

## **Cal LAW**

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office | Sonya Christian, Chancellor

#### **SONYA CHRISTIAN**

Chancellor



May 22, 2025

Secretary of the Senate Erika Contreras State Capitol, Room 305 Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Legislative Report** 

Dear Secretary Contreras:

Pursuant to California Education Code Section 88750, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors for California Community Colleges are pleased to release the Cal LAW Legislative Report.

The report includes information on program implementation; program outcomes, including student participation and the demographics, graduation, and success rates of those students; dual enrollment and transfer activity; and student and partner success stories.

For any questions regarding this report, please contact Anthony Cordova, Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Economic Development, at acordova@cccco.edu.

Sincerely,

Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Donga Christian

Enclosure: Report

CC:

Sue Parker, Chief Clerk of the Assembly Office of Legislative Counsel

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATHWAY TO LAW SCHOOL INITIATIVE LEGISLATIVE REPORT

**Prepared By** 

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

Workforce and Economic Development Division

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#### INTRODUCTION

The Community College Pathway to Law School (Cal LAW) initiative was launched with the goal of enhancing opportunities and advancement in the legal profession for diverse populations, particularly those who have been traditionally underrepresented. At the core of the initiative was expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion by ensuring all students, regardless of race, age, economic status, or geography, gained exposure and confidence to pursue a law career pathway. The intent was to provide community college students, particularly women and people of color, with a direct path to law school, and to give those law schools a pipeline of diverse students from across the state. As the largest system of higher education in the nation and with over 70% of California public higher education students attending a California community college, the California Community Colleges system plays an integral role in helping to diversify the pipeline of students seeking a career in the legal profession.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The fiscal year 2021-22 budget provided the Chancellor's Office with a one-time appropriation of \$5 million, of which \$891,000 was not distributed and later reappropriated to address the state budget deficit. These funds were intended to provide colleges the opportunity to work together with Cal LAW program partners to:

- Support opportunities for dual enrollment partnerships between community colleges and local high school law academies.
- Implement partnerships with the California State University system that incorporate associate degree for transfer pathways to prepare students for a career in the legal profession.
- Expand existing transfer agreements with the University of California that help prepare students for a career in the legal profession.
- Provide student advising and guidance to help participants in the Community College Pathway to Law School initiative successfully transfer into the California State University (CSU) system or the University of California (UC).

#### PROGRAM ALIGNMENT WITH VISION 2030

Vision 2030: A Roadmap for California Community Colleges provides focus, equity, and direction to the community colleges. The Cal LAW initiative supports Vision 2030's strategic direction of Equitable Workforce and Economic Development by expanding dual enrollment pathways, improving social and economic mobility opportunities for students, and investing in the State's economic growth and global competitiveness through career education for the legal profession.

#### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The initiative was implemented through two competitive Chancellor's Office grant processes that awarded 21 colleges with grants of \$99,000 per college, as shown in Table 1. Cal LAW grantee colleges were required to provide the Chancellor's Office with both expenditure and progress reports at multiple intervals throughout the grant term. In the final report, colleges indicating they had received technical assistance from the Chancellor's Office consistently rated the helpfulness of that assistance at the top rating as "being very helpful."

#### **TABLE 1: CAL LAW AWARDED COLLEGES**

Cal LAW Grant Awards by Region and College (Round 1)

Region	College	Award Amount
Bay Area	San Jose City College	\$99,000
Central Valley Mother Lode	College of the Sequoias	\$99,000
Inland Empire/Desert	Chaffey College	\$99,000
Los Angeles	Los Angeles City College	\$99,000
San Diego / Imperial	Palomar College	\$99,000
San Diego / Imperial	Southwestern College	\$99,000
Orange County	Saddleback College	\$99,000
South Central Coast	College of the Canyons	\$99,000
Total		\$792,000

