



# Californians & Higher Education

Mark Baldassare Dean Bonner David Kordus Lunna Lopes

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**PPIC**

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## CONTACT

Linda Strean 415-291-4412  
Serina Correa 415-291-4417

## News Release

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### PPIC STATEWIDE SURVEY: CALIFORNIANS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

## Most See College Affordability as Big Problem

### MAJORITIES FAVOR A HIGHER EDUCATION CONSTRUCTION BOND, FEWER SUPPORT RAISING TAXES OR STUDENT FEES

SAN FRANCISCO, December 8, 2016—Most Californians say the overall affordability of the state's public colleges and universities is a big problem, while few say the same about the quality of education. These are among the key findings of a survey on the state's public higher education system released today by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

As the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) consider raising tuition for the next academic year, 57 percent of residents say affordability is a big problem (28% somewhat of a problem, 13% not much of a problem). At least half of adults across political, income, and age groups see affordability as a big problem. When asked to name the most important issue facing the state's public colleges and universities, 46 percent of Californians mention affordability, cost, or student tuition and fees. All other issues were mentioned by less than 10 percent of adults.

In contrast, just 15 percent of Californians say the quality of higher education is a big problem. Across political, age, racial/ethnic, and income groups, 25 percent or fewer say quality is a big problem.

While most Californians see cost as an obstacle to getting a college education, there are differences of opinion about the accessibility of loans and financial aid. A strong majority of adults (72%) agree with the statement that the price of a college education keeps students who are qualified and motivated from going to college. This is a view held by solid majorities across parties, regions, and racial/ethnic, age, education, and income groups.

Yet 58 percent agree that almost anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans or financial aid (39% disagree). Adults with annual incomes below \$40,000 (67%) are much more likely than those with higher incomes (50%) to agree. Californians with less education are more likely than those with more education to say that anyone who needs aid can get it (68% high school or less, 54% some college, 49% college graduates). An overwhelming majority of adults (78%) agree with the statement that students have to borrow too much money to pay for a college education.

How could the government make higher education more affordable? Solid majorities of adults (73%) and likely voters (62%) favor increasing government funding to make community college free. Californians are even more supportive of increasing government funding for scholarships and grants for students attending four-year colleges and universities: 82 percent of adults and 80 percent of likely voters are in favor.

"With many Californians saying that affordability is the most important problem facing public higher education, there is overwhelming support for free community college and for expanding student scholarships," said Mark Baldassare, PPIC president and CEO.

## Most Say Higher Education Lacks Adequate State Funding

Most adults (67%) say state funding for California's colleges and universities is inadequate, while far fewer say there is more than enough (10%) or just enough (19%) funding. Yet only 13 percent say that increased state funding alone will significantly improve the higher education system. Half (49%) say that both increasing state funding and using existing funds more wisely would significantly improve the system, and 36 percent say wiser use of existing funds alone would do so. Notably, 42 percent of those who attended a community college or a CSU school say that existing funds need to be used more wisely, compared to just 22 percent of those who attended UC.

Shortly after California voters approved Proposition 51, a bond measure to pay for construction projects for K–12 and community colleges, the survey asked about the idea of a similar measure to fund higher education construction projects. Solid majorities of adults (65%) and likely voters (60%) say they would vote yes.

Support is much lower for two other ways to raise revenue for higher education. When Californians are asked if they would be willing to pay higher taxes to increase funding for the system, 48 percent of adults and 48 percent of likely voters say yes, while 50 percent in each group say no. Californians are even less likely to support raising student fees: only 23 percent of adults and 21 percent of likely voters are in favor.

"With two in three Californians saying that the public higher education system needs more state funding today, solid majorities support a state bond," Baldassare said. "Half support a tax hike and one in four favor a student fee increase."

Another way to raise funding is to increase the number of out-of-state students who pay higher tuition. Adults are divided on this idea (46% yes, 50% no). Support drops significantly if this option would mean that fewer California students are admitted: just 21 percent of adults are in favor.

## State Leaders' Approval Ratings Rise as Budget, Tuition Stabilize

Governor Brown has an overall job approval rating of 57 percent among adults and 59 percent among likely voters. Fewer (45% adults, 41% likely voters) approve of how the governor is handling the state's public college and university system. However, his rating in this area is much higher than when PPIC last asked about this in 2011 (31% adults, 29% likely voters approved). The legislature has an overall job approval rating today of 49 percent among adults and 45 percent among likely voters. Approval of the legislature's handling of higher education is also lower (42% adults, 35% likely voters) than its overall rating but higher today than it was in 2011 (21% adults, 14% likely voters).

Baldassare summed up: "Governor Brown and the California Legislature have seen their approval ratings rise as the state's budget situation and student tuition costs have stabilized in recent years."

## High Marks for Colleges, Universities—but Also Concerns

Most Californians give positive ratings to each branch of the higher education system, the California Community Colleges (15% excellent, 51% good), UC (14% excellent, 51% good), and CSU (10% excellent, 56% good). Notably, the proportion of Californians who give the CSU system a positive rating has increased 10 points since PPIC's last higher education survey in 2011. UC's rating increased by a more modest 6 points and the community college rating is about the same. Among Californians who attended a public college or university, strong majorities say the branch of the system they attended is doing a good to excellent job (69% community college, 67% CSU, 71% UC).

While Californians are generally positive about the quality of their colleges and universities, they also have concerns about these institutions.

- **Admission to UC:** An overwhelming majority of residents are concerned (38% very concerned, 38% somewhat concerned) about the difficulty state high school students face in gaining admission to one of the UC campuses. More than two-thirds of residents across all regions, parties, and demographic groups say they are concerned, with African Americans far more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to say they are very concerned.
- **CSU's four-year graduation rate:** Most adults are concerned (24% very, 30% somewhat) about the share of students who graduate within four years from CSU.
- **Community college transfers:** About half of adults are concerned (21% very, 31% somewhat) about the share of students who successfully transfer from the state's community colleges to a four-year degree program. Californians value the role of community colleges in preparing students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities: 78 percent say it is very important. At the same time, Californians value another of the community colleges' key roles: 78 percent say it is very important that the colleges include career technical, or vocational, education.

## Diversity Viewed as Very Important

Asked about the value of student diversity, 61 percent of adults say it is very important for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body, while 20 percent say it is not important. Similarly, 61 percent of adults say it is very important for these institutions to have an economically diverse student body (15% not important).

## Californians Divided on the Value of a College Education

How important is a college education to success in today's economy? Opinions are split evenly among Californians, with 49 percent saying it is necessary to succeed and 49 percent saying there are many ways to succeed in today's work world without a college education. There are notable splits among demographic groups on this question. Solid majorities of adults with no college education (60%) and those with annual incomes below \$40,000 (60%) say college is necessary to succeed. Majorities of those with more education and higher incomes say there are many ways to succeed without college (56% of those with at least some college, 57% with incomes of \$40,000 or more). Latinos (67%) are much more likely than whites (36%) to say college is necessary. About half of African Americans (52%) and Asian Americans (49%) also express this view.

Asked how prepared students are for college-level work, a strong majority of adults (67%) say that many students require basic skills and remedial education.

