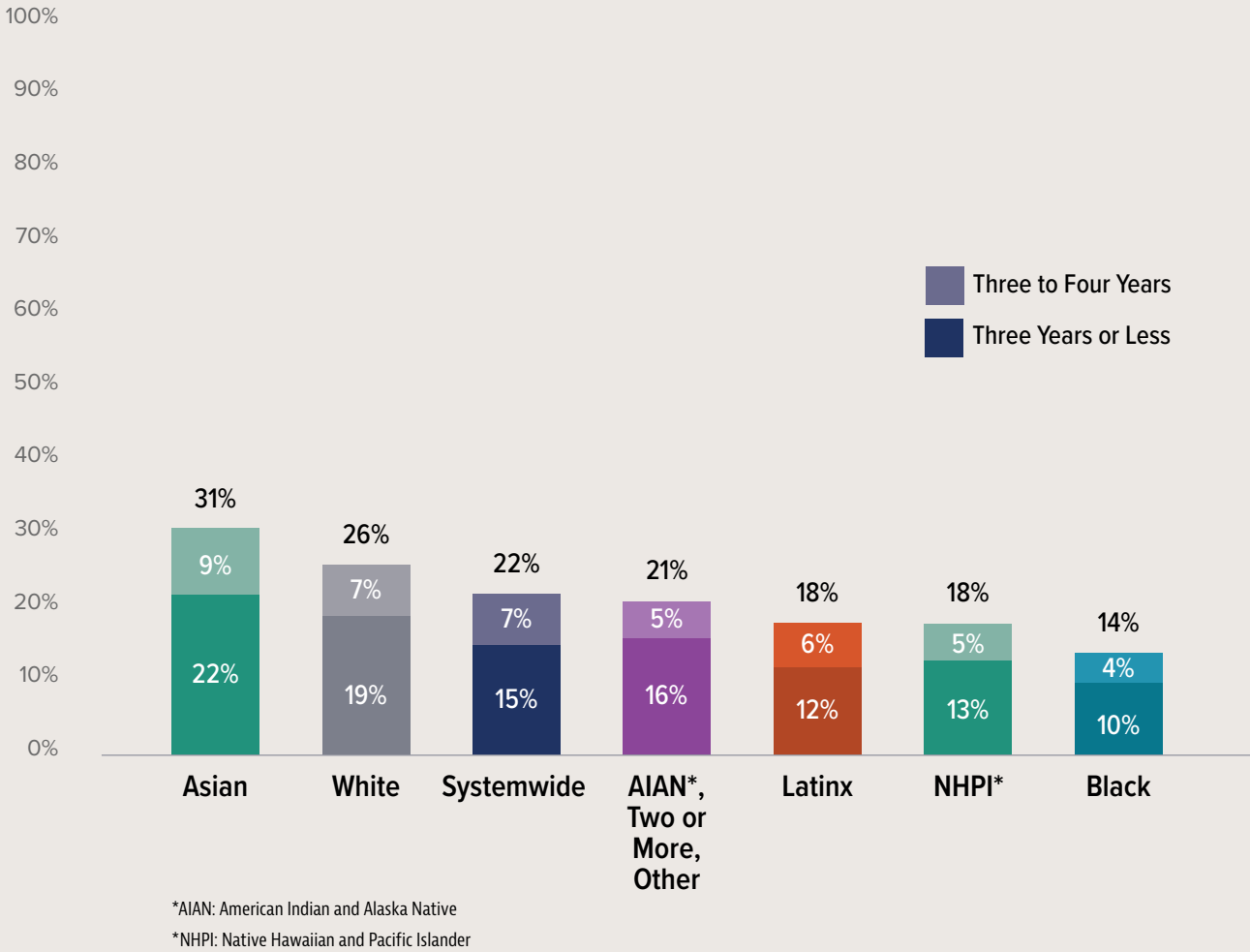
Note: These numbers exclude Ashford University's reported enrollment totals due to potentially inaccurate data and sector misclassification.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2020-2021 Collection Year, 2019-2020 12 Month Enrollments. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/%20use-the-data>

Gaps in support for students are evident in college graduation rates, but large variations are also seen in the graduation rates at the various higher education systems in California. As already noted, the California Community Colleges enroll the majority of California’s college students, but too few are supported to graduate. **That means fewer than one in four students earned an award or certificate within four years of enrolling in college.**

Systemwide, only 22% of students enrolling in the California Community Colleges are supported to earn a degree or certificate within four years, and only 14% of Black students, and 18% of Latinx and NHPI students are supported to graduate within four years.

