

# NEWS RELEASE

The Campaign for

College  
Opportunity

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## College-Going Rate in California Trends Down, Study Finds

*Low college completion rates and regional and ethnic gaps in access key problems to state's future*

**(Oakland, CA)** – Rates of college enrollment directly after high school have declined over the last decade for every ethnic group, despite some recent improvements in preparation of K-12 students for college, according to a new study by researchers at Sacramento State University and released today with the Campaign for College Opportunity (CCO).

The report, "State of Decline? Gaps in College Access and Achievement Call for Renewed Commitment to Educating Californians," by researchers Nancy Shulock and Colleen Moore of Sacramento State's Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy (IHELP), found a few bright spots, but many troubling trends.

"We hope to convince policy leaders that there is an urgent need to close the gap in educational attainment across regions of the state and racial groups in order to prevent a decline in the economic and social health of the state," said Shulock, director of IHELP and co-author of the study.

Abdi Soltani, CCO's Executive Director, agreed, saying that this is a warning sign that California leaders need to take action, before it's too late.

"California policymakers and educational institutions need to take vigorous steps to make sure that more high school graduates are prepared and enroll directly into college, and once in college, that more students complete degrees and certificates," Soltani said. "Looking ahead to the future of California, we need to make sure that we are a state of opportunity, not a state in decline."

"State of Decline?" offers regional analysis and recommendations on closing the higher education gap. This new study, a follow-up to last year's "Variations on a Theme" report, breaks down higher education performance by race, ethnicity, and geography using the methodology from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's September 2006 "Measuring Up" report.

The report found low completion rates statewide, with California ranking 47<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in the number of certificates and degrees granted per 100 undergraduates. The report also found substantial variations among regions. The South San Joaquin Valley and the Inland Empire, two regions with high population growth, also have among the lowest rates of college preparation, participation and completion, according to the report. In addition, the Upper Sacramento Valley has the lowest college-going rate directly from high school.

The study confirmed that obstacles to college-going affected ethnic and racial groups differently. In 2006, California continues to rank last (50<sup>th</sup>) among all states in the drop-off between the share of Latinos and African Americans in the 18-year-old population and the share of undergraduate degrees awarded to students in those ethnic groups. Other findings include:

- White and Asian students are taking more rigorous coursework and performing better on college entrance exams than their African American and Latino counterparts;
- The number of bachelor's degrees awarded per 100 undergraduates enrolled is highest for white students and the lowest for African American students. While white students are showing improvements in their completion rates in 2006, African Americans are falling farther behind; and
- Latinos continue to lag behind other racial and ethnic groups in levels of college preparation, participation and completion, which is particularly troubling as the Latino share of the state's working-age population reaches 36 percent by 2010, and nearly 50 percent 10 years later.

"Improving preparation, college participation and degree completion among California's diverse ethnic groups and in fast-growing regions is essential to the state's social and economic well-being," Soltani said.

The study notes that if educational attainment for each ethnic group remains as it is today, California's per capita income will fall below the national average by 2020. In light of these and related findings, CCO next year will ask state legislators to reaffirm the state's promise to its residents, made in the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education, to provide a place in college for every student who seeks the opportunity.

At the same time, CCO will promote two new programs aimed at increasing college going, working with educators to adopt proven tools for success and involving families as advocates of higher education:

- "Practices with Promise" asks California educators to share their proven solutions to expand college opportunity in our state so that institutions across California can adopt these successes.
- "Road to College: Information and Action for California Families" aims to help families learn more about preparing their children for college, thus learning about the benefits of higher education and speaking out in their communities as a voice on the issue of college access.

**About IHELP:** The Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy (IHELP), located at Sacramento State University, seeks to enhance leadership and policy for higher education in California and the nation, with an emphasis on community colleges in recognition of their importance to providing an educated and diverse citizenry and workforce. IHELP aims to produce information and services relevant to policymakers, practitioners, and educators. Learn more at: [www.csus.edu/ihe/](http://www.csus.edu/ihe/).

**About CCO:** The Campaign for College Opportunity is devoted to ensuring that the next generation of students in California has the chance to go to college, as promised by the state 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education. It was founded by the California Business Roundtable, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and the Community College League of California. Learn more at: [www.collegecampaign.org](http://www.collegecampaign.org).

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