

# 2025 Policy Priorities

## *A Blueprint for **Equity, Inclusion, and Action** for California's Students*



The United States has long revered higher education as a stepping stone to opportunity, the American dream, and full participation in society. Yet, higher education is at an inflection point. In recent years, mounting pressures are attempting to turn colleges and universities into tools of exclusion, particularly against historically underserved students and communities who stand to gain the most from a college degree—and in return give the most to our nation's economy and democracy. From the 2023 curtailing of race-conscious admissions practices nationwide to today's barrage of executive orders targeting higher education, ensuring an equitable opportunity to college for every student is essential to preserving our legacy of equity, freedom, inclusion, and democracy.

Nearly 30 years ago, California found itself in a position similar to the one our nation confronts today, and has since worked diligently to become a bastion of equity and inclusion. We cannot allow California, or the nation, to go backwards to a dark history permitting discriminatory policies to divide our people and schools. Nearly two-thirds of our state's population is Latinx, Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native. Our future rests in our ability to support our diverse body of students through TK-12, higher education, and beyond.

In the face of these challenges, leaders and policymakers must act with clarity and courage against the forces that attempt to undermine the success of our most vulnerable students. Our 2025 Policy Priorities respond to the urgent call to combat threats to our multiracial democracy and economy. Based on key findings and recommendations from our [Equity, Inclusion, Action initiative](#), we present state policymakers with a set of recommendations to establish California as a national leader in safeguarding students' right to harness the power of a college education.

## Strengthening Transfer

The California Community Colleges (CCC) system serves the largest share of the state's higher education students, many of whom aspire to transfer to a four-year university. However, the transfer process remains overly complex. This year, we are focused on simplifying the transfer journey by prioritizing clearer guidance for students, robust supports and processes to help them complete their academic programs and enhancing coordination across educational segments to ensure a smoother and more streamlined transfer experience.



### Legislative Priorities

**AB 934 - Degree Reclamation and Education Plans (Berman) - SPONSORED:** Supports community college students to achieve their educational goals by ensuring they receive comprehensive education plans in a timely manner and that they are awarded the degrees and certificates they complete.



### Budget Priorities

**Maintaining Momentum for Transfer Reform - Investing in the Critical Work Necessary to Sustain the State's First Intersegmental Transfer Committee:** The work of this intersegmental committee, referred to as the AB 928 Committee, has been crucial to ensuring a student-centered approach to transfer and timely, thoroughly developed and vetted recommendations around improving the utility of the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT). As the only public venue where students, each education segment, and their stakeholders work together to improve transfer, we urge policymakers to support a \$750,000 one-time investment to ensure a third-party facilitator supports transparency and collaboration that is necessary to continue the committee's success.



### Policy Implementation Priorities

**Common Course Numbering:** The CCC is set to launch its first statewide student-facing common course numbers in fall 2025, as they continue to develop common course numbers for courses that are most used for transfer. After AB 1111 (Berman) was signed into law in 2021, which required the community colleges to develop a student-facing statewide common course numbering system, to improve credit mobility and seamless transfer as many students attend multiple community colleges prior to transferring. This year, we will celebrate the launch and support efforts by the community colleges to develop and implement these courses.

**STEM ADT Pathway Development:** In 2024, the Campaign sponsored AB 2057 (Berman), drawing from the unanimous recommendations from the AB 928 Committee to increase the accessibility and improve the utility of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) ADT pathways. Creation of these high-demand STEM ADTs is underway, and we will monitor the various ADT establishment checkpoints throughout the year.

**Equitable Placement:** After eight years following the landmark legislation, AB 705 (Irwin), access to transfer-level gateway math and English courses is nearly universal for all students at the community colleges. Additionally, the community colleges have made significant strides in supporting students to complete these gateway courses in a timely manner, which has led to thousands more students completing their gateway transfer courses. This year, the Campaign will focus on uplifting best practices from the community colleges, highlighting research, and working in collaboration with stakeholders of equitable placement and completion to ensure all students have the supports they need to be successful.

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## College Access

Dual enrollment programs are a promising lever for increasing equitable college access and success, enabling high school students to take college courses and earn transferable credits, thereby reducing the time and cost of earning a degree. These programs strengthen college readiness, degree attainment, and workforce preparedness, with participants more likely to complete gateway transfer-level math and English courses. In addition, dual enrollment courses help close equity gaps by benefiting historically minoritized students.



### Legislative Priorities

**AB 731 - Streamlining Dual Enrollment Access (Fong):** Expands access to dual enrollment by removing the principal recommendation requirement, simplifying the application process, lifting the 4-course cap per term (while keep the 15-unit limit), and streamlining reporting to track student outcomes.

**AB 1122 - Universal Dual Enrollment Access (Bryan):** Ensures universal access to dual enrollment courses by the 2029-2030 school year, requiring all high schools to expand offerings that lead to a degree, credential, certificate, or transfer.

**SB 438 - Expanding Dual Enrollment Flexibility (Cabaldon):** Lowers the instructional time requirement for College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) courses from 240 to 180 minutes, aligning them with middle and early college programs to expand dual enrollment access while preserving Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding eligibility.

## Ensuring Black Student Success

The success of Black students in California has been a priority for the Campaign for College Opportunity for over a decade through our ground-breaking research briefs exploring the state of higher education for Black Californians.

Given the increased federal attempts to undermine equitable higher education access and success for Black and other minoritized communities, the Campaign for College Opportunity is more intentionally advancing evidence-based state policies to ensure our state's Black students can increasingly access and succeed in pursuing a postsecondary education.