Figure 11. Four-Year Completion Rates for Students Enrolling in 2015-16 at the California Community Colleges.

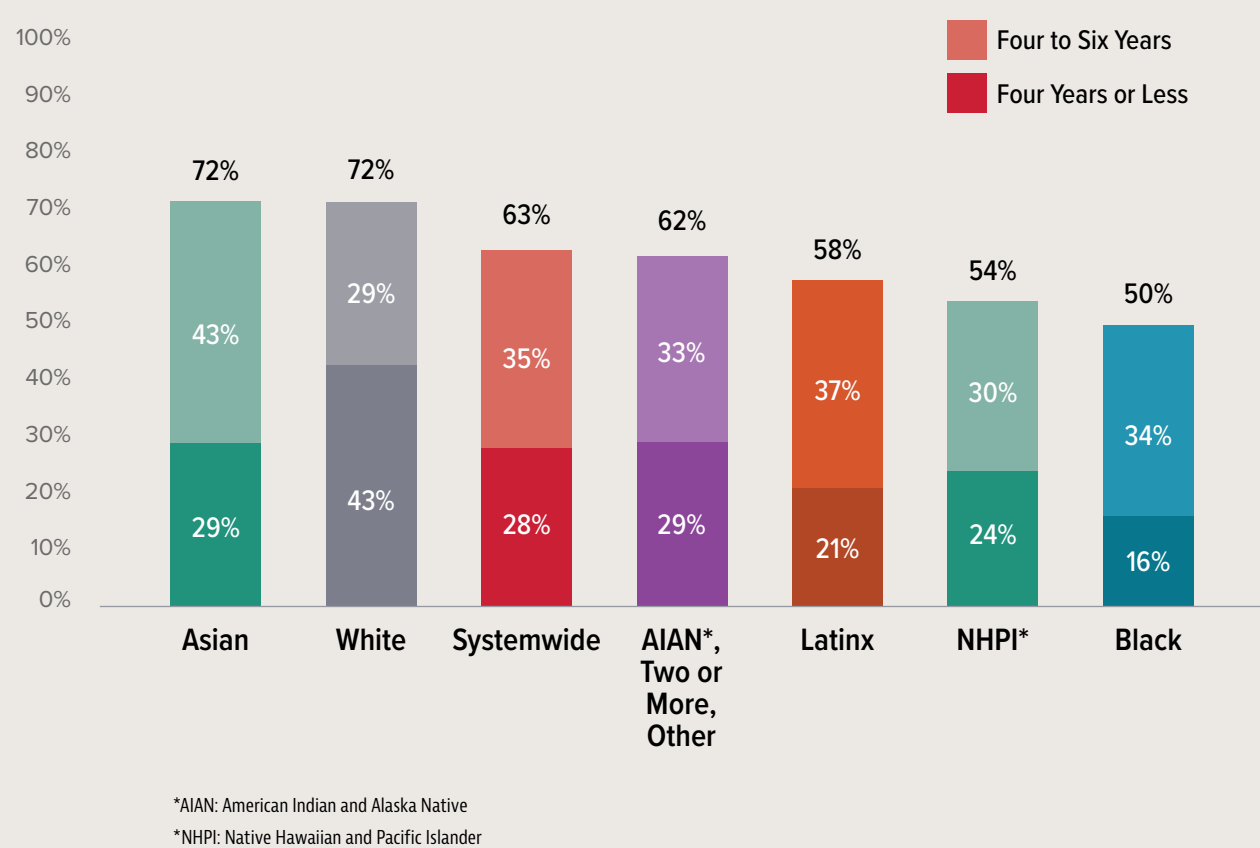


Data Source: CA Community College Chancellor's Office. <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Student-Success-Metrics-Cohort-View>

Graduation rates for first-time freshmen at the CSU have risen over the past several years, with 28% of first-time, full-time freshmen graduating in four years or less, and a further 35% graduating by the end of their sixth year. As Figure 12 makes clear, however, there are substantial gaps in support for students by race/ethnicity. While 43% of white first-time, full-time freshmen graduated in four years, only 16% of Black students, 21% of Latinx students, and 24% of NHPI students received the support needed to complete their bachelor's degrees on time.

