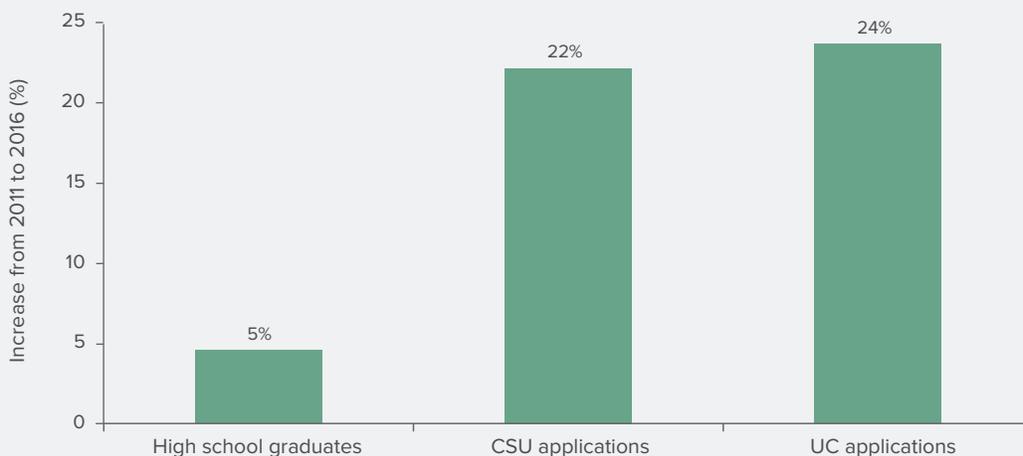


## Access to college is essential for California’s success

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 has pledged to enroll 10,000 more freshmen and transfer students between 2016 and 2018. But many qualified applicants are being turned away, and this is a source of concern. A 2016 PPIC Statewide Survey found that more than three-fourths of Californians are concerned about access to the UC system.

Expanding access to college benefits both 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 students who have traditionally been underrepresented in postsecondary institutions, including those from low-income families and California’s Latino and African American populations.

### RECENT INCREASES IN CSU AND UC APPLICATIONS INDICATE A GROWING DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



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

NOTE: California resident applications only.

## More high school graduates are competing for limited university spots

The growth in the proportion of California high school graduates completing a college preparatory curriculum has increased the competition for access to California’s four-year colleges. Eligible students are being turned away from the college of their choice. Some students choose other colleges in California, but growing numbers are leaving the state to attend college.

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

The state’s enrollment framework for public systems was set more than 50 years ago by the Master Plan for Higher Education. According to the Master Plan, UC selects from the top 12.5 percent of students, CSU selects from the top 33 percent, and the California Community Colleges (CCC) offer access to all state residents. Through these three systems, access to public higher education is available to all students. 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 a public four-year college in California, students must successfully complete a series of college preparatory courses that includes four years of English, three years of math (including advanced algebra), two years of lab science, two years of social science, two years of a foreign language, and one year of visual or performing arts. The proportion of high school graduates who meet this requirement has been increasing rapidly: from 34 percent of public high school graduates in 2003–04 to 45 percent in 2015–16. Gains have been especially strong for Asian and Latino high school graduates: the share of Asian students completing these courses increased from 56 percent in 2003–04 to 72 percent in 2015–16, and the share of Latino students completing the coursework rose from 22 to 37 percent during that time frame.
- **... but Master Plan eligibility levels have remained the same.**  
The California Master Plan for Higher Education dictates that UC admit from the top eighth of high school students and CSU admit from the top third, numbers that haven't changed for more than 50 years. California universities are accepting more students than ever, but many qualified students are still not able to attend their college of choice. In the California State University system, 17 of the 23 campuses are unable to enroll all qualified applicants in the majors to which they apply due to space constraints. During the 2015–16 academic year, CSU campuses rejected more than 17,000 qualified freshman applicants, which is an increase of 3,000 from 2013–14. Between fall 2010 and fall 2014, more than 51,000 qualified freshman UC applicants were redirected from their preferred campuses to UC Merced (fewer than 1,000 of those students enrolled).
- **The share of nonresidents at UC has grown—but it is still relatively small.**  
Total nonresident enrollment (students from another state or country) in the UC system has increased from 5 percent in 2007 to 16 percent in 2016, but it is still well below the 30 percent national average for public research universities. UC indicates that nonresidents provide funding to support the enrollment of more California residents. Nonresidents pay a supplemental tuition of \$26,682 in addition to full in-state tuition, and this money has helped make up for state funding cuts. The system has frozen nonresident enrollment at 2017–18 levels for Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, and San Diego, but is allowing for up to 18 percent at all other campuses.
- **Many more California students are leaving the state to attend college.**  
Over the past 10 years, the number of recent high school graduates who have been leaving California to attend college elsewhere in the United States has been rising. Between 2004 and 2014, the number leaving the state more than doubled to almost 36,500 students—roughly equal to the number of freshmen enrolling at UC or 13 percent of the total college-going population. Almost half of those who leave are going to public universities in other states—the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Oregon each enrolled more than 1,000 recent high school graduates from California in 2014.