### Legislative Priorities

**AB 335 - Black-Serving Institutions Grant Program (Gipson) - CO-SPONSORED:** Establishes a competitive grant program to provide academic resources and support to underserved Black and African American students and other underserved students at higher education institutions, complementing California's Black-Serving Institutions (BSI) designation (SB 1348 - Bradford).

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## College Affordability

Affordability continues to be one of the greatest barriers to college access and success for many Californians, including our most minoritized students. The Campaign for College Opportunity centers college affordability as one of the key levers to ensuring increased enrollment, retaining, and success of students pursuing a postsecondary education. This year, we are focused on responding to federal movement on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in California, expanding access to current state financial aid programs, and increasing financial aid information and resources for students with dependents.



### Legislative Priorities

**AB 313 - Financial Aid Deadline Extension (Ortega):** Automatically extends California state financial aid program deadlines by one month if the opening of the FAFSA is delayed in any year.

**AB 537 - California College Promise Program Expansion (Ahrens):** Expands California College Promise Program eligibility to part-time students, which waives enrollment fees at the CCCs.

**SB 271 - Basic Needs and Childcare Services (Reyes):** Expands the definition of basic needs to include childcare services, increasing awareness and access to childcare and supportive resources for parenting students at California's public institutions.



## Budget Priorities

**Preventing Cuts to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU):** The Campaign is committed to protecting investments in the UC and CSU systems to ensure equitable access and student success. Proposed budget cuts threaten recent gains in enrollment and degree attainment, particularly for historically underserved students and those from low-income backgrounds. Stable and sustained funding is essential to meeting California's college attainment goals and maintaining a strong workforce, economy, and democracy.

**Financial Aid Application Outreach:** As of March 2025, FAFSA and California Dream Act Application (CADAA) submissions by high school seniors have declined by 13% compared to 2023-2024—with a sharper decline of 31% for students from mixed-status families. We urge the Governor and Legislature to allocate \$5 million in one-time funding to support targeted outreach efforts to drive increased FAFSA/CADAA completions ahead of the September 2025 CCC financial aid application deadline.

**Building an Inclusive Middle Class Scholarship (MCS) Formula:** 2024-2025 expenditures for MCS are expected to exceed the program's \$926.2 million budget for 2024-2025, creating a \$103 million shortfall for the program. We urge policymakers to remedy the shortfall without offsetting support for the Cal Grant program and improve the MCS formula as a whole to better serve the state's low-income students.

# ACTION

## Accountability & Coordination

The Campaign for College Opportunity is focused on strengthening accountability and coordination in California's higher education system to ensure student success. The recent challenges with UC's Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools highlight the consequences of fragmented decision-making, where changes to admissions policies were made without transparency, stakeholder engagement, or a clear equity analysis. Without a statewide mechanism for coordination, decisions like these risk creating unnecessary barriers for students rather than expanding access to higher education.



## Legislative Priorities

**AB 95 - Education and Workforce Coordinating Council (Fong):** Establishes the California Education Interagency Council to coordinate and align California's education and workforce systems to better serve students' and the state's needs.

**SB 702 - Legislative and Gubernatorial Appointments Reporting (Limon):** Requires the public reporting of demographic data for annual gubernatorial and legislative appointments, supporting greater representation reflective of the state's diversity.

**AB 1217 - Transparency and Coordination for University Eligibility Requirements (Fong):** Aligns California public university admissions standards with TK-12 content standards and frameworks, increases consultation between universities and TK-12 education stakeholders, and streamlines the approval process for high school courses that meet college admissions requirements.



## Budget Priorities

**Higher Education Coordinating Council:** California is long overdue in establishing a state higher education coordinating body with regulatory power to ensure that the UC, CSU, and CCC are guided by the state's and students' best interests and needs. We urge the Legislature to support the Governor's proposed \$5 million investment in an interagency council that would integrate and align efforts across TK-12 education, higher education, employers, and the statewide workforce system.

**MCS Transparency:** We urge the Governor and Legislature to increase transparency and accountability measures for MCS program awarding to prevent future funding shortfalls, and ensure that all 3 public systems of higher education provide timely data to the California Student Aid Commission to confirm accurate awarding estimates for the program.



## Policy Implementation Priorities

**Student-Centered Funding Formula:** Established in the 2018-2019 State Budget, the Student-Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) fundamentally reimagined community college funding to be accountable to student access, progression, and completion, supporting access through enrollment-based funding, driving equity by targeting funding to districts serving low-income students, and providing districts with additional funding as students reach key progression and success benchmarks. The SCFF has resulted in 98.6% (or 71 of 72) community college districts receiving more revenue compared to the previous formula. We will continue to support students, practitioners, and policymakers in fully implementing the SCFF in the years ahead.

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## Economic Mobility

California is at a crossroads: as students and families are increasingly questioning the value of a college degree, our evolving workforce demands increasingly require a bachelor's degree, with 67% of jobs in California projected to require a postsecondary education by 2031. We are committed to shaping a new narrative around the value of a college education to fuel economic mobility and demonstrate to students, families, communities, and workforce partners that college attainment is inextricably linked to improved economic outcomes.



## Legislative Priorities

**SB 575 - Illuminating the Data Behind Economic Mobility (Laird):** Allows the Cradle-to-Career data system to enter into a data sharing agreement with the Franchise Tax Board in order to better depict workforce data, creating a clearer picture of economic mobility in California.