#### Cal LAW Grant Awards by Region and College (Round 2)

Region	College	Award Amount
Bay Area	Evergreen Valley College	\$99,000
Bay Area	Solano Community College	\$99,000
Central Valley Mother Lode	Bakersfield College	\$99,000
Central Valley Mother Lode	San Joaquin Delta College	\$99,000
Inland Empire / Desert	Riverside City College	\$99,000
Los Angeles	Cerritos College	\$99,000
Orange County	Cypress College	\$99,000
Orange County	Golden West College	\$99,000
Orange County	Irvine Valley College	\$99,000
Orange County	Santa Ana College	\$99,000
San Diego / Imperial	San Diego Mesa College	\$99,000
South Central Coast	Oxnard College	\$99,000

Region	College	Award Amount
South Central Coast	Ventura College	\$99,000
Total		\$1,287,000

Additionally, the Chancellor's Office issued a \$2,030,000 grant to the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) to support the community college pathway to law school initiative expansion and facilitate central support for Cal Law Pathway partner schools. Activities resulting from this grant included the following:

#### 2023 Activities

- Developed an online newsletter, updating all partners, members, and students of Cal LAW events, nationwide legal issues, and alumni updates. The average number of newsletter subscribers for the past three years is 635.
- As part of a contract to mentor and guide Cal LAW community college faculty, Career Ladders Project held a webinar to assist high schools in creating dual enrollment agreements with community colleges (86 high school faculty and administrators attended).
- Cal LAW staff began meeting with California State University (CSU) and University of California representatives to discuss transfer models and pathway connectivity.
- Held a two-day California LAW Academy Support (CLAS) Summer Institute (27 attendees).
- Held in-person and virtual Regional Assemblies and Roundtable discussions with partners, faculty, and administrators (100 attendees).
- Delivered a Cal LAW informational session webinar for CSUs (19 representatives).

#### 2024 Activities

- Held a two-day California LAW Academy Support (CLAS) Summer Institute (30 attendees).
- Held in-person and virtual Regional Assemblies and Roundtable discussions with partners, faculty, and administrators (138 attendees).

#### **Multi-Year Activities**

 Since June 2021, Cal LAW has awarded 704 certificates to students who successfully completed a seven-course pattern and graduated from a participating community college. The certificate officially recognizes them as "Cal LAW Scholars" and provides them with key benefits, including a fee waiver at partner law schools and a competitive edge in law school applications.

- Constitution Day webinars were presented in 2021 through 2024, averaging approximately 270 viewers each year.
- Organized and implemented a two-day Cal LAW Summit conference in 2021 through 2025, averaging approximately 300 registrants at each event. The Pathways to Law Summit is an annual gathering at a partner law school that brings together students, educators, and legal professionals to strengthen and expand law pathway programs across California, and provide students with valuable networking opportunities, workshops, and insights into legal education and careers.
- Organized and implemented a Law Day in 2022 through 2024, averaging approximately 90 participants each year. Law Day is celebrated annually on the first of May in the United States and is dedicated to reflecting on the role of law in the foundation of the country and its importance in maintaining justice and liberty.
- From 2022 to 2025, the Cal LAW website received 130,186 page views, reflecting growing interest and engagement with programs, events, and resources.
- Held equity-centered webinars for Cal LAW students and faculty:
  - O Fireside Chat with Mary Smith: National Native American Heritage Month
  - O Applying to Undergraduate and Law School as a Cal Law Scholar
  - O Critical Race Theory Information Session

#### GENERAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Funding to community colleges for expanding pathways to law school programs resulted in faculty engagement and training in law pathways and curriculum design; delivery of law-related courses to dually enrolled high school students and regularly enrolled community college students; outreach to and engagement of underrepresented students; enrichment opportunities for high school and community college students in law-related careers; and collaboration with local school districts, universities, and legal organizations. One college noted that the grant funds allowed them to develop lasting recruitment strategies that will continue long beyond the grant, helping to ensure the program's continued success.

#### STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Student participation in engagement opportunities varied significantly by college, from 20 to 1,060 students, with a total of 4,836 students. The number of regularly enrolled community college students on a Cal LAW pathway also varied from zero to 206, with a total of 1,071 students, as shown in Table 2. This variation is likely due to the different phases of program implementation across the funded colleges, and each college's areas of focus. For example, some colleges were involved in the Cal LAW initiative prior to the grant funding and already had some program infrastructure and support systems in place, while others were in the initial phase of obtaining their Cal LAW-related associate degree for transfer (ADT) approval and developing related degree courses. Other colleges focused on building or expanding

partnerships with local high schools to offer dual enrollment courses. Colleges further along in implementation could focus more on high school and community college student engagement, enrichment, and support.

One college that was particularly successful at engaging high numbers of students offered mentorship programs and networking events, allowing students to connect with legal professionals and build professional networks. Other colleges facilitated law school, jail, and courthouse visits, established student-run law clubs, and developed law academies with local high schools.

A significant number of students who started on a Cal LAW pathway did not complete it. One college with 129 of these students faced unexpected challenges. They found setting up law academies with local high schools more difficult than expected and faced unanticipated changes in administration and personnel that impacted the project. Others attributed the lack of completion to the same persistence challenges that many community college students face, regardless of their academic goals.

**Table 2: Student Participation in Cal LAW** 

Student Participation in Cal LAW	Total
Students who participated in Cal LAW engagement opportunities	4,836
Regularly enrolled community college students who indicated they are on a Cal LAW pathway	1,071
Students who began but did not complete the Cal LAW pathway	323

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Due to the small number of students participating in Cal LAW at any one community college, colleges were not asked to track the demographics of participating students. This is consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirement that educational institutions protect student information, and with the practice of most educational institutions to suppress data for any group where the number of students falls below a pre-set threshold. For the California Community Colleges system, that threshold is 20 students. However, each college was asked to identify targeted populations in their Cal LAW grant application and describe how they would outreach to those student groups. Figure 1 is a pie chart that shows the combined student demographics of the 21 Cal LAW-funded colleges, of which 18 are federally designated Hispanic Serving Institutions.

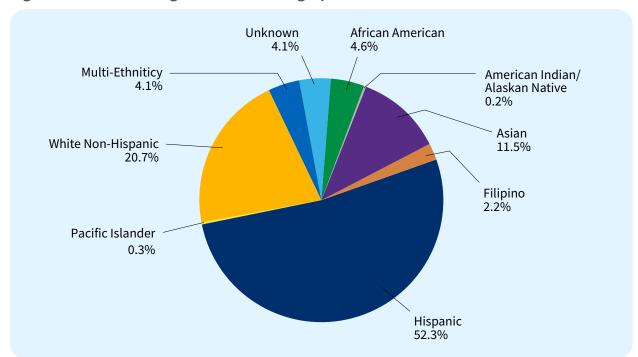


Figure 1: Cal LAW Colleges Student Demographics

#### **DUAL ENROLLMENT**

While Table 3 shows the number of students enrolled in "new" dual enrollment courses, there were also dual enrollment successes within existing law-related dual enrollment courses. For example, Southwestern College noted that during the grant term, 460 students enrolled in dual enrollment courses related to their Law, Public Policy, and Society ADT and Pathway to Law School Certificate of Achievement.

In addition to dual enrollment successes, there were also challenges. For example, some colleges found engaging with high schools and coordinating with high school curriculum development schedules more difficult than expected, particularly within the limited timeframe of the grant.

**Table 3: Cal LAW Dual Enrollment Activity** 

Cal LAW Dual Enrollment Activity	Total
New dual enrollment partnerships developed due to Cal LAW grant	20
New dual enrollment courses offered due to Cal LAW grant	8
Number of students enrolled in new dual enrollment courses	208

#### **GRADUATION AND TRANSFER**

As shown in Table 4, a total of 300 Cal LAW students graduated and transferred into a similar major at either a California State University (CSU), a University of California (UC), or another college or university. These included transfers to CSU Bakersfield, CSU East Bay, CSU Long Beach, CSU Northridge, Fresno State University, CSU Sacramento, CSU San Bernadino, San Diego State University, San Francisco State University, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC

Los Angeles, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, Auburn University, Stanford University, University of Pennsylvania, and University of San Diego.

