



Vision for Success

STRENGTHENING THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO MEET CALIFORNIA'S NEEDS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With low tuition and a longstanding policy of full and open access, the CCCs are designed around a remarkable idea: that higher education should be available to everyone. The CCCs are equally remarkable for their versatility. They are the state's primary entry point into collegiate degree programs, the primary system for delivering career technical education and workforce training, a major provider of adult education, apprenticeship, and English as a Second Language courses, and a source of lifelong learning opportunities for California's diverse communities.

The CCCs have made significant strides in the last five years through sustained reform efforts in the areas of student success, transfer, and career technical education. The colleges are now well-poised to build on this success and accelerate the pace of improvement.

At the same time, the CCCs face very serious challenges today:



Most students who enter a community college never complete a degree or certificate or transfer to a 4-year university. Researchers project that California's public higher education system is not producing nearly enough educated graduates to meet future workforce needs.



CCC students who do reach a defined educational goal such as a degree or transfer take a long time to do so, often accumulating many excess course credits along the way.



Older and working CCC students are often left behind in the system, lacking services and financial aid that suit their needs.



CCCs are more expensive than they appear—both to students and taxpayers—because of slow time-to-completion and a lack of financial aid to cover students' living expenses.



Serious and stubborn achievement gaps persist across the CCCs and high-need regions of the state are not served equitably.

LOOKING AHEAD:

GOALS FOR MEETING CALIFORNIA'S NEEDS

The success of California's broader system of higher education and workforce development stands or falls with the CCCs. To meet California's needs, the CCC system should strive to achieve the following goals by 2022:

- Increase by at least 20 percent the number of CCC students annually who acquire associates degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job.
- Increase by 35 percent the number of CCC students transferring annually to a UC or CSU.
- Decrease the average number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate's degrees, from approximately 87 total units (the most recent system-wide average) to 79 total units—the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure.
- Increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 60 percent to an improved rate of 69 percent—the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure.
- Reduce equity gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups, with the goal of cutting achievement gaps by 40 percent within 5 years and fully closing those achievement gaps within 10 years.
- Reduce regional achievement gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults, with the ultimate goal of fully closing regional achievement gaps within 10 years.

In order to reach the ambitious system-wide goals proposed above, each college will need to do its part. Many colleges have already set goals as part of a system-wide or local effort and do not need to start from scratch—they should continue to use their goals as planned. However, every college should ensure their goals are aligned with the systemwide priorities and goals above, to ensure that the entire system is moving in a consistent direction.