

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is the Campaign for College Opportunity?

The Campaign for College Opportunity is a nonprofit organization devoted to ensuring that the next generation of Californians has the opportunity to go to college as promised by the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education.

The Campaign was founded by the California Business Roundtable, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the Community College League of California in 2003.

The goals of the Campaign are to substantially increase the number of students attending two and four year colleges in the state and to significantly impact the rate that students succeed and achieve their post-secondary education objectives. Through building a strong and committed coalition of key education, industry, labor, and policy leaders as well as leading public awareness efforts which highlight the crisis facing higher education in California, the Campaign works to create an environment of change and lead the state toward effective policy solutions.

Why is the Campaign for College Opportunity needed?

In 1960, California's leaders made a commitment through the Master Plan for Higher Education to provide a place in college for every student who seeks the opportunity. That promise is now at risk as is the economic future of the state which relies increasingly on a college educated workforce.

California currently imports over 60% of its college educated workforce from other states and other countries according to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), while the majority of its own students never complete a college program. Research indicates that the state will simply not be able to import enough workers to meet its growing needs. California must lay the educational groundwork now if it hopes to maintain a robust economy.

A College education will prepare California's future workforce. Over the next two decades, according to a recent report by Dr. Robert Fountain at Sacramento State University, **the growing demand for educated workers and the need to replace retiring Baby Boomers means that we need 3.2 million new college-educated workers** – nurses, teachers, medical technicians, electricians, engineers, and others – to keep our competitive edge.

California has slipped from 40th to 48th in the nation in the percentage of high school students who go directly to college, including both 2-year and 4-year colleges. Less than 44% of the state's high school graduates attend college within a year compared with rates as high as almost 70% in the top ranked states, according to the newest rankings from The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

Between 2000 and 2015, the number of Californians between the ages of 18 and 24 will have increased by more than one million. According to the Department of Finance, 640,000 additional California students are likely to seek college over current capacity by 2014. At the same time, there is no commitment or plan on the part of the state to provide adequate space and funding in our community colleges and universities for this expected growth.

For every new dollar that California invests to get more students in and through college, it will receive a net return of three dollars, according to a landmark study by researchers at UC Berkeley titled "Return on Investment". There are tremendous opportunities now for stakeholders in the state to come together to solve these issues.

What solutions does the Campaign propose to address the college-access crisis?

- Implement Early Commitment to College: The Early Commitment to College program will ensure that students and their families, beginning in middle school, understand that if they prepare for college, California will provide them an opportunity at either a UC, CSU, or Community College. The program reflects two shared values – opportunity, by giving students a path to education after high school, and joint responsibility, by communicating our expectations of students, families, and the state to each do our part.
- Establish alignment of standards, assessments, and instruction between high schools and community colleges so that students are better prepared for college and ready to succeed once in college.
- Propose solutions to emphasize student success in our community colleges and four year universities.
- Establish and define statewide goals to increase college-going and improve college graduation rates with policies and funding in place to support these goals.
- Support the development and use of a K-16 database to track individual students and measure progress and success as students move from high school through college.

How is California's current budget crisis affecting college opportunity?

The Governor's proposed budget cuts may force the state to turn away over 60,000 students from its community colleges and universities, this year alone. The budget gap is not a one-year problem. Colleges have not yet recovered from the cuts of 2003-2004. Restricting access and cutting funding for education services this year will have a cumulative impact on the ability of our colleges and universities to accept and educate students. **The state will feel the economic impact of these decisions for decades to come with a workforce that does not meet industry needs and provides the state with decreased tax revenue.**

Put simply, the state cannot afford to further cut already limited higher education resources. Moreover, students cannot continue to disproportionately bear the costs of higher education without the collaboration and shared responsibility from all who are stakeholders in the state's future.

Who provides support for the work of the Campaign for College Opportunity?

The Campaign would not be possible without financial support from a number of institutions including the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Lumina Education Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the McConnell Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the College Access Foundation of California, the Koret Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, Citigroup, Kaiser Permanente and many other individuals and organizations.

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