

The State of Higher Education in California

AVERAGE WON'T DO



How is California Performing on Key College Measures?

California's future is directly linked to our ability to educate our residents and sustain a competitive workforce. Our community colleges and universities have provided the opportunity for millions of Californians to succeed, but our future is at risk. Industries in which California is considered a leader—technology, healthcare, agriculture, biotechnology, aerospace, and entertainment—are dependent upon an educated workforce yet, according to estimates in other studies, we are on track to be 2.3 million college degrees and certificates short of meeting the workforce demands of our economy by 2025.¹

An economically and socially vibrant California requires dramatic gains in the preparation of students for college, access to an affordable college education, college-going rates, and college completion. When compared to the rest of the nation, on most of these measures California performs no better than average. Even more troubling, serious gaps across regions of the state and among racial/ethnic groups exist. This is simply unacceptable. California has never aspired to be just average. California can excel in higher education once again if, and only if, we have a plan for turning things around.

This brief, prepared by the Campaign for College Opportunity, highlights some of the key findings of *Average Won't Do: Performance Trends in California Higher Education as a Foundation for Action* by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy, as well as findings from other sources where noted.

Category	California's Current Performance	10-Year Trend
Preparation <i>How prepared are students for college-level work?</i>	worse than most states	↑
Affordability <i>How easily can families pay for college?</i>	average	↓
Participation <i>How many students are going to college?</i>	better than most states	↔
Completion <i>How many students earn a certificate or degree?</i>	average	↔
Benefits <i>What are the benefits of a college degree to students and the state?</i>	better than most states	↔
Finance <i>How well financed are our colleges and universities?</i>	average	↔

Source: Moore, Colleen, Connie Tan, and Nancy Shulock. (2014). *Average Won't Do: Performance Trends in California Higher Education as a Foundation for Action*. Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy—California State University, Sacramento, CA

¹ California Competes. (2012). *The Road Ahead: Higher education, California's promise, and our future economy*. San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from http://californiacompetes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CaCompetes_Report_Final-2.pdf.

THE FINDINGS

PREPARATION

- California's high school graduation rate is 68%, ranking 37th among the states.
- More than 60% of high school graduates do not complete the A-G course sequence, rendering them ineligible for the state's four-year public universities.

Worse than Most States

AFFORDABILITY

- California has one of the lowest average student loan amounts in the nation.
- In the last decade, UC tuition has risen at a rate of 139% and CSU tuition at a rate of 157%, in comparison to the national rate of 91%. California Community Colleges fees are only 42% of the national average.

Average

PARTICIPATION

- California has high levels of participation among traditional-age college students compared to other states.
- Large gaps in the rates of students going to college exist between racial/ethnic groups and regions, with gaps as high as 28 percentage points.

Better than Most States

COMPLETION

- California ranks first in the share of freshmen who return as sophomores and has higher-than-average graduation rates for full-time, first-time students.
- However, California ranks among the lowest of the states in the number of credentials and degrees produced at public two-year colleges.

Average

BENEFITS

- In California, more than any other state, there is a huge personal economic benefit to getting a higher education degree.
- Older Californians (age 35 to 64) are better educated than in other states, while younger Californians (age 25 to 34) have average levels of educational attainment.

Better than Most States

FINANCE

- California is about average when it comes to how much is appropriated for students at the statewide level. However, because tuition is so low in the community colleges, total revenue per student is among the lowest in the country.

Average

Note: Arrows indicate California's 10-year trend rather than a comparison to other states.

California used to be the epitome of quality, affordable, and effective higher education. Now, we have become mediocre. Our policymakers and college leaders have some work to do to change this trend. Our charge to our state leaders is to create an actionable statewide higher education plan, and we are starting the process of developing one. *Average Won't Do* will be followed by a model public agenda, describing California's challenges and suggesting broad strategies for addressing them. When the Governor and Legislature act on such a plan, students will be more successful and we will all benefit.

The time for action is now.

The Campaign for
**College
Opportunity**

The report, Average Won't Do: Performance Trends in California Higher Education as a Foundation for Action, by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy (IHELP) at California State University, Sacramento was commissioned by the Campaign for College Opportunity. It examines California's performance in six higher education categories: preparation, participation, affordability, completion, benefits, and finance. The full IHELP report can be found on our website at www.collegecampaign.org.

The Campaign for College Opportunity is a California non-profit organization focused on a single mission: to ensure that the next generation of California students has the chance to attend college and succeed in order to keep our workforce and economy strong.