

## California Community Colleges Strategic Plan

---

*The following is excerpted and adapted from “Vision for Success: Strengthening the California Community Colleges to Meet California’s Needs” by the California Community College System Office. The executive summary, Strategic Plan, and implementation updates are posted on the Chancellor’s Office Website, <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/Reports/vision-for-success.pdf>.*

The System Strategic Plan for the California Community Colleges (CCCs) was adopted in 2017 and provides a comprehensive road map for improving student access and success. The Plan addresses the major demographic, economic, and educational issues that California will face over the coming decade. Developed through consultation with the colleges’ educational leaders and external partners, the Plan builds on the planning and work done by individual colleges and districts, and provides a framework for all constituencies to work together.

### Challenges and Opportunities

California is a dynamic state with a wonderfully diverse population, an innovative business environment, and a vibrant workforce. It is also a state where change is always on the horizon and where opportunities are endless.

The CCCs have made significant strides in the last five years through sustained reform efforts in the areas of student success, transfer, and career technical education. The colleges are now well-poised to build on this success and accelerate the pace of improvement. At the same time, the CCCs face very serious challenges today:

1. Most students who enter a community college never complete a degree or certificate or transfer to a 4-year university. Researchers project that California’s public higher education system is not producing nearly enough educated graduates to meet future workforce needs.
2. CCC students who do reach a defined educational goal such as a degree or transfer take a long time to do so, often accumulating many excess course credits along the way.
3. Older and working CCC students are often left behind in the system, lacking services and financial aid that suit their needs.
4. CCCs are more expensive than they appear—both to students and taxpayers— because of slow time-to-completion and a lack of financial aid to cover students’ living expenses.
5. Serious and stubborn achievement gaps persist across the CCCs and high-need regions of the state are not served equitably.

### Goals for Meeting California’s Needs

The success of California’s broader system of higher education and workforce development stands or falls with the CCCs. To meet California’s needs, the CCC system should strive to achieve the following goals by 2022:

- Increase by at least 20 percent the number of CCC students annually who acquire associates degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job.

- Increase by 35 percent the number of CCC students transferring annually to a UC or CSU.
- Decrease the average number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate's degrees, from approximately 87 total units (the most recent system-wide average) to 79 total units—the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure.
- Increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 60 percent to an improved rate of 69 percent—the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure.
- Reduce equity gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups, with the goal of cutting achievement gaps by 40 percent within 5 years and fully closing those achievement gaps within 10 years.
- Reduce regional achievement gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults, with the ultimate goal of fully closing regional achievement gaps within 10 years.

## Opportunities - A Vision for Change

Below are seven core commitments the community college system can make to achieve these ambitious goals and realize its full potential to meet the future workforce needs of California:

1. **Focus relentlessly on students' end goals.** Getting students to their individual educational goals—whether a degree, certificate, transfer, or specific skill set—should be the explicit focus of the CCCs. More than just offering courses, colleges need to be offering pathways to specific outcomes and providing supports for students to stay on those paths until completion.
2. **Always design and decide with the student in mind.** Colleges need to make it easy for all students, including working adults, to access the courses and services they need. Students should not bear the burden of misaligned policies between education systems.
3. **Pair high expectations with high support.** Students should be encouraged to go “all in” on their education, with support to meet their personal and academic challenges. Assessment and placement practices must be reformed so that students are placed at the highest appropriate course level, with ample supports to help them succeed.
4. **Foster the use of data, inquiry, and evidence.** Data analysis should be a regular practice used for improving services at all levels, not a compliance activity. Decisions should be based on evidence, not anecdotes or hunches.
5. **Take ownership of goals and performance.** The CCC system should be rigorously transparent about its performance, own its challenges, and adopt a solution-oriented mindset to those things it can control. Goals should be used to motivate and provide direction, not punish.
6. **Enable action and thoughtful innovation.** Moving the needle on student outcomes will require calculated risk, careful monitoring, and acceptance that failures will sometimes happen. Innovation should be thoughtful and aligned with goals; results should be tracked early and often.
7. **Lead the work of partnering across systems.** Education leaders across the education systems and workforce development systems need to meet much more frequently, in more depth, and with more personnel dedicated to the task.

By working together these systems can strengthen pathways for students and improve results. In each of these areas, there are clear steps for the CCC Chancellor's Office to lead and support the work of the colleges, from modeling the kinds of organizational changes and behaviors expected at the college level to advocating for CCC students at the highest levels of state government.