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Study: Not enough state students get degrees

■ Sacramento think tank believes California may lose economic edge

By Michelle Maitre
STAFF WRITER

California is at risk of losing its economic edge because not enough students are attending and graduating from college, according to a new report

The report, released Thursday by a higher-education think tank at Sacramento State University, calls on state leaders to do more to build a "college-going culture" to encourage the pursuit of higher degrees

"We want to issue a very strong warning that if we don't close the gaps in educational attainment... we will in fact see a decline in the social and economic health of this state," said study co-author Nancy Shulock, director of the Institute for Higher Educational Leadership and Policy at Sacramento State.

The proportion of high school graduates enrolling directly into colleges has dropped over the past decade, from 61 percent in 1995 to 52 percent in 2005, said the report. And relatively few students who do go to college ultimately earn de-

Please see **STUDY**, News 9

By the numbers

College readiness in the San Francisco Bay Area*

	Region	State
18-24 year olds enrolled in college, 2005	45 percent	39 percent
High school grads going directly to college	60 percent	52 percent
High school grads completing college coursework	42 percent	35 percent
Age 25-64 with bachelor's degrees or higher	44 percent	31 percent
Per capita income	\$33,128	\$26,800

*Region includes the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma

SOURCE: "State of Decline" report by Sacramento State's Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy

STUDY, from News 1

degrees. At the same time, the number of students going to college varies greatly by geographic region and ethnicity, which Shulock said is especially troubling in a state that is growing increasingly more diverse

About 70 percent of Asian high school graduates enroll directly in college, compared with 47 percent of white students, 49 percent of black students and 43 percent of Latino students, the report said

"The only population group projected to grow rapidly is Latino, which currently exhibits the lowest level of educational attainment," Shulock said.

College-going rates also vary greatly by region. In the Bay Area, for instance, 60 percent of the 2005 high school graduates went directly to college, compared with only 23 percent in the Upper Sacramento Valley. Statewide, about 52 percent of graduates went directly to college.

The San Francisco region — which includes the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa and San Mateo — generally earned high marks in a number of benchmarks, such as college completion rates and preparation among students. The study authors said the results were likely due to the demographics of the region, which are buoyed by higher income levels than other parts of the state.

Shulock said Legislators and policymakers must devise new ways to reverse the trends, including making sure students know what courses they need to take to get into college and are aware of financial aid programs. California, which is 49th in the nation in terms of spending per college student, should reinvest resources to help students succeed.

The state's economic well-being will suffer "unless we start making immediate progress and closing the gap in college attendance, college access and college completion," Shulock said.

The report is available at www.collegecampaign.org.