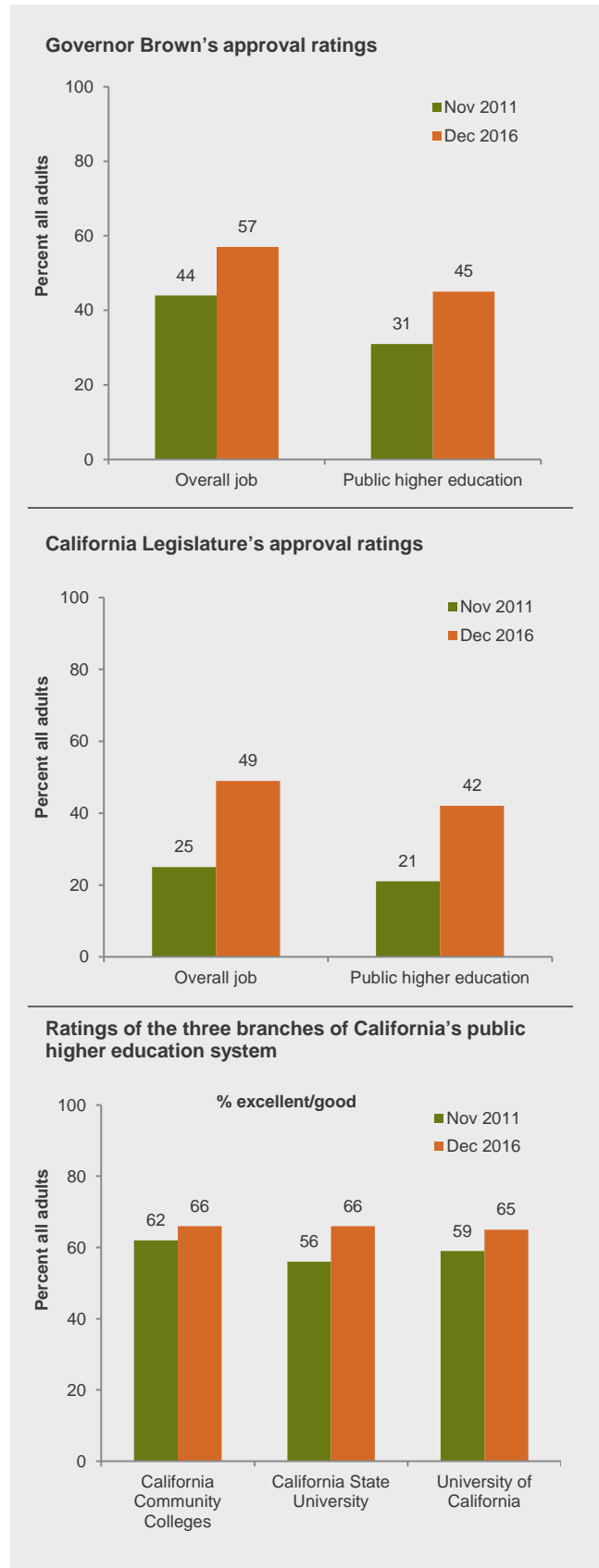
## Nearly All Say Higher Education System Is Important to State's Future

At the same time, nearly all Californians say the state's higher education system is important (77% very, 19% somewhat) to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years. Yet fewer than half (45%) recognize that the state will face a shortage of the college-educated residents needed for the jobs of the future, as PPIC research has shown. A majority say they have confidence (16% a great deal, 43% some) in the state government to plan for the future of higher education, while 40 percent have little or none.

# Perceptions of Public Higher Education

## Key Findings

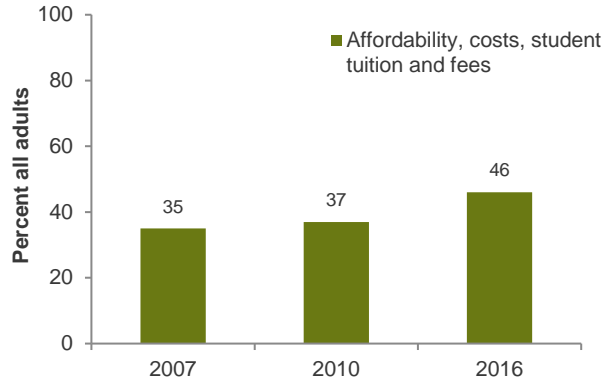
- When asked to name the most important issue facing California’s public colleges and universities, 46 percent of Californians mention affordability. Californians are divided on whether the state’s public higher education system is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction (45% each). *(page 7)*
- Approximately one in six Californians (15%) say the quality of education in California’s public colleges and universities is a big problem, while a majority (57%) see affordability as a big problem. *(page 8)*
- Approval of the way Governor Brown and the California Legislature are handling the state’s public higher education system has increased sharply since we last asked about this in 2011. *(page 9)*
- Two-thirds of Californians give excellent or good ratings to the California Community Colleges system (66%), the California State University system (66%), and the University of California system (65%). CSU approval has increased the most since 2011, when we last asked this question. Many Californians are unfamiliar with some basic facts about the three systems. *(pages 10, 11)*
- About half of adults are very or somewhat concerned about the transfer rate at California’s community colleges (52%) and the graduation rate in the CSU system (54%). Three in four adults (76%) are concerned about the difficulty of admittance to the UC system. *(pages 11, 12)*
- Sixty-seven percent of adults say the level of state funding for public higher education is not enough. One in eight adults say that more funding alone will improve higher education, while about half (49%) say that both more funding and better use of existing funds are needed. *(page 13)*



## Most Important Issue and Overall Direction

When asked to name the most important issue facing California’s public colleges and universities today, 46 percent of adults mention affordability, cost, or student tuition and fees. All other topics are mentioned by less than one in ten adults, including not enough government funding (5%); administrative costs, bureaucracy, and waste (4%); overall accessibility (4%); and political views (3%). Affordability and cost is also the most important issue among likely voters (52%) and leads other topic areas by wide margins across political parties and regions of the state, as well as across age, education, gender, income, and racial/ethnic groups. Californians named affordability and cost as the most important issue in public higher education when we first asked this open-ended question in our 2007 PPIC Statewide Survey on higher education, as well as when it was last asked in November 2010. Today, affordability and cost are mentioned more often than in the earlier PPIC surveys.

**Californians name affordability the most important issue in public higher education**



When asked about the public higher education system overall, 45 percent say it is going in the right direction and 45 percent say it is going in the wrong direction. Responses were much more negative when we last asked this question in the 2011 PPIC survey on higher education (28% right direction, 62% wrong direction). Today, Democrats, Latinos, those with annual incomes under \$40,000, and non-college educated adults are more likely than others to say it is going in the right direction.

**“Thinking about the public higher education system overall in California today, do you think it is generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?”**

		Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know
All adults		45%	45%	10%
Likely voters		38	54	9
Party	Democrats	49	40	11
	Republicans	21	72	7
	Independents	33	55	11
Household income	Under \$40,000	55	36	10
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	39	52	10
	\$80,000 or more	37	54	9
Race/Ethnicity	African Americans	42	51	6
	Asian Americans	41	36	23
	Latinos	59	32	8
	Whites	35	57	7
Age	18–34	47	42	10
	35–54	45	45	10
	55 and older	42	49	10

## Quality and Affordability of Public Higher Education

With tuition increases in two of the three branches of California’s public higher education system under discussion, most Californians are concerned about the overall affordability of education; far fewer express concern about the overall quality of education in California’s public colleges and universities. Fifty-seven percent of adults say the overall affordability of public higher education is a big problem. Today, perceptions of affordability are similar to PPIC surveys in December 2014 (59%), November 2011 (61%), and October 2007 (53%). By contrast, 15 percent of adults say the quality of higher education is a big problem, down somewhat from 2014 (25%) and 2011 (24%), but similar to 2007 (18%). Concern about the quality of education in California’s public K–12 schools is much more widespread: in April, 40 percent of adults and 53 percent of likely voters rated it as a big problem.

**“How about the overall \_\_\_\_\_ of education in California’s public colleges and universities today? Is it a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem?”**

<i>All adults</i>	Quality	Affordability
Big problem	15%	57%
Somewhat of a problem	35	28
Not much of a problem	45	13
Don’t know	4	2

The affordability of public higher education is rated as a big problem by half or more across political, income, and age groups, while concern is lower among the non-college educated (47%). African Americans (76%) and whites (70%) are more likely than Asian Americans (45%) and Latinos (44%) to hold this view.

When it comes to the quality of public higher education, Democrats (11%) are less likely than Republicans (25%)—and those under 35 (11%) are less likely than those 55 and older (21%)—to say it is a big problem. One in four or fewer across political, age, racial/ethnic, and income groups say quality is a big problem.

