

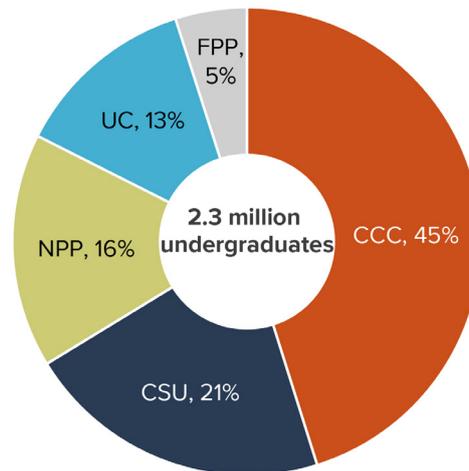
California's Higher Education System

Kevin Cook

California is home to the largest higher education system in the United States.

- ▶ California colleges and universities account for 13% of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of all higher education institutions in the United States.
- ▶ Nearly 80% of college students in California attend a public institution, with nearly half enrolled in the community college system.
- ▶ California's [master plan for higher education](#) lays out the goals for the state's three public segments: University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and California Community Colleges (CCC).
- ▶ In 2022–23, California spent just over \$21 billion in state funds to support its higher education institutions and financial aid system, accounting for about 7% of the state's budget.

Community colleges account for nearly half of enrollment in California



Source: IPEDS.

Notes: Fall 2021 total enrollment; for-profit 2-year colleges were excluded from this analysis.

The University of California is the state's primary academic research institution.

- ▶ UC enrolls nearly 300,000 students in 10 campuses—9 that serve undergraduates—and provides undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs.
- ▶ In 2021–22, UC conferred nearly 63,000 bachelor's degrees and 22,000 graduate degrees.
- ▶ Average annual tuition for resident full-time students is \$13,572, but will see increases tied to inflation for the next few years.
- ▶ About 37% of UC undergraduates are first-generation college students. Compared to the population of California high school graduates, Asian students are overrepresented and Latino students are underrepresented.

The California State University is the largest public four-year higher education system in the United States.

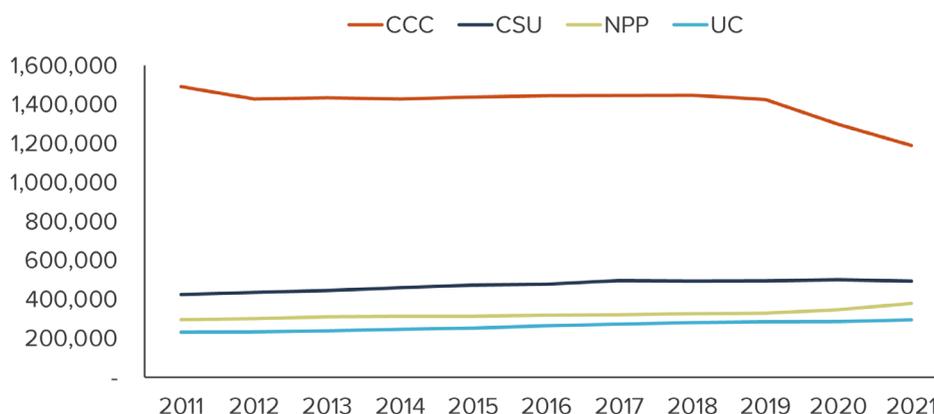
- ▶ CSU has 23 campuses and enrolls nearly half a million students; in 2021–22, the system conferred about 110,000 bachelor's degrees and 20,000 graduate degrees.
- ▶ Average annual tuition for resident full-time students is \$5,742, but will see 6% increases each year for the next five years.

- ▶ About one-third of CSU students are first-generation college goers; the racial and ethnic mix of students at CSU roughly mirrors that of high school graduates in the state.

The California Community Colleges serve almost half of college students in the state.

- ▶ CCC is the largest public higher education system in the country, with a total enrollment of nearly 1.3 million students in Fall of 2021; however, enrollment has fallen in recent years.
- ▶ In 2021–22, the system conferred just over 111,000 certificates, nearly 200,000 associate degrees, and 341 bachelor’s degrees.
- ▶ Average annual tuition for full-time, California resident students is \$1,245, which is the lowest in the nation.
- ▶ CCC enrollment is racially and ethnically similar to high school graduates in the state; 35% of students are first-generation college students.

California’s community college system has seen a steep drop in enrollment



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS).

Notes: Fall total enrollment reported to IPEDS; fall enrollment is a measure of student access to higher education. Data collected for all students enrolled in credit-bearing courses that could lead to postsecondary awards.

Private colleges and universities play an important role.

- ▶ There are about 150 private nonprofit colleges in California, and they produce about 20% of the bachelor’s degrees conferred annually in the state. Annual tuition averages \$20,000, but tuition varies widely.
- ▶ Just over 130 for-profit private colleges in California serve nearly half a million undergraduate and graduate students.
- ▶ Due to a recent US Supreme Court ruling, private institutions will join California public institutions in being unable to consider race when making enrollment decisions, which could impact the demographic composition of their student body going forward.

Transfer between systems is crucial to California students attaining a bachelor’s degree.

- ▶ Over half of California high school graduates start at a community college (54% in 2019–20)—a higher share than most states, making transfer between institutions especially important.
- ▶ Three quarters of community college students state their goal is to transfer, but only about 28% of those do so within six years. However, a vast majority of successful transfers complete a baccalaureate degree.
- ▶ Most transfers are to public institutions—about one in four CSU undergraduates and one in three UC undergraduates are transfer students from a community college.
- ▶ New regional and statewide efforts including the [Associate Degree for Transfer](#), expansion of [dual enrollment](#), and [dual admissions](#) programs aim to streamline transfer.

Supported with funding from the Sutton Family Fund and the College Futures Foundation.

Sources: [AICCU Fact Sheet](#); [California Community College Chancellor’s Office Data Mart](#); [CCC Key Facts](#); [CSU Fact Book](#); [Higher Education Funding in California](#); [Education Commission of the States](#); [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System](#); [Public School Enrollment across California’s Regions, Past and Future](#); [Legislative Analyst’s Office, Higher Education Spending Plan 2022–23](#); [State Higher Education Executive Officer’s State Higher Education Finance Report \(2022\)](#); [UC facts at a glance](#); [Coordinating California’s Higher Education System](#).