

Strengthening Student Success and Economic Mobility

BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2026-27



California's community colleges are the most powerful drivers of economic mobility in the state, where access to education creates opportunity, bolsters the workforce, and strengthens the economy and communities. Each year our 116 colleges open doors for more than 2 million students who are working to build better futures for themselves and their families. Our 2026 legislative priorities and proposed budget reflect a clear commitment to strengthen student success, expand opportunity at scale and support the talent pipeline that fuels our economy.

The California Community Colleges are requesting **\$478.1 million in ongoing funds** and \$237.4 million in one-time funds to advance the system's highest priorities and **ensure more students can access opportunity and economic mobility.**

These investments center on three priorities that will strengthen student success and California's long-term economic health:

- 1. Equitable Baccalaureate Attainment** requires expanding degree and transfer pathways so more students can complete 4-year degrees.
- 2. Enhanced Workforce and Economic Development** depends on strengthening earn-and-learn programs, aligning training with regional labor market needs and preparing students for high-demand careers across the state.
- 3. Generative AI and the Future of Learning** call for modernizing technology and learning environments so students can access quality online instruction, benefit from AI-enabled tools and build the digital skills needed for a changing economy.



Stand with us in expanding opportunity for every student and strengthening the workforce that drives our state forward.

I. Equitable Baccalaureate Attainment

Goal: *Expand access to high-value degrees that drive economic mobility and meet state workforce needs.*

California's talent pipeline depends on more students completing degrees and transferring into high-demand fields. Many regions lack accessible four-year options, and students face barriers that limit their ability to earn credentials that lead to living-wage careers.

EXPANDING BACCALAUREATE ATTAINMENT WILL:

- **Expand access to community college baccalaureate programs**, including rural and underserved areas.
- **Modernize and expand Credit for Prior Learning** to help students earn credit for skills they already have.
- **Improve financial aid access** through stronger student communication and expansion of student assistance programs.
- **Strengthen faculty and staff capacity** with professional development and resources.
- **Improve supports for Native American students, Dreamers** through legal services and liaison staffing.
- **Address housing and basic needs barriers** that prevent students from completing degrees.
- **Reach focused learner populations** through targeted advertising, academic support and culturally responsive services.



WORKING MOM BECOMES EDUCATOR

Cassandra Sisemore returned to college at age 29, balancing school and parenting while discovering a passion for mathematics at Modesto Junior College. After earning her associate degree she transferred to a four-year university, completed a bachelor's and later finished a master's in Mathematics Education. She now teaches as a full-time TOSA and adjunct instructor. **Accessible transfer pathways allowed Cassandra to restart her education while raising a family and to build a stable career.**



The Governor has set a statewide goal for **70% of working-age Californians to earn a post-secondary degree**. The state will not meet this goal without expanding flexible degree pathways and helping more students stay enrolled and graduate.

II. Enhanced Workforce and Economic Development

Goal: Ensure students and workers can access training that meets California's most urgent labor market demands.

Our state's economy depends on a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of fast-growing industries in health care, climate response, education and infrastructure. Employers across the state report persistent shortages and many workers struggle to access training that leads to stable living-wage careers.

STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WILL:

- **Expand apprenticeship and earn-and-learn opportunities** by increasing Related Supplemental Instruction funding.
- **Invest in campus-based microgrids and climate-resilient learning programs** to prepare students for clean energy careers.
- **Modernize Economic and Workforce Development programs** to align training with emerging industries, including health care, climate response, education and early education.
- Support regional economic initiatives like the **Los Angeles Rebuild plan**.
- **Create integrated education and employment pathways** through safety-net program partnerships.
- **Support part-time faculty** through training and stability resources.



APPRENTICESHIP BUILDS A LONG-TERM CAREER

Vicente Lopez entered Santiago Canyon College's apprenticeship program as he shifted careers from construction. Through a placement with the Metropolitan Water District, he gained hands-on training, classroom instruction and steady wage growth while earning a State Certificate of Completion. **Earn-and-learn apprenticeship models gave Vicente a direct route into a skilled career with clear advancement and strong, long-term opportunity.**



The return on investment is clear: **California Community Colleges generate \$173 billion annually and support 1.66 million jobs statewide.** These investments meet workforce shortages, keep employers competitive and expand opportunity for students.

III. Generative AI and the Future of Learning

Goal: Equip students, educators and institutions with technology tools to thrive in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

One in four California workers will be affected by AI-linked job changes by 2030. Colleges need stronger tools to help students learn and build new skills that match the future of learning.



SHORT-TERM CREDENTIAL LEADS TO CAREER JOB IN IT

Jason Zippel completed the COMPTIA A+ certification prep course at Santa Ana College, gaining the troubleshooting skills and confidence he needed to pass his exams. He now applies his technical skills daily in his role at Kaiser Permanente. **Short-term workforce credentials helped Jason build practical skills quickly and step into a career job with real growth potential.**

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF LEARNING WILL:

- **Modernize systemwide technology** by building a Cloud Data Platform and improving administrative systems that support enrollment, advising and student services.
- **Expand online learning** through an enhanced California Virtual Campus and stronger digital tools for students.
- **Integrate AI across instruction and operations** with AI-enabled tools and faculty and staff training that supports effective and responsible use.



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CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES AT A GLANCE

The California Community Colleges form the largest system of higher education in the nation with 116 colleges serving more than 2 million students each year. Our campuses provide open access to affordable education and training that help students build stronger futures for themselves and their families. As the primary entry point to higher education for California's most diverse populations, the system plays a core role in preparing the state's workforce and supporting local communities.

VISION 2030: A ROADMAP FOR OPPORTUNITY

[Vision 2030](#) guides the system's efforts to increase access, boost completion and create real economic mobility for students. It promotes alignment with workforce needs and investment in modern tools and supports. With shared commitment across the state, Vision 2030 positions more Californians to earn credentials that lead to stable careers and long-term economic security.

For more information, visit [cccoco.edu](https://www.cccco.edu).