<i>Percent saying big problem</i>	Quality	Affordability
All adults	15%	57%
Likely voters	17	65
Party	Democrats	11
	Republicans	25
	Independents	18
Household income	Under \$40,000	16
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	16
	\$80,000 or more	13
Race/Ethnicity	African Americans	13
	Asian Americans	9
	Latinos	13
	Whites	18
Age	18–34	11
	35–54	14
	55 and older	21



## Approval Ratings of State Elected Officials

Fifty-seven percent of adults and 59 percent of likely voters approve of the way Jerry Brown is handling his job as governor. Current approval is similar to October (55% adults, 56% likely voters) and last December (51% adults, 54% likely voters). Today, Democrats (81%) are more likely than independents (49%) and Republicans (25%) to approve. Approval is higher in the San Francisco Bay Area (65%) than elsewhere (59% Los Angeles, 54% Orange/San Diego, 53% Central Valley, 50% Inland Empire), and it is higher among African Americans (69%), Asian Americans (66%), and Latinos (63%) than among whites (49%).

Fewer approve of Governor Brown’s handling of California’s public college and university system (45% adults, 41% likely voters), and approximately one in four Californians say they don’t know. In April, approval ratings of the governor regarding K–12 public education were similar (45% adults, 36% likely voters). The governor’s approval ratings on higher education were much lower when we last asked this question in PPIC’s 2011 survey on higher education (31% adults, 29% likely voters). Today, Democrats (54%) are more likely than independents (38%) and Republicans (18%) to express approval on public higher education.

### “Do you approve or disapprove of the way that Jerry Brown is handling...?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
His job as governor of California	Approve	57%	81%	25%	49%	59%
	Disapprove	24	6	63	34	33
	Don't know	18	13	11	17	8
California’s public college and university system	Approve	45	54	18	38	41
	Disapprove	31	22	60	36	38
	Don't know	24	24	22	26	21

Forty-nine percent of Californians and 45 percent of likely voters approve of the legislature’s job performance. Approval was similar in October (46% adults, 43% likely voters) and slightly lower last December (41% adults, 38% likely voters). Today, Democrats (64%) are more likely than independents (38%) or Republicans (21%) to approve. Approval is highest in the San Francisco Bay Area (54%, 49% Los Angeles, 48% Inland Empire, 47% Central Valley, 45%, Orange/San Diego) and higher among Latinos (58%) and Asian Americans (57%) than among African Americans (46%) and whites (40%).

Approval of the legislature’s handling of California’s public college and university system is somewhat lower (42% adults, 35% likely voters). The legislature’s approval ratings regarding K–12 public education were similar in April (42% adults, 29% likely voters). The legislature’s approval ratings on higher education were much lower when we last asked this question in our November 2011 survey (21% adults, 14% likely voters). Today, Democrats (49%) are more likely than independents (32%) and Republicans (20%) to approve.

### “Do you approve or disapprove of the way the California Legislature is handling...?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
Its job	Approve	49%	64%	21%	38%	45%
	Disapprove	38	20	70	50	44
	Don't know	13	16	9	12	11
California’s public college and university system	Approve	42	49	20	32	35
	Disapprove	42	36	63	51	51
	Don't know	16	15	18	18	15

## Institutional Ratings

Most Californians give positive ratings to each branch of California’s higher education system—California Community Colleges (CCC) (15% excellent, 51% good); California State University (CSU) (10% excellent, 56% good); and University of California (UC) (14% excellent, 51% good). Notably, the proportion of Californians who give the CSU system a positive rating has increased by 10 points since our 2011 survey. For the UC system, the increase in positive ratings has been more modest (6 percentage points), while ratings for the CCC system remain similar to those in 2011.

**“Overall, is the \_\_\_\_\_ doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?”**

<i>All adults</i>	California Community Colleges system	California State University system	University of California system
Excellent	15%	10%	14%
Good	51	56	51
Not so good	19	19	20
Poor	7	6	7
Don't know	8	9	8

Strong majorities of Californians (66%), likely voters (65%), and those who attended a California community college (69%) say the CCC system is overall doing an excellent or good job. Regionally, residents in Orange/San Diego (73%) are the most likely to give the CCC system a positive rating while those in the Inland Empire (58%) are the least likely to do so. Majorities across parties and across income, age, and racial/ethnic groups give the CCC system a positive rating.

The CSU system also receives positive ratings. About two-thirds of adults (66%), likely voters (63%), and those who attended a CSU (67%) rate the system as excellent or good. Across parties, solid majorities of Democrats (71%) and independents (60%) give CSU a positive rating, compared to half of Republicans. Majorities across regions and demographic groups rate CSU as excellent or good.

Most Californians (65%), likely voters (62%), and those who attended a University of California school (71%) rate the UC system as excellent or good. Across parties, Republicans (48%) are less likely than Democrats (74%) and independents (59%) to give the UC system an excellent or good rating. Majorities across regions and racial/ethnic groups give the UC system positive ratings.

<i>Percent saying excellent/good</i>		California Community Colleges system	California State University system	University of California system
All adults		66%	66%	65%
Likely voters		65	63	62
Party	Democrats	71	72	74
	Republicans	58	49	48
	Independents	63	61	59
Race/Ethnicity	African Americans	72	64	59
	Asian Americans	71	72	80
	Latinos	68	69	66
	Whites	62	62	60
Age	18–34	71	71	72
	35–54	63	66	65
	55 and older	64	61	58

## Institutional Knowledge

Californians have positive views of the CCC, CSU, and UC systems, but how familiar are they with some key facts about the three systems?

The UC system has the highest state tuition of the three systems, followed by the CSU system and the CCC system. Today, a majority of Californians (55%) correctly identify the UC system as having the highest state tuition and fees—23 percent are unsure and 22 percent incorrectly name one of the other public higher education systems.

The CCC system has the highest enrollment, followed by CSU and UC. When asked which system has the most students enrolled, 45 percent of Californians correctly identify CCC, while 27 percent are unsure and 28 percent name another system.

Only 38 percent of Californians correctly identify CSU as the system that awards the highest number of bachelor’s degrees each year. More than a third (35%) are unsure and 27 percent name another system.

### “Do you happen to know which branch...?”

All adults	...has the highest state tuition and fees	...has the most students enrolled	...awards the highest number of bachelor's degrees each year
California Community Colleges	3%	45%	9%
California State University	19	18	38
University of California	55	10	18
Don't know	23	27	35

## Institutional Concerns

An overwhelming majority of Californians are very (38%) or somewhat (38%) concerned about the difficulty California high school students face in gaining admission to one of the UC campuses. According to the University of California Office of the President, the 2015 system-wide admission rate for in-state students was 60 percent. Today, more than two-thirds of residents across all regions, parties, and demographic groups express concern about the competitiveness of admissions to the UC system. Notably, African Americans are far more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to say they are very concerned.

### “For each of the following, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned. How about the difficulty for California’s high school students to gain admission to one of the campuses in the University of California system?”

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very concerned	38%	41%	36%	38%	62%	29%	37%	39%
Somewhat concerned	38	36	38	39	20	44	39	37
Not too concerned	13	13	13	16	9	22	12	12
Not at all concerned	9	8	12	6	8	5	11	9
Don't know	1	1	–	2	1	–	1	2

A majority of Californians are very (24%) or somewhat (30%) concerned about the four-year graduation rate of students who attend California State Universities. As noted in recent PPIC research, across the California State University system an average 19 percent of students graduate within four years;

57 percent graduate within six years. Across regions, residents in the Central Valley (65%) are the most likely to say they are concerned about CSU graduation rates, while those in Orange/San Diego (47%) are the least likely to say the same. Californians who attended a CSU (66%) are more likely than those who attended a CCC (53%) or UC (50%) to say they are concerned about CSU graduation rates. The level of concern is similar across income and racial/ethnic groups.