63% of students enrolling in the CSU system in the fall of 2015 graduated within six years. Among Black students, only half were supported to earn their bachelor’s degrees in this timeframe.

Figure 12. Six-Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for Students Enrolling as Full-Time Freshmen in the Cal State University, Fall 2015

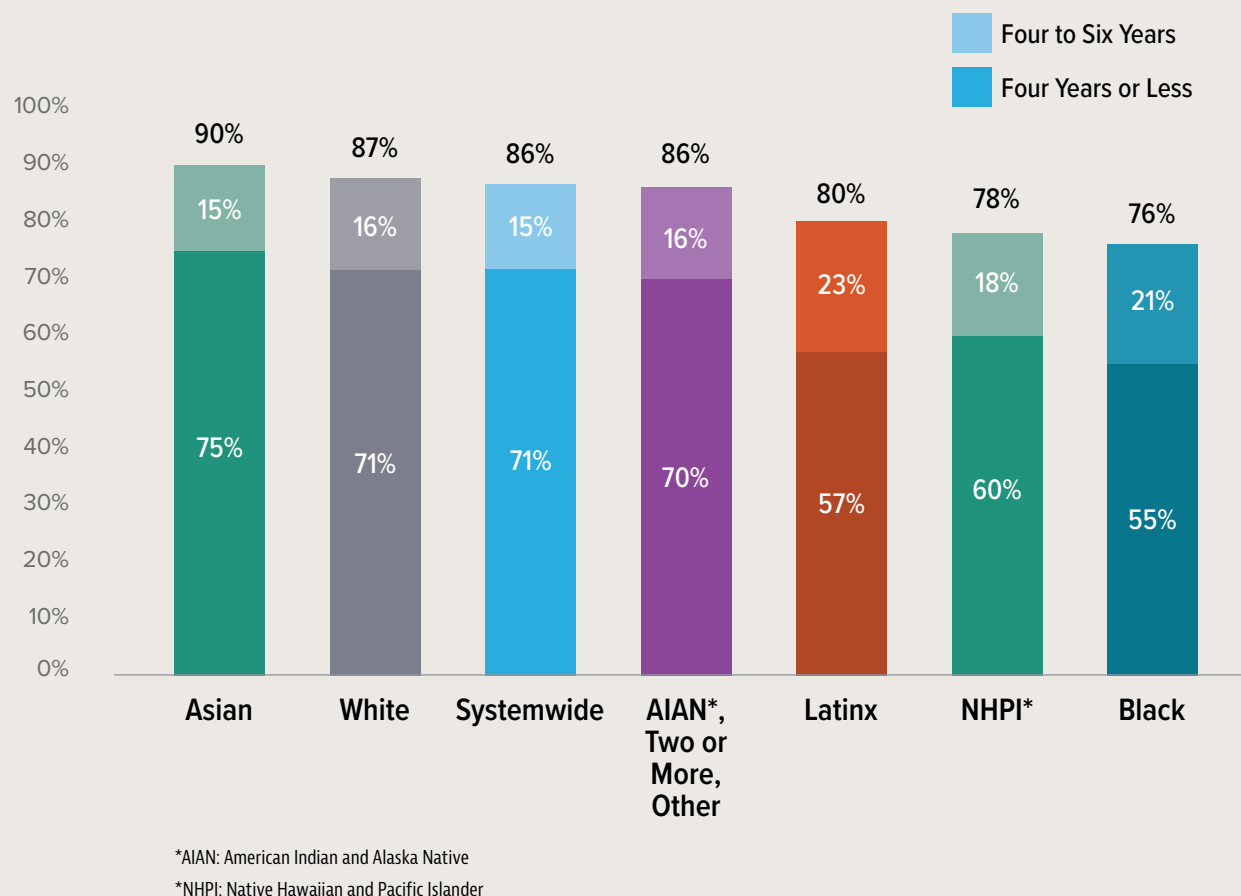


Data Source: CSU Live Enrollment Portal Collection Year: 2021 https://tableau.calstate.edu/views/GraduationRatesPopulationPyramidPrototype_liveversion/SummaryOverview?iframeSizedToWindow=true&%3Aembed=y&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3AshowVizHome=no

