



California Community Colleges

SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY:

Building Competency Based Education (April 2026)

This [webinar](#) focused on building competency-based education (CBE) programs through collaboration. Guest presenters included Randy Beach of Southwestern College, Buffy Tanner of Shasta College, Dolores Davison of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC), Peter Nguyen of RAND, and Amparo Diaz of the Foundation for California Community Colleges.

What is Competency-based Education?

- [CBE](#) is one of the system's strategies toward reenvisioning how to deliver on our promise of equity and access for all Californians under Vision 2030. It requires new structures that allow students to move forward based on what they can do rather than how much time they spend in class.
- There are multiple models of CBE. More traditional forms assess skill mastery within familiar course structures such as class meetings and standard calendars, while direct assessment models remove the constraints of seat time so students can progress at a pace that works for them, opening doors for working adults and others whose complex lives and schedules may not align within traditional pathways.
- A systemwide pilot engaged eight colleges to implement CBE as a collaborative effort. They integrated new technologies and business operations, designed new programs, trained faculty and staff, and addressed approvals and accreditation.
- To be viable, CBE must be supported by clear, aligned, and sustainable policy and funding frameworks. The CCCCO is working with these colleges and Calbright College to examine how to improve the regulatory environment, and is pursuing sustainable funding approaches to support both innovation and accountability for such models.

How Does General Education Apply to CBE Programs?

- Some have assumed that CBE applies only to career education programs, and that competencies in general education are harder to define and discipline-specific.
- ASCCC worked with faculty at the 8 colleges to address misconceptions, and to figure out how to concretely measure the performance of GE competency. The group included faculty from all areas of CalGETC, who worked to reframe GE as skills that could be measured in a way that was agnostic to discipline.
- The group developed both a Competency Summary to communicate expected skills in a simple way to students and employers, and a more detailed Competency Description to clarify for faculty the skills to be assessed.

- ASCCC passed a resolution adopting these [General Education Competency Statements](#) at its Fall 2025 plenary session, without opposition.

How are Colleges Implementing CBE?

- Southwestern College
 - Launched [Automotive Technology](#) associate degree and Brake and Suspension certificate in Fall 2025
 - Faculty developed competencies equivalent to 42 units of credit reflecting the Automotive Service Excellence standards and skills built into its existing programs.
 - The programs comply with the mastery grading schemes defined in Title 5 **regulations**. The college's student information systems capture mastery of each competency in a competency-transcript and a traditional credit transcript that crosswalks competencies into courses with letter grades.
 - Faculty duties are distributed across a team of faculty and student services staff, including curriculum and assessment design and upkeep, administration of summative assessments, and substantive interaction with students.
- Shasta College
 - Launched [Early Childhood Education](#) stackable certificate in Fall 2025; currently working on GE component for a degree.
 - Certificate is based on the 8 courses (24 units) in the statewide ECE curriculum alignment project. Faculty crosswalked the 24 units in that curriculum to 24 key competencies. The competencies are sequenced to match up to the 8 traditional credit courses, with students enrolling in one competency module (equivalent to 3 competencies/3 credits or one course) at a time.
 - The program is online and serves students who currently work in the field, which allows them to complete the 54-hour practicum at their worksite.
 - Specific faculty and counselors are assigned responsibility for CBE students.
- Lessons from the 8-college pilot and other CBE efforts are reflected in an [implementation blueprint](#), [evaluation guide](#), and a training series on the [Vision Resource Center](#) (log-in required).

What are Students Experiences in CBE Programs?

- According to a RAND survey (N = 9), students enrolled in CBE for its flexibility and accessibility. They appreciated the self-paced nature of the programs and were satisfied with the support provided.
- Researchers offered lessons for supporting student success in CBE programs, including promoting the programs to local employers, addressing student access to financial aid, and providing support early on with pace-setting and time management.