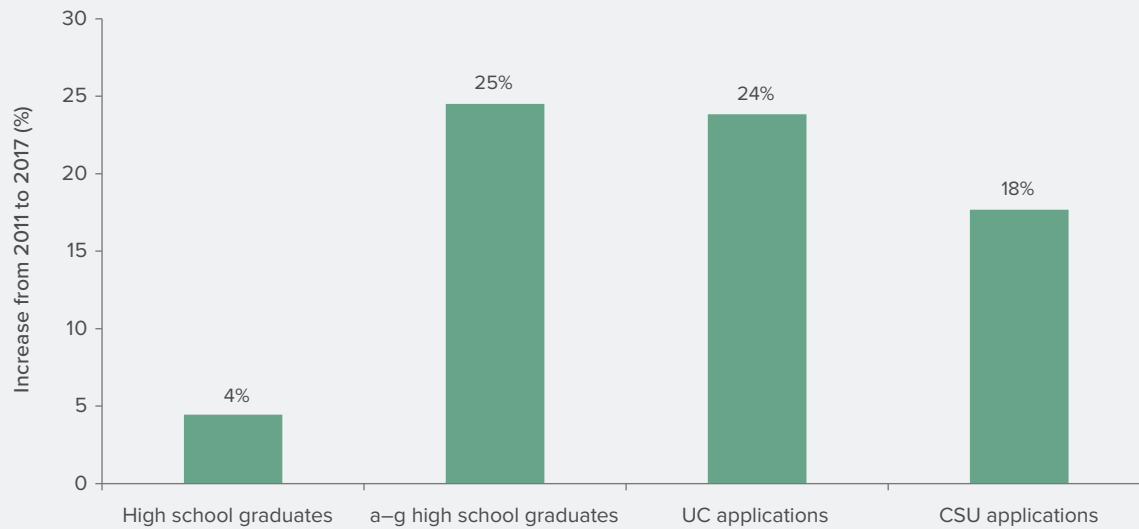


Access to college is essential to California’s future growth

More California high school graduates are academically ready for college than ever before. More are applying to and enrolling in college, and both the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) are expanding access for example—UC pledged to enroll 10,000 more freshmen and transfer students between 2016 and 2018. But many qualified applicants were still turned away, which is a source of concern. Indeed, a 2018 PPIC Statewide Survey found that more than half of Californians are concerned about enrollment capacity in the state’s public colleges and universities.

Expanding access to college benefits individuals and the state as a whole. The economic returns to a postsecondary degree are at their highest level in decades, even as more Californians are attending college, and workers with postsecondary degrees will continue to play a crucial role in the state’s economic growth. Expanding access can also ensure that our system of higher education offers opportunities to Californians who have historically been underrepresented in postsecondary institutions, including those from low-income families and the state’s Latino and African American populations.

RECENT INCREASES IN COLLEGE READINESS AND COLLEGE APPLICATIONS INDICATE A GROWING DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



SOURCES: University of California, California State University, California Department of Education.

NOTES: Students who are a-g graduates have completed the college preparatory course sequence required for admission for UC and CSU. Increases among California residents only, 2011–17.

More high school graduates are competing for limited university slots

The growing share of California high school graduates who are college ready has increased competition for admission to the state’s four-year universities. Eligible students are being turned away from their first-choice colleges. Some choose other colleges in California, but growing numbers are leaving the state.

- California’s Master Plan aimed to provide higher education opportunities for all students.**

The enrollment framework for the state’s public higher education system was set almost 60 years ago by the Master Plan for Higher Education. According to the Master Plan, UC selects from the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates, CSU selects from the top 33 percent, and the California Community Colleges offer access to all state residents. Students also choose to attend nonprofit and for-profit private colleges, as well as colleges in other states.