**Table 4: Cal LAW Graduation and Transfer Activities** 

Cal LAW Graduation And Transfer Activity	
Students who graduated and transferred into similar major at a CSU	77
Students who graduated and transferred into similar major at a UC	
Students who graduated and transferred into a similar major at another college or university	134
Total	300

#### **Success Rates**

While 300 Cal LAW students successfully graduated and transferred into a similar major at a CSU, UC, or other college or university, many other students are still completing their degrees. As a result, the number of students yet to graduate and transfer into a similar major at a college or university is expected to increase in the coming years.

#### TRANSFER PATHWAYS ESTABLISHED

Only a few colleges reported new transfer pathways established due to the Cal LAW grants. Examples include Palomar College's Law, Public Policy & Society Associate of Arts for Transfer to the Global Studies major at CSU San Marcos, and Golden West College's Law and Public Policy degree to UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC Los Angeles, UC San Diego, Loyola Marymount, Santa Clara University, University of San Francisco, and University of Southern California.

#### **SUCCESS STORIES**

#### STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

#### College of the Sequoias

Jazmin is a single mother who returned to school to obtain a degree to be more marketable in the business sector. However, while at College of the Sequoias (COS), she picked up a Pathway brochure and attended a presentation hosted by the college. Jazmin's interest was piqued, and she applied to the program. Not only did she become a Pathway Scholar, but she also became involved in the college's Society of Legal Studies club, became an officer, and was part of the Student Senate. Jazmine is the first in her family to attend college. Her transformation speaks to the power of education. She was no longer limiting herself to obtaining an associate degree; now, she can see herself as a future attorney. Her next hurdle was transferring to a UC, as she needed housing for herself and her daughter. It seemed to be an insurmountable hurdle. She was incredibly stressed, thinking she would not be able to transfer to UC Berkeley, although she was accepted. Her tenacity and learned commitment served her well. Berkeley worked closely with COS and was able to offer her campus housing. Coming from a small town and being a single mother, she is now in her last year at UC Berkeley and looking to apply to law school.

#### **Palomar College**

Palomar College received the following from a Cal LAW student:

My journey in higher education has been anything but traditional. I started college back in 2009 while serving on active duty in the Navy, but between deployments and military responsibilities, my education came in pieces. It wasn't until I retired from the Navy that I could finally commit to being a full-time student. By then, I was a single mom who later married to become a mother of three, while homeschooling my middle school-aged daughter. As a first-generation college student, I knew I was charting new territory for my family.

I discovered the Cal LAW program when I noticed flyers for a Legal Careers Panel on campus. The timing couldn't have been better. Through my military career, I had progressed from being a law enforcement first responder to an anti-terrorism officer, and finally to a legal officer on an aircraft carrier. Working closely with Navy JAG officers, coordinating cases and handling legal documentation, I developed an interest in law that I wanted to pursue further.

"Being part of the Pathway to Law program opened doors that you wouldn't know were there if you weren't involved," I can say without hesitation. The program has given me incredible opportunities – from having lunch with a judge to participating in workshops about law school admissions. "It has given me opportunities I wouldn't have known were out there," and helped me understand everything from the different levels of student admissions to the importance of being honest in applications. I've learned that our personal struggles actually make us better lawyers.

The one-on-one mentorship from my faculty advisor and academic counselor has been invaluable. Even though I've graduated from Palomar College, I stay connected with the Cal LAW program, watching for opportunities on their website and attending webinars, like a recent one about liberty and free speech in schools.