Graduation rates at the UC are the highest among any of the public segments, with 71% of students graduating in four years of less, and a further 15% earning their bachelor's degrees by the end of their sixth year. Again, however, substantial gaps in support are apparent when the data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity. While 75% of white freshmen and 80% of Asian American freshmen are supported to earn their degrees in four years, only 61% of their Black classmates and 63% of their Latinx classmates are supported to do the same.

The UC has the highest graduation rates for any of California's public higher education systems, but Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students are not receiving the support they need to ensure they graduate in four or six years at the same rate as their peers.

Figure 13. Six-Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity for Students Enrolling as Freshmen in the University of California, Fall 2015



Data Source: UCOP Info center Collection Year: 2021 <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/about-us/information-center/ug-outcomes>



Courtesy of College of the Sequoias Marketing Office

ACTIONS TO INCREASE GRADUATES AND KEEP CALIFORNIA'S ECONOMY STRONG



Commit to a Statewide Attainment Goal and Eliminate Racial Equity Gaps.

If California is to remain competitive, maintain its economic standing as the fifth largest economy in the world, and meet workforce needs, the state must ensure that college preparation and opportunity are provided in a more equitable way, and must close racial/ethnic gaps in college attainment while ensuring that 60% of residents in every racial/ethnic group hold a college credential by 2030. Governor Newsom has called for a 70% attainment goal. However, the goal has not been statutorily adopted nor does it articulate a specific goal for closing racial/equity gaps.



Adopt an actionable blueprint to achieve California's attainment and racial equity goals, serve eligible students and increase the number of Californians with a degree.

The state's outdated 58-year-old Master Plan has eligibility requirements that do not fit the 21st century or the diversity of our state. This results in constrained access to our public four-year universities and disproportionately affects low-income and underrepresented students who are the least likely to have options for relocating to attend distant campuses. Policymakers should revise and expand eligibility

requirements aligned with statewide goals and workforce needs but also adopt a new blueprint/plan to meet these needs. This includes, increasing the percentage of high school graduates, growing the share of graduates who meet UC and CSU eligibility, engaging adult workers with some college but no degree, increasing the number of transfer students enrolling in four-year institutions, and increasing degree production at our public and private independent universities. Linking ongoing state funding for higher education segments—via the Higher Education Compacts for the UC and CSU and the Roadmap for California’s Future for community colleges—in exchange for demonstrated progress to improving student outcomes will be instrumental in meeting the state’s 70% college attainment goal.



Establish a statewide higher education coordinating entity.

Addressing baccalaureate capacity and production in California requires deep collaboration across the state’s segmented K-12 and higher education systems and a level of coordination that is impossible to achieve without an entity to lead the efforts. The California Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education is a valuable step, bringing together the leaders of the K-12, postsecondary, and business sectors to provide advice to the administration but is an insufficient mechanism for the detailed planning and implementation of the structural and policy changes required to meet the broad public interest of higher education and all California students rather than the needs of an individual system.



Fully fund equitable Cal Grant reform and ensure aid to all financially needy students.

Despite recent changes made to expand eligibility and remove barriers to access a Cal Grant, the current Cal Grant program structure remains overly complex for students and their families to navigate and leaves out too many financially needy students from aid. The 2022-23 state budget enacted the principles of the Cal Grant Equity Framework, which would simplify the existing Cal Grant programs and expand aid and eligibility to serve more low-income students, but made the implementation of the new Cal Grant structure and expanded access contingent upon a future funding. Policymakers must remain committed to fully adopting the framework to help serve more students and provide more support to ensure higher education remains accessible.



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