- **More students are taking the courses that qualify them for college ...**
To be eligible for admission to CSU or UC, students must successfully complete college preparatory coursework (known as the a–g requirement) that includes four years of English, three years of math, two years of lab science, two years of social science, two years of a foreign language, one year of visual or performing arts, and one year of a college preparatory elective, a total of 15 courses. The proportion of public high school graduates who meet this requirement has been increasing rapidly: from 34 percent in 2007–08 to 47 percent in 2016–17. Gains have been especially strong for Asian American and Latino high school graduates: the share of Asian American students completing the a–g requirement grew from 56 percent in 2003–04 to 76 percent in 2016–17, and the share of UC- and CSU-eligible Latino students rose from 22 to 42 percent.
- **... but Master Plan eligibility levels are limiting student options.**
California universities are accepting more students than ever, but the Master Plan framework limits enrollment options for many qualified students. For example, 19 of the 23 CSU campuses are unable to enroll all qualified applicants in the majors to which they apply due to space constraints. During the 2017 admissions, CSU campuses rejected more than 16,600 qualified freshmen applicants, which is an increase of 36 percent since 2013–14.
- **The share of nonresidents at UC has grown—but it is still relatively small.**
The share of first-time UC freshmen coming from another state or country increased from 6 percent in 2008 to 21 percent by 2018, but it is still well below the 30 percent national average for public research universities. Non-residents pay a supplemental tuition of \$29,000 on top of in-state tuition; this money augments state funding and regular tuition revenue. UC has frozen nonresident enrollment at 2017–18 levels for Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, and San Diego, but is allowing for growth of up to 18 percent at its other campuses.
- **Many more California students are leaving the state to attend college.**
A growing number of California’s high school graduates are attending college in other states. Between 2004 and 2017, this number more than doubled, to just over 36,100 students—roughly equal to UC’s freshman class, or 15 percent of the college population. Almost half of those who leave go to public universities—in 2017, the University of Oregon, Northern Arizona University, University of Nevada-Reno, and University of Colorado-Boulder each enrolled more than 800 recent California high school graduates.

Access varies across types of institutions

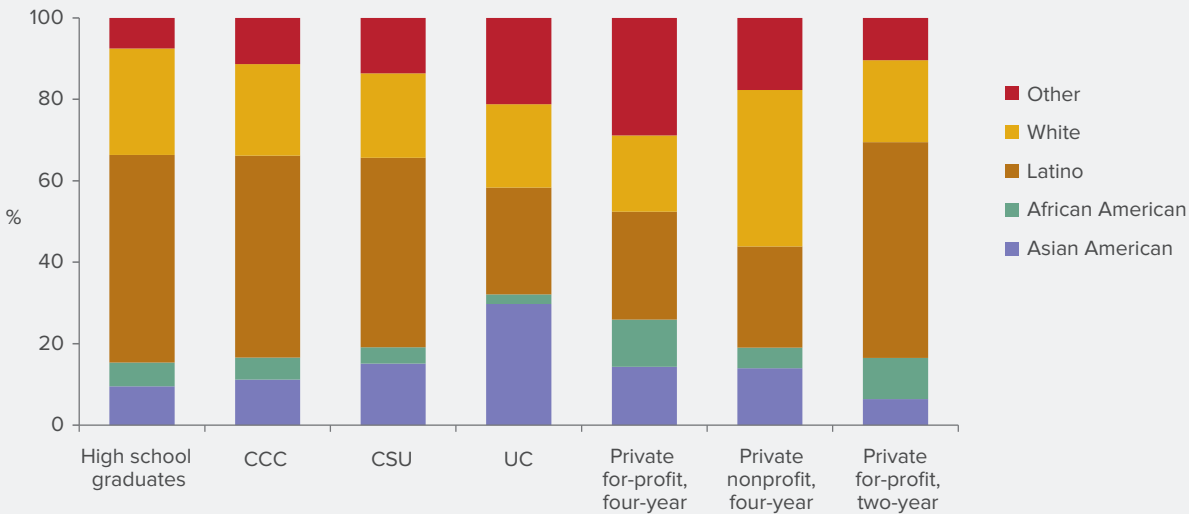
Greater numbers of underrepresented students enroll at CSU and the community colleges than at UC; increased competition and rising tuition may widen this gap.