Looking ahead, I'm focused on completing my bachelor's degree before deciding between paralegal school and law school. Given my military background, I'm particularly interested in cybersecurity law, though I'm also considering becoming an ethics counsel for the government. Either way, I want to continue serving my community, just in a different uniform.

#### **Riverside City College**

"Law school was always my big dream and, as a first-generation college student, I wasn't sure how to get there. Riverside City College changed everything! I immediately connected with the Pathway to Law School Program's Faculty Champion and became a Law Ambassador. That's how I found Cal LAW. It's been a whirlwind of amazing opportunities. This isn't just a program; it's a life-changing experience. The exceptional mentorship, the connections, and the practical skills have changed my trajectory and is making my dream of becoming an attorney, and maybe even a judge, feel within reach!" Myisha, Riverside City College, Law Ambassador.

#### Southwestern College

Southwestern College shared, "A Binational Student's Journey to Success:"

Meet Stefany, a remarkable binational student who called the San Ysidro community of South San Diego and Northern Tijuana region home. Learning English later in her high school years, rather than as a young child, Stefany faced the challenge of navigating academic life in a second language. But through her grit and determination, she turned every challenge into an opportunity for growth and achievement. During her time at Southwestern College, Stefany maintained a stellar GPA while working at a local taqueria, balancing her job, her studies, and her family obligations. Despite the demands of work, she became a standout member of the Southwestern College national award-winning debate team, earning multiple individual and team first-place awards. Her success didn't stop there. Stefany was also an active participant in the Southwestern College Pathway to Law School Program, where she thrived academically and professionally.

Attending the Cal Law Summit and visiting UC Davis was a transformative experience for Stefany. It inspired her to dream even bigger and pursue a future in Law. Stefany's story is one of perseverance, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to her dreams. From overcoming language barriers to excelling in academics and extracurriculars, Stefany has shown us what is possible with hard work and determination. We are incredibly proud of her, and we know she will continue to shine as she embarks on her pathway to law school and beyond. She applied to several prestigious universities, including UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis, NYU, and Cornell. Her dedication and hard work paid off as she received acceptance letters from all these schools. Ultimately, Stefany chose to attend UC Berkeley, which offered her a full tuition, room, and board scholarship and aid package.

#### PATHWAY PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORIES

#### **Cypress College**

One of the key outcomes of this partnership was the expansion of pathways for high school students to enter the legal profession through the Dual Enrollment program. This pathway not only allowed students to gain early college experience but also helped to strengthen the existing administrative pathway for Dual Enrollment, ensuring students could smoothly transition into higher education. Additionally, through this collaboration, we were able to identify and offer a broader range of general education courses through Dual Enrollment, enabling students to complete transfer college requirements while still in high school. This approach not only facilitated academic growth but also supported students, positioning them to identify as California law scholars while a high school student. The partnership also played a key role in sustaining long-term collaboration between high schools and universities, creating stronger academic connections and expanding opportunities for collaboration.

The program's success was highlighted by increased student engagement and participation in events and field trips. Nichole Dudley from Chapman School of Law shared her observations of the students' enthusiasm. She commented that the students were eager, mature, and very interested in the law. She was impressed with their engagement and the insightful questions they asked during the field trip. Michael Hannah, the Faculty Champion, also noted that he was impressed by the Dual Enrollment students in his courses, as they were much more

engaged compared to "other" students. This positive feedback reflects the program's ability to cultivate a motivated and passionate student.

In terms of next steps, the partnership is actively working to continue offering enriching field trips and other experiential learning opportunities for students. These activities will further connect them to the legal profession, providing hands-on experiences that complement their classroom learning.

#### **Golden West College**

Kelly Greer and her staff at Loyola Law School provided such an amazing experience for the Law Pathway students, and the work they are doing there simply showcases the transformative power of collaboration in providing CAL Law Pathway students with an immersive and inspiring experience. Under Kelly Greer's leadership, the Loyola team organized an impactful campus visit, tailored to highlight the rigors and rewards of a legal education.