**“For each of the following, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned. How about the rate of students who graduate within four years from California State Universities?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very concerned	24%	23%	24%	24%	27%	19%	25%	23%
Somewhat concerned	30	32	32	29	28	32	34	29
Not too concerned	25	24	24	30	23	35	17	28
Not at all concerned	17	17	18	13	20	12	20	17
Don't know	4	3	3	4	2	2	5	4

Fifty-two percent of Californians are very (21%) or somewhat (31%) concerned about the rate of students who successfully transfer from California’s community colleges to a four-year degree program. As noted in recent PPIC research, fewer than half of students who enter community college with the intention to transfer actually do so. Californians who attended a CCC (57%) or CSU (54%) are more likely than those who attended a UC (44%) to say they are concerned about the transfer rate at California’s community colleges. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans are more likely than whites to say they are very concerned.

**“For each of the following, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned. How about the rate of students who successfully transfer from California’s community colleges to a four-year degree program?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very concerned	21%	21%	20%	21%	36%	25%	20%	18%
Somewhat concerned	31	34	33	25	23	30	37	27
Not too concerned	25	22	25	30	16	24	23	28
Not at all concerned	19	20	19	20	24	19	17	21
Don't know	4	2	3	3	1	2	3	5

## Adequacy and Efficient Use of State Funding

Californians continue to view the level of state funding of higher education as inadequate. Today, two-thirds of adults say that funding for California’s public colleges and universities is not adequate, while far fewer say there is more than enough (10%) or just enough (19%) funding. The share saying that there is not enough funding has decreased slightly since our 2011 PPIC survey on higher education (74% not enough), though it is higher today than it was in 2007, when 57 percent said the level of funding was not adequate.

Across parties, Democrats (83%) are far more likely than independents (61%) and Republicans (45%) to say the current level of state funding is not adequate. Majorities across regions say that funding is not adequate; residents in Los Angeles (71%) are the most likely to hold this view, while those in Orange/San Diego (57%) are the least likely to do so. Across racial/ethnic groups, African Americans (77%) and Latinos (73%) are more likely than Asian Americans (63%) and whites (62%) to say there is not enough funding. Women are somewhat more likely than men to say the current level of state funding is not adequate (71% to 62%).

**“Do you think the current level of state funding for California’s public colleges and universities is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?”**

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
More than enough	10%	2%	23%	11%	13%
Just enough	19	12	25	23	19
Not enough	67	83	45	61	63
Don't know	5	3	8	4	5

Half of Californians (49%) say that to significantly improve the state’s higher education system, the amount of state funding needs to be increased and existing funds need to be used more wisely. Only 13 percent of residents think that increasing state funding alone is the best way to significantly improve the state’s public higher education system. In the 2011 PPIC survey on higher education, a similar share of adults (50%) said more funds and better use of existing funding were both needed.

Today, there are stark partisan differences on this issue: 59 percent of Democrats say more funds and better use of existing funds is necessary, while a similar proportion of Republicans (57%) say better use of existing funds alone is needed. Across racial/ethnic groups, whites (43%) and Latinos (35%) are more likely than Asian Americans (22%) and African Americans (24%) to say that wiser use of existing funds is needed. Notably, 42 percent of those who attended a CCC or a CSU say that existing funds need to be used more wisely, compared to only 22 percent of those who attended a UC.

**“To significantly improve California’s public higher education system, which of the following statements do you agree with the most—We need to use existing state funds more wisely, or we need to increase the amount of state funding, or we need to use existing state funds more wisely and increase the amount of state funding?”**

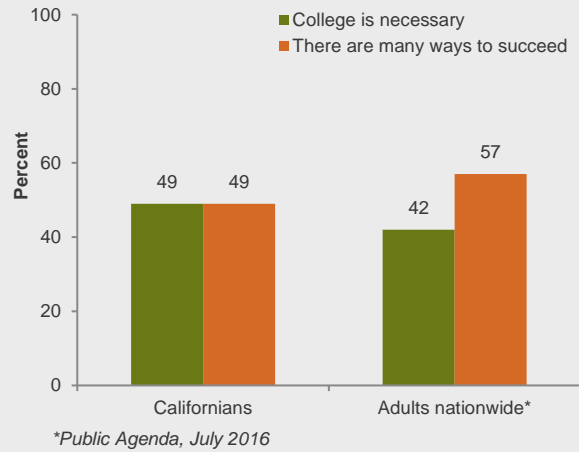
	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Use funds more wisely	36%	20%	57%	41%	40%
Increase state funding	13	18	7	8	11
Use funds more wisely and increase funding	49	59	35	50	49
Don't know	3	2	1	1	1

# Attitudes and Policy Preferences

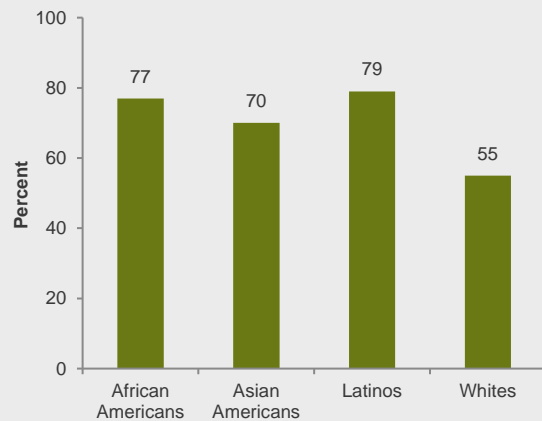
## Key Findings

- Half of Californians (49%) say that a college education is necessary for success in today's work world. Two in three think many students require remedial education when they enter college. *(page 15)*
- Seven in ten Californians (72%) agree that the price of college deters qualified and motivated students, and 58 percent agree that almost anyone who needs financial help can get loans or financial aid. Most continue to say that students have to borrow too much money. *(page 16)*
- Majorities of Californians continue to say it is very important to have a student body that is racially diverse (61%) and economically diverse (61%) in public colleges and universities. *(page 17)*
- Overwhelming majorities of Californians say it is very important for community colleges to include career technical and vocational education (78%) and classes that prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges (78%). *(page 18)*
- Overwhelming majorities of Californians favor increasing funding for student grants and scholarships (82%) and increasing government funding to make community college free (73%). *(page 19)*
- Sixty-five percent of Californians support a state bond for higher education, and 48 percent are willing to pay higher taxes to raise revenue for higher education. But only 23 percent would increase student fees. *(page 20)*
- Three in four Californians say public higher education is very important to the state's future; 45 percent anticipate a shortage of college-educated workers. Six in ten have at least some confidence in the state's ability to plan for the future. *(page 21)*

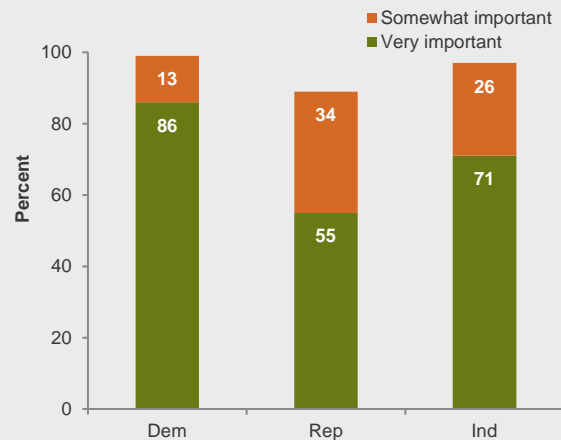
**Necessity of college to succeed in today's work world**



**Support for a state bond measure for construction projects for higher education**



**Importance of California's higher education system to the state's quality of life and economic vitality**



## College Importance and Student Preparation

Do Californians think that a college education is necessary to be successful in today’s economy, or are there many ways to succeed without one? Opinions of California adults are evenly divided, with 49 percent saying a college education is necessary to succeed and 49 percent saying there are many ways to succeed in today’s work world without one. Nationally, adults in a July Public Agenda survey were slightly less likely to say a college education is necessary (42%). Earlier PPIC surveys found majorities saying college is necessary, similar to the national trends in 2008 and 2009 Public Agenda surveys.

