



**TO:** President Costa  
Vice President Aguinaldo  
Members of the Board of Governors

**FROM:** Dr. Daisy Gonzales, Interim Chancellor

**RE:** Fall 2022 Student Headcount Update

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Over the last three years, college students across the nation faced substantial uncertainties about their health and safety, their financial stability, their learning environments, and their family and social connections – all critical inputs for success in college. I have committed to keeping you informed of emerging enrollment data and necessary steps to support our colleges recovery.

The herculean efforts of our colleges have led enrollments to stabilize. The impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic on higher education enrollment have stabilized, with declines nationally of about .6% across higher education and a slight increase in community college enrollment of approximately .4%, according to the National Student Clearinghouse review of fall enrollment. While COVID-related uncertainty amongst our students and institutions does remain, the enrollment picture has begun to improve. Though data from one college, Napa Valley College, remains to be reported, sufficient data is now available for meaningful observations to be made about the general patterns of student enrollment in Fall 2022 and generally those observations about the state of enrollment in our system are encouraging.

## California Community College Enrollment Improved in Fall 2022

The analysis below accounts for more than 99% of unduplicated student headcount in our system and helps us understand the shape of the ongoing impact on student enrollment. **For reporting colleges, the Fall 2022 headcount increased by approximately 2.4%**, beginning to reverse the declines that our system experienced from Fall 2020 through Spring 2022 and slightly outperforming the national enrollment picture in Fall 2022.

As can be seen in Table 1, most student populations exhibited increases, particularly student populations most impacted by the pandemic, including African Americans +5.3%, Hispanics +5.7%, Native Americans, +5.7%, and students between 45-54 years old +4.5%, and 65 years old and older+7.4%. Additionally, male students increased by 4.1%, students 19 and under increased by 9.6% as colleges increased their dual enrollment students and as first-time students and first-time transfers both increased for the first time in the pandemic.

Furthermore, 71 of the system's colleges and noncredit institutions demonstrated at least some positive headcount growth. Of those, 45 colleges demonstrated growth of 5% or greater and, of that group, 18 had headcount growth of 10% or more.

**Table 1: Preliminary system headcount change from F2019 to F2022 (for reporting colleges)**

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	% Change F19 to F21	% Change F21 to F22	Total % Change F19 to F22
<b>Systemwide Headcount</b>	<b>1,562,038</b>	<b>1,341,973</b>	<b>1,251,130</b>	<b>1,280,918</b>	<b>-19.9%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>-18.0%</b>
<b>Female</b>	850,681	765,543	693,880	695,431	-18.4%	<b>0.2%</b>	-18.3%
<b>Male</b>	688,499	557,691	535,799	558,020	-22.2%	<b>4.1%</b>	-19.0%
<b>African American</b>	84,180	70,428	65,935	69,406	-21.7%	<b>5.3%</b>	-17.6%
<b>Asian</b>	164,519	140,956	128,574	129,038	-21.8%	<b>0.4%</b>	-21.6%
<b>Filipino</b>	43,213	38,501	33,622	31,524	-22.2%	<b>-6.2%</b>	-27.0%
<b>Hispanic</b>	744,353	642,455	601,725	635,962	-19.2%	<b>5.7%</b>	-14.6%
<b>Native American</b>	5,578	4,495	4,092	4,314	-26.6%	<b>5.4%</b>	-22.7%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	6,157	5,580	4,984	4,973	-19.1%	<b>-0.2%</b>	-19.2%
<b>White Non-Hispanic</b>	363,640	324,328	300,113	293,754	-17.5%	<b>-2.1%</b>	-19.2%
<b>Two or more races</b>	58,156	56,665	52,913	53,749	-9.0%	<b>1.6%</b>	-7.6%
<b>Other/Unknown</b>	92,242	58,565	59,172	58,198	-35.9%	<b>-1.6%</b>	-36.9%
<b>19 and less</b>	468,726	429,051	403,827	442,506	-13.8%	<b>9.6%</b>	-5.6%
<b>20 to 24</b>	445,828	383,961	341,048	331,187	-23.5%	<b>-2.9%</b>	-25.7%
<b>25 to 34</b>	318,755	283,813	257,532	246,757	-19.2%	<b>-4.2%</b>	-22.6%
<b>35 to 44</b>	139,707	117,489	119,105	122,369	-14.7%	<b>2.7%</b>	-12.4%
<b>45-54</b>	80,670	60,532	61,564	64,340	-23.7%	<b>4.5%</b>	-20.2%
<b>65 and up</b>	47,179	31,207	31,890	34,252	-32.4%	<b>7.4%</b>	-27.4%
<b>Non-DSPS</b>	1,439,386	1,243,977	1,161,631	1,196,541	-19.3%	<b>3.0%</b>	-16.9%
<b>DSPS</b>	122,652	97,996	89,503	84,374	-27.0%	<b>-5.7%</b>	-31.2%

However, the recovery has been uneven with some groups exhibiting continuing declines, particularly Filipino students (-6.2%), students with disabilities (-5.7%), and students in the middle of the age distribution, ages 20 to 24 (-2.9%) and 25 to 34 (-4.2%). Additionally, 12 colleges exhibited additional headcount declines of 5% or more, with 5 of them declining by 10% or more.