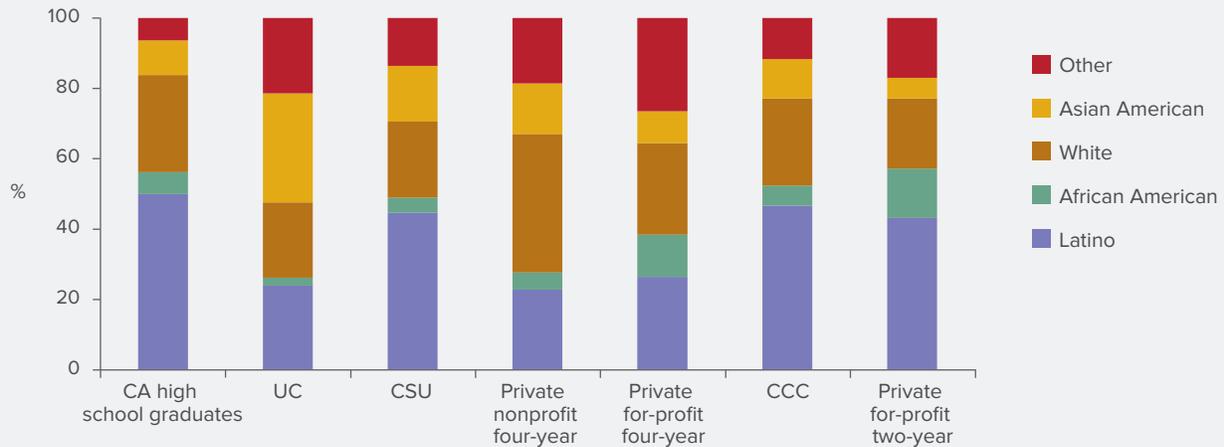
## Access varies across types of institutions

Greater numbers of underrepresented students enroll at CSU and California Community Colleges than at UC; increased competition and rising tuition may widen this gap.

- **Enrollment is high at community colleges but low at four-year colleges.**  
In 2014, California ranked 47th among the 50 states in the share of recent high school graduates who enroll in four-year colleges. Many recent high school graduates in California enroll in community colleges, and the state ranked fifth in the nation in the proportion of recent high school graduates who do so.
- **Some colleges are more diverse than others.**  
The student populations at California's community colleges and CSU more or less match the ethnic and racial breakdown of high school graduates in the state. In the UC system, Asians are overrepresented, while African Americans and Latinos are underrepresented. The gap between the share of these underrepresented high school graduates and the share enrolled at UC has grown since Proposition 209—passed in 1996—eliminated race as a factor that can be considered in the admissions process. At private nonprofits, whites are overrepresented relative to California high school graduates, and African American students are overrepresented at private for-profits. This is a concern, given the low graduation rates and the higher likelihood of for-profit students taking on loans (70%, compared to 50% at public institutions) and because these students leave for-profit schools with more debt (\$30,500 vs. \$16,600 at public institutions).

- California’s lowest-income high school graduates are more likely to start at a community college.**  
 About a quarter of full-time first-time freshmen come from families making less than \$30,000 a year. About half of these students begin at community college, while 20 percent start at a CSU school and 10 percent at UC. Students from families with higher incomes are generally less likely to start at a community college: only 4 percent of students from families making more than \$75,000 do so, while 58 percent start at UC or CSU and 33 percent go to a private nonprofit.
- Most students who enroll in community college do not transfer to four-year institutions.**  
 For some students, community college 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. However, most students who begin at a two-year institution intending to transfer do not succeed in doing so and are less likely to earn bachelor’s degrees than those who start at a four-year university. Only 10 percent of entering students in 2009–10 transferred within six years. Not all students intend to transfer, of course. But only about 38 percent of students who were on track to transfer (those who completed 12 units and attempted transfer-level math or English) ever did so. The Associate Degree for Transfer seeks to lessen the challenge of taking the right kind and number of classes to transfer. Since its inception in 2010, close to 70,000 students have earned an Associate Degree for Transfer, which guarantees admission to a CSU campus.
- Cost concerns may discourage low-income students from applying to or attending four-year colleges.**  
 According to a December 2016 PPIC Statewide Survey, 66 percent of Californians believe that the cost of college keeps students from enrolling. California high school graduates from low-income families are eligible for grants that fully cover tuition at California’s public four-year universities. But books, housing, and other living expenses can cost thousands of dollars and are not fully covered by grants.

### CALIFORNIA’S DIVERSE COLLEGE POPULATION IS UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED



SOURCES: California Department of Education; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: Data on high school graduates refer to 2015. College enrollment numbers are from the fall 2015 provisional release of all first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students. The “other” category includes Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, students who mark two or more races, students whose race is unknown, and students who are not US citizens or nationals. The response rates by institution are 100 percent for CCC, CSU, and UC; 80 percent for private for-profit four-year; 78 percent for private for-profit two-year; and 57 percent for private nonprofit four-year.

### Looking ahead

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

**Plan for the impact of better K–12 preparation.** California’s recently implemented academic standards, the Common Core State Standards, are designed to better prepare students for college and careers. Since 2014, the number of college-ready high school graduates has increased and it is expected to continue to rise, boosting demand for higher education. California must be able to provide access to college for these students.

**Expand access to four-year colleges.** The economy requires far more highly educated workers than it did when the Master Plan admission formulas for UC and CSU were devised more than 50 years ago. The state and its public systems should increase the share of high school graduates eligible for admittance to UC and CSU; this change would also increase the number of historically underrepresented students at the state's public universities. Another important way to both expand and diversify access to four-year colleges is to improve transfer rates from community colleges.

**Use CSU's regional capacity.** The state has mandated that CSU create a referral pool so that it can direct eligible students who are denied admission at their first-choice campuses to alternative locations with available slots. The new policy will be more effective if it refers CSU students to campuses that are as close as possible to their homes. UC generally refers denied students to the Merced campus, which has very low take-up rates.

**Connect high school and college data.** Unlike many states, California has no longitudinal data system that spans K–12 and college. This limits the state's ability to identify programs and practices that could improve access for California's students. With comprehensive information on how—and how many—students make the leap from high school to college, the state could learn more about the barriers students face to successfully entering and completing college. Such knowledge could be used to better target state investments to programs and policies that work.

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*This series is funded by the Sutton Family Fund.*

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