During the visit, students had the unique opportunity to engage directly with Professor Joseph Trigilio, a leading advocate for justice and the faculty director of Loyola's Project for the Innocent. Professor Trigilio shared insights into his work, detailing how the project addresses wrongful convictions and fights for the rights of the innocent. His stories of real-world advocacy resonated deeply with the students, offering them a tangible connection between their aspirations and the profound impact of a legal career.

The experience extended beyond the classroom as students toured the campus, exploring facilities such as the mock courtroom and library. Loyola's staff ensured that students felt welcomed and encouraged, providing them with valuable advice on navigating the path to law school, including application strategies, scholarship opportunities, and the importance of public interest law.

This partnership not only broadened the students' understanding of the legal field but also motivated them to envision themselves in spaces of influence and change. The collaboration with Kelly Greer and Loyola Law School exemplifies how strategic partnerships can inspire the next generation of legal professionals while reinforcing the value of programs like Cal Law Pathway in preparing students for success.

#### **Riverside City College**

Our students were profoundly impacted by the [Cal LAW] Law Summit in February 2025. It was truly an awesome experience, and we are sincerely thankful for the grant that enabled us to attend. This grant has been instrumental in expanding and enhancing our Pathway to Law School program, providing students with invaluable exposure to the legal field. The support has been transformative, allowing us to cultivate meaningful opportunities that directly contribute to their success. We are dedicated to the responsible stewardship of the remaining funds and will continue to build upon this foundation beyond the grant's duration, ensuring sustained student achievement and program excellence.

#### Santa Ana College

Santa Ana College's Pathway to Law School program was selected as a finalist for the 2024 Excelencia in Education awards. Only five community college programs were selected nationwide for this honor.

#### **GRANTEE LESSONS LEARNED**

- Creating a cross-system pathway that met the scheduling needs of high school students, staff, and faculty was more challenging than expected. Various schedules need to be taken into consideration early in the planning phase, particularly when working with high school block scheduling.
- A faculty liaison for dual enrollment faculty can be beneficial for conducting a dual enrollment orientation for faculty teaching dual enrollment courses and for ensuring strong connections between community college faculty and high school administrators.
- To help ensure greater student success, provide wrap-around services, such as tutoring and mentoring, for high school students who may not be academically or emotionally prepared for the rigor of college courses.
- Secure high-level commitments to maintain consistent team membership throughout the grant period to ensure a stable project team.
- Dedicate sufficient staff resources and try to minimize staff turnover when building a new program.
- We reserved funds for internships instead of providing additional staffing to complete our Cal LAW goals.
- Have a full-time person dedicated to building dual enrollment. Establishing dual enrollment pathways takes longer than expected.
- The process of engaging with the high schools to create law academies was more
  difficult than anticipated. The high school partner curriculum development schedules
  made it difficult to complete the conception and adoption of three years' worth of
  high school courses and the other aspects of the law academy within the time frame
  allowed by the grant.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Cal LAW funding has helped participating colleges build a legal pathway infrastructure, including approved ADTs in Law, Public Policy, and Society; ADT-related course offerings for dually enrolled high school and regularly enrolled community college students; student academic support and resources; mentorship opportunities; student engagement, and law-related experiential learning activities. Together, these efforts have helped and will continue to help support students, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented in the legal field, to pursue an educational pathway leading to a career in the legal profession.

As a comment from Golden West College aptly summarizes, "The Cal LAW Pathway program has proven to be a resounding success in supporting students on their journey toward legal careers, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. By providing critical resources, mentorship, and academic support, the program has empowered students to overcome barriers and achieve their goals."

Front cover photo:
Evergreen Valley College
Photo at right:
Compton College
Back cover photo:
Los Medanos College



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California Community Colleges ccco.edu

Salary Surfer salarysurfer.cccco.edu

I Can Go To College icangotocollege.com

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