Solid majorities of Californians with no college education (60%) and those with annual incomes below \$40,000 (60%) say college is necessary to succeed. Notably, majorities of those with more education and with higher incomes say there are many ways to succeed without a college education (56% among those with at least some college, 57% incomes of \$40,000 or more). The opinion that college is necessary is far more common among Latinos (67%) than whites (36%); about half of African Americans (52%) and Asian Americans (49%) say it is necessary. Across regions, Inland Empire residents (59%) are the most likely and Central Valley residents (42%) are the least likely to say college is necessary; about half in other regions hold this view. Across parties, a majority of Democrats (55%) say college is necessary to succeed, while majorities of independents (54%) and Republicans (71%) say there are many ways to succeed in today’s work world without a college education.

**“Do you think that a college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today’s work world, or do you think that there are many ways to succeed in today’s work world without a college education?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
College is necessary	49%	60%	40%	43%	52%	49%	67%	36%
Many ways to succeed without a college education	49	39	58	56	47	49	32	63
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1	2	–	1

A strong majority of Californians (67%) think that many students require basic skills and remedial education when they enter college. Only 26 percent say that most students enter college already prepared for college-level work. Findings were similar in the November 2011 PPIC survey (69% many require remedial education, 23% most students are prepared). Today, at least six in ten across parties and regions, as well as age, education, and income groups say that many students require remedial education when they enter college. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups say the same, with African Americans (75%), whites (71%), and Latinos (67%) more likely than Asian Americans (55%) to say so.

**“Do you think that most students are prepared for college-level work when they enter college, or do you think that many students require basic skills and remedial education when they enter college?”**

	All adults	Household income			Race/Ethnicity			
		Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Most students are prepared	26%	28%	24%	23%	19%	35%	27%	22%
Many require basic skills and remedial education	67	66	66	71	75	55	67	71
Don't know	7	6	9	6	5	10	6	7

## College Costs and Student Finances

Most Californians today see cost as an obstacle to getting a college education, but there are differences in opinion about the accessibility of loans and financial aid. Seventy-two percent of Californians agree that the price of a college education keeps students who are qualified and motivated to go to college from doing so. Findings have been similar since 2007. Today, at least six in ten across regions and racial/ethnic, age, education, and income groups agree. Solid majorities across parties agree, with independents (76%) and Democrats (75%) somewhat more likely than Republicans (67%) to do so. Majorities across ideological groups also agree that the price of an education keeps qualified students away, with self-described liberals (80%) more likely to say so than conservatives (64%).

**“Please say if you agree or disagree with the following statements... The price of a college education keeps students who are qualified and motivated to go to college from doing so.”**

	All adults	Education			Parents of children 18 or younger
		High school or less	Some college	College graduate	
Agree	72%	69%	75%	73%	72%
Disagree	27	29	24	26	27
Don't know	2	2	1	1	1

A majority of Californians (58%) agree that almost anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans or financial aid; four in ten (39%) disagree. In PPIC surveys since 2008, at least half have agreed. Today, Republicans (60%) are more likely than Democrats (49%) to say almost anyone can get loans or financial aid (54% independents). Those with annual incomes below \$40,000 (67%) are much more likely than those with higher incomes (50%) to agree. Across racial/ethnic groups, Latinos (70%) are more likely than Asian Americans (59%), African Americans (57%), and whites (51%) to say almost anyone can get financial aid. Majorities across age groups agree.

Notably, we find that those with less education are more likely to hold favorable views of financial aid opportunities than those with more education (68% high school or less, 54% some college, 49% college graduates). The belief that almost anyone can get financial aid is slightly more prevalent among those who have attended a CCC school (54%) than among those who have attended CSU (47%) or UC (42%). Among parents of children 18 or younger, about two-thirds (65%) say that almost anyone can get loans or financial aid.

**“Please say if you agree or disagree with the following statements... Almost anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans or financial aid.”**

	All adults	Education			Parents of children 18 or younger
		High school or less	Some college	College graduate	
Agree	58%	68%	54%	49%	65%
Disagree	39	31	44	46	33
Don't know	3	1	2	5	2

An overwhelming majority of Californians (78%) continue to agree with the statement that students have to borrow too much money to pay for a college education. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups have agreed on this issue since October 2007, when we first asked this question. Today, college graduates (88%) and those with some college (92%) are more likely to agree than those with less education (60%). Democrats (91%) are more likely than Republicans (81%) to agree (87% independents). Those with incomes above \$40,000 (89%) are more likely to agree than are those with lower incomes (67% below \$40,000).



## Importance of Student Diversity

A solid majority of Californians (61%) say that it is very important for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body, while one in five say it is not important. Californians today are slightly more likely than in previous PPIC surveys to say that racial diversity among students is very important (53% 2011, 54% 2010, 54% 2009, 55% 2008). While most Californians today say that diversity at public colleges and universities is important, there are differences in opinion across groups. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups say racial diversity is very important. But whites (54%) are somewhat less likely than Asian Americans (63%) or Latinos (66%), and far less likely than African Americans (86%), to hold this view. There are wide partisan differences, with Democrats (78%) far more likely than independents (52%) or Republicans (32%) to say having a racially diverse student body is very important. Across income groups, those with annual incomes below \$80,000 (67%) are more likely than those with higher incomes (51%) to say racial diversity is very important.

**“How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body—that is, a mix of blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, and other minorities?”**

	All adults	Party			Race/Ethnicity			
		Dem	Rep	Ind	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites
Very important	61%	78%	32%	52%	86%	63%	66%	54%
Somewhat important	18	14	29	22	11	15	14	23
Not too important	9	3	17	13	1	13	7	10
Not at all important	11	4	20	12	1	9	11	12
Don't know	1	–	–	1	–	–	2	1

A solid majority of Californians (61%) also say that it is very important for public colleges and universities to have an economically diverse student body, with a mix of students from lower-, middle-, and upper-income backgrounds. Fifteen percent say it is not important. Californians today are somewhat more likely to say economic diversity is very important than they were in 2011 (54%). Today, majorities across income groups say economic diversity is very important, but this opinion is somewhat less common among those with incomes of \$80,000 or more (54%) than among those with lower incomes. Democrats (79%) are far more likely than independents (55%) or Republicans (36%) to say it is very important to have an economically diverse student body. Majorities across racial/ethnic groups say economic diversity is very important, with African Americans (86%) more likely than other groups to say so (67% Asian Americans, 63% Latinos, 54% whites). Adults age 18 to 34 (67%) are somewhat more likely than older adults (60% age 35 to 54, 56% 55 and older) to say it is very important.

**“How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have an economically diverse student body—that is, a mix of students from lower, middle, and upper-income backgrounds?”**

	All adults	Party			Household income		
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more
Very important	61%	79%	36%	55%	63%	66%	54%
Somewhat important	23	15	32	22	21	22	28
Not too important	9	3	16	12	9	7	11
Not at all important	6	3	17	8	6	5	7
Don't know	1	–	–	3	1	1	–

## Role of Community Colleges

There is widespread agreement among Californians about the importance of two key roles for community colleges: providing career technical education and preparing students for transfer to four-year schools.

An overwhelming majority of Californians (78%) say it is very important that community colleges offer career technical or vocational education, similar to previous PPIC surveys (72% 2011, 73% 2010, 76% 2007). Today, at least seven in ten across parties and regions, as well as racial/ethnic, age, education, and income groups, say this is very important, though there are some differences across groups. Californians age 18 to 34 (70%) are less likely than older Californians (83% age 35 to 54, 82% 55 and older) to say technical and vocational education is very important. Those working full time (82%) and those who have retired (83%) are somewhat more likely than those not working for other reasons (73%) or working part time (73%) to say it is very important. Independents (85%) and Democrats (82%) are slightly more likely than Republicans (76%) to say this.