## **Lessons Learned from the Fall 2022 California Community College Decision Survey**

The impact of the pandemic on community college enrollment nationwide and across our colleges continues to be profound and far-reaching, leading many more students of all ages to choose or be forced to forgo education. National and state surveys of college students during the pandemic revealed increased levels of food and housing insecurity, anxiety and mental health issues, difficulty concentrating, and increased worries about academic performance. Increased economic, social, and academic stress was particularly pronounced among community college students and has led large numbers of students to temporarily or permanently alter their college-going intentions/plans.

To further improve our system's understanding of our students' needs to serve them better and help them return to their education, the Chancellor's Office engaged the Research and Planning Group for the California Community Colleges (The RP Group) to [conduct a statewide survey of students](#) who had not yet enrolled in the Fall term, including both previously enrolled and first-time students, ultimately yielding more than 75,000 responses. The most common challenges that students revealed were with affording college, needing to prioritize work, and the care of dependents. Student responses also revealed a tension between students' preferences – with some students frustrated with the lack of availability of enough online courses but other students wanting a more systematic return to in person courses. There was a similar juxtaposition between students that felt that the current COVID policies were too restrictive and those that felt that they were not strong enough, leading them to not feel safe returning to in person instruction.

Taken together, the pandemic has revealed three core lessons. First, our students continue to face systemic financial and other life challenges that underscores the continued need for our colleges to work with the state to better and more holistically support our students, making sure that our students have the resources necessary to cover their basic needs so that they are able to focus more of their time and efforts on their education. Second, students discovered important possibilities in the delivery of online and asynchronous instruction and supports during the pandemic and what they are revealing is the desire to be able to access their education and their educational supports **with increased flexibility**. They want to be able to attend in person to get that stronger sense of connection with their faculty and their fellow students, but they also want to be able to attend online when their schedule or their child care makes it hard for them to come to campus, and they want to be able to attend asynchronously when their boss changes their schedule or the one class that they need to finish is consistently offered only during the times they work. Finally, the survey revealed that, whatever the challenges students were facing, nearly half of students indicated that they would like to be contacted by their institutions, something that tends to reliably improve students' likelihood of enrolling and staying enrolled.

## Fall 2022 Enrollment Update

March 10, 2023

Following the *Vision for Success* framework and its key strategies and metrics (including Guided Pathways, Equitable Placement, Support and Completion, the Student-Centered Funding Formula, and our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility work), our colleges have been able to reorganize themselves and better prepare for the future of education. These priorities refocus our efforts and attention on improving student success in our classrooms, the climate on our campuses, and our students' persistence through to the successful completion of the meaningful educational outcomes they seek and deserve.

## Next Steps in Understanding Student Enrollment in the California Community Colleges

To support these goals and continue our path forward grounded in the work of the *Vision for Success*, the Chancellor's Office will continue to:

- 1) Publish effective strategies, including the forthcoming *Top 10 Strategies to Better Serve Californians: High-impact Practices to Bring Back Underrepresented Students to California's Community Colleges*, a brief produced in partnership with the Chancellor's CEO Roundtable.
- 2) Collaborate with system CEOs to identify and share effective regional actions and take them to scale or ensure their permanency across our colleges. This includes a strong focus on dual-enrollment infrastructure, inmate education, baccalaureate degree programs and short-term workforce credentials with career placement and mentorship.
- 3) Focus system webinars on elevating strategies that support students from enrollment to completion and accelerate improvements in enrollment.
- 4) Collaborate with state and national research partners to:
  - a. Survey our colleges about their strategies for addressing pandemic impact to their students and institutions (launching this month).
  - b. Comprehensively examine the impacts of institutional differences in strategies to address student enrollment, persistence, and completion.
  - c. Survey former students, current students, and students who applied but did not enroll to better understand the barriers that students are facing **and** to continue to provide that information directly to colleges to support more effective triage and support of students.

The work ahead will require us to remain student-centered and, as the *Vision for Success* calls us to do, *always* design with the student in mind. The data and survey results reinforce our actions and continue to provide our system a foundation upon which we can recover, rebuild, train, and retrain millions of Californians. Stakeholders throughout our system continue to pour themselves into very difficult work in an effort to help maintain our students' access and advance their success amid changing conditions. As the system continues to be resilient and evolve, the Board of Governors steady commitment and affirmation of the *Vision for Success* goals will continue to be critical to the future of California Community Colleges.

cc: Dr. Lizette Navarette, Interim Deputy Chancellor  
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