- **Some parts of the system are more diverse than others.**
The student populations at California’s community colleges and CSU more or less reflect the racial/ethnic composition of high school graduates in the state. In the UC system, Asian Americans are overrepresented, while African American and Latino students are underrepresented. This underrepresentation has grown since Proposition 209—passed in 1996—prohibited the consideration of race in the admissions process. Whites are overrepresented at private nonprofits while African American students are overrepresented at private for-profits.
- **California’s lowest-income high school graduates are more likely to start at a community college.**
About a quarter of full-time first-time college freshmen come from families making less than \$30,000 a year. About half of these students begin at community college, while 19 percent start at CSU and 10 percent at UC. Students from families with higher incomes are generally less likely to start at a community college: only 6 percent of students from families making more than \$75,000 do so, while 58 percent start at UC or CSU and nearly 30 percent go to a private nonprofit.
- **Most students who enroll in community college do not transfer to four-year institutions.**
For some students, community colleges can be a cost-effective way to begin work on a bachelor’s degree. In fact, transfers from community colleges make up about half of CSU graduates each year. Not all community college students intend to transfer, of course. But only about 38 percent of entering students in 2009–10 who were on track to transfer ever did so. Transfer pathways are improving: the number of degrees awarded through the Associate Degree for Transfer—a program that prepares students for transfer to any CSU campus—increased from about 11,000 in 2013–14 to nearly 50,000 in 2017–18.

- **Cost concerns may discourage low-income students from attending four-year colleges.**

According to the PPIC Statewide Survey, most Californians are concerned about the affordability of public colleges and universities. High school graduates from low-income families are eligible for grants that cover tuition in California’s public system. But books, housing, and other living expenses can cost thousands of dollars and are not fully covered by grants. Legislation introduced in 2019 (SB 291) aims to address these costs for community college students.

CALIFORNIA’S DIVERSE COLLEGE POPULATION IS UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED



SOURCE: California Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: High school graduates are from 2017. College enrollment is final release fall 2017 first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates. “Other” includes Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, students who mark two or more races or do not reveal their race, and students who are not US citizens or nationals. Response rates: 100 for CCCs, 23 for CSU, and 9 for UC, 76 private for-profit four-year, 64 for private for-profit two-year, and 49 for private nonprofit four-year.

Looking ahead

Providing meaningful access to college is essential to California residents and the state economy. While projections suggest that the number of high school graduates will not change dramatically over the next 10 years, additional resources devoted to college access could boost college enrollment.

Plan for the impact of better K–12 preparation. California’s K–12 system recently implemented the Common Core State Standards, designed to better prepare students for college and careers. These new academic standards, along with changes to the way colleges determine college readiness (Assembly Bill 705 and Executive Order 1110), are expected to dramatically increase the number of high school graduates ready for college-level coursework. California must be ready to offer these students access to college.

Expand access to four-year colleges. The economy requires many more highly educated workers than it did when the Master Plan enrollment formulas were developed in 1960. The state and its public systems should increase the share of high school graduates eligible for UC and CSU. Another way to increase access to four-year colleges among under-represented groups—including low-income, first-generation, Latino, and African American students—is to improve transfer rates from community colleges. Many private colleges and universities have joined CSU in signing on to the Associate Degree for Transfer program; these agreements have the potential to significantly improve transfer rates.

Connect high school and college data. Unlike many states, California has long lacked a longitudinal data system that monitors student progress through K–12 and college. This limits the state’s ability to identify programs and practices that could improve student access and outcomes. In June 2019, the state legislature passed a bill (AB 75) that funds a process for the development of a statewide education data system. With comprehensive information on how—and how many—students make the leap from high school to college, the state can learn more about barriers to college entrance and completion.

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




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