### “How important to you is it that community colleges include career technical or vocational education?”

	All adults	Party			Education		
		Dem	Rep	Ind	High school or less	Some college	College graduate
Very important	78%	82%	76%	85%	80%	75%	80%
Somewhat important	19	16	21	14	18	22	17
Not too important	2	2	2	–	2	3	2
Not at all important	–	–	1	1	–	–	1
Don't know	–	–	–	1	–	–	–

An overwhelming majority of Californians (78%) also say it is very important that community colleges offer classes that prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Responses were similar in previous PPIC surveys (73% 2011, 78% 2010, 81% 2007). Californians with a high school education or less (83%) are more likely than those with more education (76% some college, 72% college graduates) to hold this view. Those who have attended a CCC (81%) are somewhat more likely than those who have attended a CSU (74%) or a UC (73%) to say this is very important. This view is also more common among Democrats (85%) than among independents (75%) or Republicans (69%). Across racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans (62%) are the least likely to say preparing students to transfer to a four-year school is very important (77% whites, 82% African Americans, 86% Latinos).

Among those saying it is very important to include classes that prepare students to transfer to a four-year school, 54 percent are very or somewhat concerned about the rate of students who successfully transfer from California’s community colleges. Among others, 43 percent are concerned.

### “How important to you is it that community colleges include classes that prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities?”

	All adults	Party			Education		
		Dem	Rep	Ind	High school or less	Some college	College graduate
Very important	78%	85%	69%	75%	83%	76%	72%
Somewhat important	18	12	24	18	13	19	22
Not too important	2	2	4	2	2	2	3
Not at all important	1	–	1	3	1	1	2
Don't know	1	–	1	1	1	2	–

## Affordability and Government Programs

With affordability mentioned as the top issue facing California’s public colleges and universities, what do Californians think about possible ways to make higher education more affordable? More than seven in ten Californians (73%) and six in ten likely voters (62%) favor increasing government funding to make community college free. An overwhelming majority of Democrats (85%) and six in ten independents (61%) support this proposal, compared to 43 percent of Republicans.

Majorities of residents across regions are in favor. Support is highest in Los Angeles (82%), followed by the San Francisco Bay Area (76%), the Central Valley (70%), the Inland Empire (68%), and Orange/San Diego (59%). Majorities across demographic groups are also in favor, but some differences do emerge. African Americans (94%) and Latinos (88%) are more likely than Asian Americans (71%) and whites (60%) to favor making community college free. Support is higher among those with no college education (82%) compared with those who have attended college (67% some college, 66% college graduate). Support declines as household income increases, and those with (74%) and without (72%) children 18 or younger are in favor.

**“For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal. How about increasing government funding to make community college free?”**

	All adults	Party			Household income		
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more
Favor	73%	85%	43%	61%	84%	74%	57%
Oppose	26	15	55	36	15	25	41
Don't know	1	1	2	3	1	1	1

Californians are even more supportive of increasing government funding for scholarships and grants for students attending four-year colleges and universities. Eight in ten Californians (82%) and likely voters (80%) are in favor of this proposal. Unlike the proposal to make community colleges free, there is bipartisan majority support for scholarships and grants for students attending four-year colleges, with nearly all Democrats (94%), three in four independents (74%) and two in three Republicans (66%) in favor. More than three in four Californians across regions favor this proposal (84% San Francisco Bay Area, 84% Los Angeles, 82% Central Valley, 78% Inland Empire, 76% Orange/San Diego). More than three in four across demographics groups are also in favor. Support is somewhat higher among women than men (86% to 78%) and declines with age.

**“For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal. How about increasing government funding for scholarships and grants for students attending four-year colleges and universities?”**

	All adults	Party			Household income		
		Dem	Rep	Ind	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$80,000	\$80,000 or more
Favor	82%	94%	66%	74%	85%	83%	78%
Oppose	17	6	32	24	14	16	21
Don't know	1	1	2	2	1	1	1

Both of these proposals garner broad support: 67 percent of Californians are in favor of both proposals and only 11 percent oppose both proposals.

## Raising Revenue

As the state’s higher education system looks for ways to fund construction projects, one method would be a state bond. On the November 2016 ballot, Proposition 51, a school construction bond for K–12 and community colleges, passed with 55 percent support. When asked about the general idea of a bond measure on the state ballot for higher education construction projects, two in three Californians (65%) and six in ten likely voters (60%) are in favor. Support has increased 11 points since December 2014 and is at its highest point since we began asking this question in 2007 (64% October 2007, 53% November 2009, 58% November 2011, 54% December 2014, 65% today). Support is also at its highest point among likely voters (56% October 2007, 46% November 2009, 52% November 2011, 44% December 2014, 60% today). Today, majorities of Democrats (77%) and independents (58%) are in favor, compared to 44 percent of Republicans. More than six in ten across regions and majorities across demographic groups are in favor.

### “If the state ballot had a bond measure to pay for construction projects in California’s higher education system, would you vote yes or no?”

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Yes	65%	77%	44%	58%	60%
No	29	18	54	36	35
Don't know	6	5	3	6	5

Californians are less supportive of two other proposals to increase funding for public higher education if the state needed more money. Californians are divided on the idea of paying higher taxes. Though a strong majority of Democrats are willing to pay higher taxes, majorities of Republicans and independents are not willing to do so. Across regions and demographic groups, support is higher among certain age, racial/ethnic, and education groups (60% age 18 to 34, 59% African Americans, 55% college graduates). An overwhelming majority are opposed to increasing student fees as a way to provide more money. Three in ten or fewer across parties, regions, and demographic groups express willingness to increase student fees.

### “What if the state government said it needed more money to increase funding for California’s public higher education system, would you be willing to...for this purpose, or not?”

		All adults	Party			Likely voters
			Dem	Rep	Ind	
...pay higher taxes	Yes	48%	68%	20%	42%	48%
	No	50	31	79	54	50
	Don't know	2	1	1	4	2
...increase student fees	Yes	23	21	23	20	21
	No	74	76	74	76	76
	Don't know	3	3	2	4	3

Another possible way to increase funding for the state’s higher education system would be to increase the number of out-of-state students who pay higher tuition. Californians are divided on this issue overall, and support declines if it would mean fewer in-state admissions (21% yes, even if fewer in-state students; 25% yes, but not if fewer in-state students; 50% no). One in four or fewer across parties, regions, and demographic groups are in favor if it means fewer in-state students are admitted.

## Planning for the Future

Nearly all Californians say that the state’s higher education system is very (77%) or somewhat (19%) important to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years. Results have been similar since this question was first asked in 2007. Majorities across parties say higher education is very important to the state’s future (86% Democrats, 71% independents, 55% Republicans). At least three in four across regions consider the system very important. More than two in three across demographic groups say the system is very important. However, African Americans (89%), Latinos (87%), and Asian Americans (80%) are more likely than whites (69%) to hold this view.

**“In general, how important is California’s higher education system to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years?”**

	All adults	Race/Ethnicity				Likely voters
		African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	Whites	
Very important	77%	89%	80%	87%	69%	75%
Somewhat important	19	10	17	12	23	20
Not too important	2	–	–	1	4	3
Not at all important	2	1	3	–	3	1
Don’t know	1	–	1	–	1	–

A plurality of Californians (45%) recognize that the state will face a shortage in the number of college-educated residents needed for the jobs of the future (32% just enough, 17% more than enough). PPIC research has shown that the state will have a shortage of 1.1 million college-educated workers in 2030. The share of Californians who say the state will face a shortage is similar to last September (50%) and has been between 45 and 56 percent in nine PPIC surveys since 2007. Across parties, a majority of Democrats (54%), compared to about four in ten Republicans (43%) and independents (39%), anticipate a shortage of college-educated workers. About half of residents in the Inland Empire (53%) and the Central Valley (52%) say the state will not have enough college-educated workers, while somewhat fewer elsewhere hold this view. A plurality of residents across demographic groups expect a shortage.

**“In thinking ahead 20 years, if current trends continue, do you think California will have more than enough, not enough, or just enough college-educated residents needed for the jobs and skills likely to be in demand?”**

	All adults	Region					Likely voters
		Central Valley	San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles	Orange/San Diego	Inland Empire	
More than enough	17%	14%	20%	17%	18%	11%	15%
Just enough	32	30	27	32	43	28	30
Not enough	45	52	44	44	38	53	49
Don’t know	6	4	9	7	1	8	6

About six in ten Californians have a great deal (16%) or some (43%) confidence in the state government to plan for the future of higher education, while 40 percent have very little or none. Findings today are similar to September 2015 (55% confident), December 2014 (60%), and October 2007 (57%). But in PPIC surveys from 2009 to 2012, confidence was between 40 and 50 percent. Today, Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to be confident. More than half of Californians across regions and demographic groups have confidence in the state government’s ability to plan for the future.

# Regional Map



# Methodology

The PPIC Statewide Survey is directed by Mark Baldassare, president and CEO and survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, with assistance from research associate Lunna Lopes, project manager for this survey, associate survey director Dean Bonner, and survey research associate David Kordus. The Californians and Higher Education survey is supported with funding from the Arjay and Frances Miller Foundation, the Flora Family Foundation, John and Louise Bryson, Walter Hewlett, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The PPIC Statewide Survey invites input, comments, and suggestions from policy and public opinion experts and from its own advisory committee, but survey methods, questions, and content are determined solely by PPIC's survey team.

Findings in this report are based on a survey of 1,711 California adult residents, including 851 interviewed on landline telephones and 860 interviewed on cell phones. Interviews took an average of 19 minutes to complete. Interviewing took place on weekend days and weekday nights from November 13–22, 2016.

Landline interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of telephone numbers that ensured that both listed and unlisted numbers were called. All landline telephone exchanges in California were eligible for selection, and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as six times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households. Once a household was reached, an adult respondent (age 18 or older) was randomly chosen for interviewing using the "last birthday method" to avoid biases in age and gender.

Cell phone interviews were conducted using a computer-generated random sample of cell phone numbers. All cell phone numbers with California area codes were eligible for selection, and the sample telephone numbers were called as many as eight times to increase the likelihood of reaching an eligible respondent. Once a cell phone user was reached, it was verified that this person was age 18 or older, a resident of California, and in a safe place to continue the survey (e.g., not driving).

Cell phone respondents were offered a small reimbursement to help defray the cost of the call. Cell phone interviews were conducted with adults who have cell phone service only and with those who have both cell phone and landline service in the household.

Live landline and cell phone interviews were conducted by Abt SRBI, Inc., in English and Spanish, according to respondents' preferences. Accent on Languages, Inc., translated new survey questions into Spanish, with assistance from Renatta DeFever.

Abt SRBI uses the US Census Bureau's 2010–2014 American Community Survey's (ACS) Public Use Microdata Series for California (with regional coding information from the University of Minnesota's Integrated Public Use Microdata Series for California) to compare certain demographic characteristics of the survey sample—region, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education—with the characteristics of California's adult population. The survey sample was closely comparable to the ACS figures. To estimate landline and cell phone service in California, Abt SRBI used 2014 state-level estimates released by the National Center for Health Statistics—which used data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and the ACS—and 2015 estimates for the West Census Region in the latest NHIS report. The estimates for California were then compared against landline and cell phone service reported in this survey. We also used voter registration data from the California Secretary of State to compare the party registration of registered voters in our sample to party registration statewide. The landline and cell phone samples were then integrated using a frame integration weight, while sample balancing adjusted for differences across regional, age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, telephone service, and party registration groups.

The sampling error, taking design effects from weighting into consideration, is  $\pm 3.5$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total unweighted sample of 1,711 adults. This means that 95

times out of 100, the results will be within 3.5 percentage points of what they would be if all adults in California were interviewed. The sampling error for unweighted subgroups is larger: for the 1,417 registered voters, the sampling error is  $\pm 3.8$  percent; for the 1,123 likely voters, it is  $\pm 4.3$  percent; for the 400 respondents who attended a California community college, it is  $\pm 7.3$  percent; for the 270 who attended a California State University campus, it is  $\pm 10.0$  percent; for the 185 who attended a University of California campus, it is  $\pm 11.2$  percent. Sampling error is only one type of error to which surveys are subject. Results may also be affected by factors such as question wording, question order, and survey timing.

We present results for five geographic regions, accounting for approximately 90 percent of the state population. “Central Valley” includes Butte, Colusa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. “San Francisco Bay Area” includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. “Los Angeles” refers to Los Angeles County, “Inland Empire” refers to Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and “Orange/San Diego” refers to Orange and San Diego Counties. Residents of other geographic areas are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes for these less populous areas are not large enough to report separately.

We present specific results for non-Hispanic whites, who account for 43 percent of the state’s adult population, and also for Latinos, who account for about a third of the state’s adult population and constitute one of the fastest-growing voter groups. We also present results for non-Hispanic Asian Americans, who make up about 15 percent of the state’s adult population, and non-Hispanic African Americans, who comprise about 6 percent. Results for other racial/ethnic groups—such as Native Americans—are included in the results reported for all adults, registered voters, and likely voters, but sample sizes are not large enough for separate analysis. We present results for Californians with a high school education or less, for those with some college (which includes those holding an associate degree), and college graduates (including those holding bachelor’s degrees or higher). We compare the opinions of those who report they are registered Democrats, registered Republicans, and decline-to-state or independent voters; the results for those who say they are registered to vote in other parties are not large enough for separate analysis. We also analyze the responses of likely voters—so designated per their responses to survey questions about voter registration, previous election participation, and current interest in politics.

The percentages presented in the report tables and in the questionnaire may not add to 100 due to rounding.

We compare current PPIC Statewide Survey results to those in our earlier surveys and to those in national surveys by Public Agenda. Additional details about our methodology can be found at [www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/other/SurveyMethodology.pdf) and are available upon request through [surveys@ppic.org](mailto:surveys@ppic.org).



# Questionnaire and Results

## CALIFORNIANS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

November 13–22, 2016

1,711 California Adult Residents:

English, Spanish

MARGIN OF ERROR  $\pm 3.5\%$  AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL FOR TOTAL SAMPLE  
PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING

**1. First, overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Jerry Brown is handling his job as governor of California?**

57% approve  
24 disapprove  
18 don't know

**2. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that Governor Brown is handling California's public college and university system?**

45% approve  
31 disapprove  
24 don't know

**3. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling its job?**

49% approve  
38 disapprove  
13 don't know

**4. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way that the California Legislature is handling California's public college and university system?**

42% approve  
42 disapprove  
16 don't know

**5. Thinking about the public higher education system overall in California today, do you think it is generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?**

45% right direction  
45 wrong direction  
10 don't know

**6. Next, what do you think is the most important issue facing California's public colleges and universities today?**

*[code, don't read]*

46% student costs, affordability, tuition, fees  
5 not enough government funding, state budget cuts  
4 access to education, reduced admissions  
4 administrative costs, salaries, waste  
3 campus safety  
3 financial aid  
3 professors are too political  
2 class size, overcrowding, student-teacher ratio  
2 immigrants  
2 lack of racial/ethnic diversity  
2 quality of education overall  
2 reduced course offerings, courses full  
14 other  
8 don't know

I'm going to read you a list of issues people have mentioned when talking about California's public higher education system today. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a big problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem. First...

*[rotate questions 7 and 8]*

**7. How about the overall quality of education in California's public colleges and universities today?**

15% big problem  
35 somewhat of a problem  
45 not much of a problem  
4 don't know

**8. How about the overall affordability of education for students in California’s public colleges and universities today?**

- 57% big problem
- 28 somewhat of a problem
- 13 not much of a problem
- 2 don’t know

As you may know, California’s public higher education system has three branches—the California Community College system, the California State University system, and the University of California system.

*[rotate questions 9 to 11]*

**9. Overall, is the California Community College system doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?**

- 15% excellent
- 51 good
- 19 not so good
- 7 poor
- 8 don’t know

**10. Overall, is the California State University system doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?**

- 10% excellent
- 56 good
- 19 not so good
- 6 poor
- 9 don’t know

**11. Overall, is the University of California system doing an excellent, good, not so good, or poor job?**

- 14% excellent
- 51 good
- 20 not so good
- 7 poor
- 8 don’t know

*[rotate questions 12 to 14]*

**12. Do you happen to know which branch has the highest state tuition and fees—*[rotate]* (1) the California Community College system, (2) the California State University system, *[or]* (3) the University of California system?**

- 3% California Community College
- 19 California State University
- 55 University of California
- 23 don’t know

**13. Do you happen to know which branch has the most students enrolled—*[rotate]* (1) the California Community College system, (2) the California State University system, *[or]* (3) the University of California system?**

- 45% California Community College
- 18 California State University
- 10 University of California
- 27 don’t know

**14. Do you happen to know which branch awards the highest number of bachelor’s degrees each year—*[rotate]* (1) the California Community College system, (2) the California State University system, *[or]* (3) the University of California system?**

- 9% California Community College
- 38 California State University
- 18 University of California
- 35 don’t know

Next, for each of the following, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned.

*[rotate questions 15 to 17]*

**15. How about the rate of students who successfully transfer from California’s community colleges to a four-year degree program?**

- 21% very concerned
- 31 somewhat concerned
- 25 not too concerned
- 19 not at all concerned
- 4 don’t know

**16. How about the rate of students who graduate within four years from California State Universities?**

- 24% very concerned
- 30 somewhat concerned
- 25 not too concerned
- 17 not at all concerned
- 4 don't know

**17. How about the difficulty for California's high school students to gain admission to one of the campuses in the University of California system?**

- 38% very concerned
- 38 somewhat concerned
- 13 not too concerned
- 9 not at all concerned
- 1 don't know

**18. Next, do you think the current level of state funding for California's public colleges and universities is more than enough, just enough, or not enough?**

- 10% more than enough
- 19 just enough
- 67 not enough
- 5 don't know

**19. To significantly improve California's public higher education system, which of the following statements do you agree with the most? [rotate responses 1 and 2] (1) We need to use existing state funds more wisely, [or] (2) We need to increase the amount of state funding, [or] (3) We need to use existing state funds more wisely and increase the amount of state funding.**

- 36% use funds more wisely
- 13 increase state funding
- 49 use funds more wisely and increase funding
- 3 don't know

Next, please say if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

*[rotate questions 20 to 22]*

**20. The price of a college education keeps students who are qualified and motivated to go to college from doing so.**

- 72% agree
- 27 disagree
- 2 don't know

**21. Almost anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans or financial aid.**

- 58% agree
- 39 disagree
- 3 don't know

**22. Students have to borrow too much money to pay for their college education.**

- 78% agree
- 21 disagree
- 1 don't know

**23. Next, do you think that most students are prepared for college-level work when they enter college, or do you think that many students require basic skills and remedial education when they enter college?**

- 26% most students are prepared
- 67 many require basic skills and remedial education
- 7 don't know

**24. Do you think that a college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today's work world, or do you think that there are many ways to succeed in today's work world without a college education?**

- 49% college is necessary
- 49% many ways to succeed without a college education
- 1 don't know

*[question 25 deleted]*

*[rotate questions 26 to 27]*

**26. How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have a racially diverse student body—that is, a mix of blacks, whites, Asians, Hispanics, and other minorities? Is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?**

- 61% very important
- 18 somewhat important
- 9 not too important
- 11 not at all important
- 1 don't know

**27. How important do you think it is for public colleges and universities to have an economically diverse student body—that is, a mix of students from lower, middle, and upper-income backgrounds? Is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?**

- 61% very important
- 23 somewhat important
- 9 not too important
- 6 not at all important
- 1 don't know

Next,

*[rotate questions 28 and 29]*

**28. How important to you is it that community colleges include career technical or vocational education—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?**

- 78% very important
- 19 somewhat important
- 2 not too important
- not at all important
- don't know

**29. How important to you is it that community colleges include classes that prepare students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?**

- 78% very important
- 18 somewhat important
- 2 not too important
- 1 not at all important
- 1 don't know

Next, I am going to read you some ways that the federal and state government can make California's higher education system more affordable to students. For each of the following, please say if you favor or oppose the proposal.

*[rotate questions 30 to 31]*

**30. How about increasing government funding to make community college free? (Do you favor or oppose this proposal?)**

- 73% favor
- 26 oppose
- 1 don't know

**31. How about increasing government funding for scholarships and grants for students attending four-year colleges and universities? (Do you favor or oppose this proposal?)**

- 82% favor
- 17 oppose
- 1 don't know

Next, what if the state government said it needed more money to increase funding for California's public higher education system?

*[rotate questions 32 and 33]*

**32. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes for this purpose, or not?**

- 48% yes
- 50 no
- 2 don't know

**33. Would you be willing to increase student fees for this purpose, or not?**

- 23% yes
- 74 no
- 3 don't know

**34. Would you be willing to admit more out-of-state students paying higher tuition for this purpose, or not? [if yes: Would you still support this even if it meant admitting fewer in-state students?]**

- 21% yes, even if it meant admitting fewer in-state students
- 25 yes, but not if it meant admitting fewer in-state students
- 50 no
- 4 don't know

**35. If the state ballot had a bond measure to pay for construction projects in California’s higher education system, would you vote yes or no?**

- 65% yes
- 29 no
- 6 don’t know

Changing topics,

**36. In general, how important is California’s higher education system to the quality of life and economic vitality of the state over the next 20 years—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?**

- 77% very important
- 19 somewhat important
- 2 not too important
- 2 not at all important
- 1 don’t know

**37. In thinking ahead 20 years, if current trends continue, do you think California will have [rotate 1 and 2] (1) more than enough, (2) not enough, [or] just enough college-educated residents needed for the jobs and skills likely to be in demand?**

- 17% more than enough
- 45 not enough
- 32 just enough
- 6 don’t know

**38. How much confidence do you have in the state government’s ability to plan for the future of California’s higher education system—a great deal, only some, very little, or none?**

- 16% a great deal
- 43 only some
- 28 very little
- 12 none
- 1 don’t know

**39. Next, some people are registered to vote and others are not. Are you absolutely certain that you are registered to vote in California?**

- 63% yes [ask q39a]
- 37 no [skip to q40b]

**39a. Are you registered as a Democrat, a Republican, another party, or as an independent?**

- 43% Democrat [ask q40]
- 28 Republican [skip to q40a]
- 5 another party (*specify*) [skip to q41]
- 24 independent [skip to q40b]

**40. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?**

- 67% strong
- 33 not very strong
- don’t know

*[skip to q41]*

**40a. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?**

- 60% strong
- 37 not very strong
- 2 don’t know

*[skip to q41]*

**40b. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party?**

- 25% Republican Party
- 42 Democratic Party
- 26 neither (*volunteered*)
- 7 don’t know

**41. Would you consider yourself to be politically:**

*[read list, rotate order top to bottom]*

- 15% very liberal
- 20 somewhat liberal
- 26 middle-of-the-road
- 22 somewhat conservative
- 14 very conservative
- 3 don’t know

**42. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in politics?**

- 30% great deal
- 31 fair amount
- 28 only a little
- 11 none
- 1 don’t know

*[d1-d15 demographic questions]*

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**Gaddi H. Vasquez**

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Edison International  
Southern California Edison



Public Policy Institute of California  
500 Washington Street, Suite 600  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
T: 415.291.4400  
F: 415.291.4401  
**PPIC.ORG**

PPIC Sacramento Center  
Senator Office Building  
1121 L Street, Suite 801  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
T: 916.440.1120  
F: 916.440.1121



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