

MAINTAINING CALIFORNIA'S EDGE

A POLICY AGENDA FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

CALIFORNIA

edge
coalition

californiaedgecoalition.org

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A POLICY AGENDA FOR SHARED PROSPERITY

The California EDGE Coalition is composed of leading business, labor, social justice, education and workforce organizations. Our mission is to advance state policy and investments that create and sustain pathways into the middle class for all Californians, including individuals facing barriers to economic and social mobility.

OUR VISION is a broadly shared prosperity.

OUR FOCUS is on jobs that require significant postsecondary education and training but not necessarily a baccalaureate degree.

OUR COMMITMENT is to all Californians, including low-income communities and communities of color, disconnected youth, dislocated workers, and formerly incarcerated men and women.

California Hospital Association
California Workforce Association
California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
California Manufacturers and Technology Association

Career Ladders Project for the California Community Colleges
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Policy Link
State Building and Construction Trades Council of California
UnidosUS



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A photograph showing the backs of four students walking up a wide, light-colored stone staircase. They are all wearing backpacks. The student on the far left is in a dark blue t-shirt and shorts. The student next to them is in a maroon long-sleeved shirt. The student in the center is in a yellow t-shirt and dark shorts. The student on the far right is in a white t-shirt and khaki pants. The staircase has white metal railings. In the background, there is a modern building with large glass windows and doors.

Executive Summary

California can only compete successfully in an increasingly global economy based on the skills of its people.

A skills gap in new and emerging technologies, the growing divide between high- and low-skilled work, stagnating incomes, and growing income inequality put California's prosperity and its ability to compete globally at risk. Estimates of the looming skills gap vary, but it appears that by 2025 California will face a shortfall of roughly a million workers with bachelor's degrees and over a million more who will need other high-quality postsecondary career education or training.

California has made progress in the past ten years in reforming its community colleges and adult schools; however, the pace of institutional transformation is slow while the need for skills development is urgent. **Unless we find radically new ways of providing education and training for large segments of our population, employers will struggle to find the**

kinds of workers they need and the talents of low-income Californians, immigrants, and communities of color will continue to be under-utilized.

For more than a decade, the California EDGE Coalition has advocated for the development of a learner-centered, industry-responsive education and workforce system. EDGE is an unusual coalition of business, labor, community college, social justice organizations and workforce boards. Our focus is on career education and training for middle-income jobs that require considerable postsecondary education but not necessarily a bachelor's degree. We believe that the **Governor and Legislature must lead a strategic effort to ensure that our state's impressive education and training institutions work together effectively to provide skill development for all Californians, but particularly the underserved communities that are now the majority of our workforce and will drive California's future.**

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California must ensure that our state's education and training institutions work together effectively to provide skill development for all Californians, but particularly for individuals from the underserved communities that are now the majority of our workforce and will drive California's future.

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The goal of our new policy agenda – *Maintaining California’s EDGE: A Policy Agenda for Shared Prosperity* – is a diverse workforce with the skills to earn middle-class wages, opportunities for upward mobility, and the tools to effectively navigate the ever-changing landscape of work. To achieve these goals and ensure a growing economy and shared prosperity, the EDGE Coalition makes the following recommendations:

- I. Support career education.** California has historically undervalued career education and has not viewed it as integral to the core mission of postsecondary education, resulting in unpredictable and insufficient funding for these programs.
- II. Link career education and workforce training programs to create pathways to middle-class jobs.** The complexity of California’s education and training systems makes it difficult to navigate and complete a sequence of courses to achieve a certificate, credential or degree that will lead to a career with a future.
- III. Eliminate barriers and expand supports for learner access, progress, and success, especially for traditionally underserved populations.** Despite our state’s historic commitment to college for all, Californians face significant financial, educational, and navigational barriers to completing the education and training they need to succeed in today’s labor market.
- IV. Provide low-skilled working Californians access to skill upgrade training and other educational opportunities.** Rapid labor market changes will require individuals to continue their education and skills training to either enter or stay in well-paid jobs and to meet the demands of our state’s business and industry. This is particularly true for California’s almost five million low-wage workers, many of whom lack the skills employers increasingly require.
- V. Bring disconnected adults and youth back into education or training and into the labor market.** In addition to the Californians who are working but have limited prospects, there are a great many who are disconnected from both school and work. If our state is to close its looming skills gap, it will be important to bring disconnected youth and adults into employment and training and the labor market.
- VI. Invest in regional workforce strategies to build prosperous communities and competitive industries.** To be effective, workforce education and training institutions must work collaboratively and in concert with business and labor to be responsive to different labor market needs in each region of the state.
- VII. Develop a shared vision, measurable goals, and longitudinal data to monitor the progress of California’s education and training systems.** California does not have a shared vision of what we want our postsecondary education and training systems to achieve or a way of understanding progress and outcomes across institutions and over time.



The Challenge Facing California

Representatives from business, labor, community colleges, workforce boards, and social justice organizations came together over a decade ago to forge a vision of California's future based on a broadly-shared prosperity.

The product was a reform agenda – *Keeping California Competitive, Creating Opportunity* – endorsed by over a hundred businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations. The California EDGE Coalition grew out of this process. The commitment of our coalition is to work together to implement reforms we envision as critical to California's future. Our focus is on jobs that require high-quality postsecondary career education and training but not necessarily a baccalaureate degree.

California has made progress in the past 10 years.

There is now widespread recognition that despite the state's historic commitment to higher education, too few students achieve degrees, certificates, or transfers to four-year universities and many low-skilled working adults have limited access to skill-development opportunities. In response, there have been multiple efforts to improve student outcomes by redesigning programs, addressing educational and financial barriers, creating student support systems, and developing partnerships with business and labor. Career education that had once received limited recognition and insufficient financial support is increasingly being recognized as an important component of higher education.

California's Skills Gap

- The Public Policy Institute of California projects that by 2020 California will face a shortfall of about 1.1 million workers with bachelor's degrees.
- The Community College League of California estimates we also will need 1 million more associate's degrees by 2020.
- The California Workforce Development Board set a goal of 1 million more workers with middle-skill credentials over the next 10 years.
- California Competes projects that by 2025, the state's workforce will need an additional 2.3 million degrees and certificates.
- The Campaign for College Opportunity has calculated that by 2025 fully 60 percent of California adults will need a degree or credential, up from just under 50 percent today.



Middle-skill jobs are expected to account for about 44 percent of job openings in California between 2014 and 2024 and represent a wide range of occupations in health care, manufacturing, construction, sales, installation/repair, clerical, transportation, and other industries and occupations.



However, the pace of institutional transformation is slow while the need for skill development has become urgent in the face of dramatic demographic shifts and the rapidly changing nature of work.

Unless we find radically new ways of providing education and skills training for large segments of our population, employers will struggle to find the kinds of workers they need, the achievement gap for low-income Californians and communities of color will not be closed, and the prosperity of our state and its residents will be threatened. Several organizations have quantified the looming skills gap and all conclude that California is facing a serious challenge (see sidebar on previous page).

Many jobs paying middle-class wages will not require a baccalaureate degree but will require high-quality postsecondary education or training.

These “middle-skill” jobs are expected to account for about 43 percent of job openings in California between 2014 and 2024 and represent a wide range of occupations in health care, manufacturing, construction, sales, installation/repair, clerical work, transportation, and other industries and occupations.¹ These jobs are often gateways to economic security

and offer opportunities for continuing advancement, yet a great many Californians do not have the necessary education or training to access them.

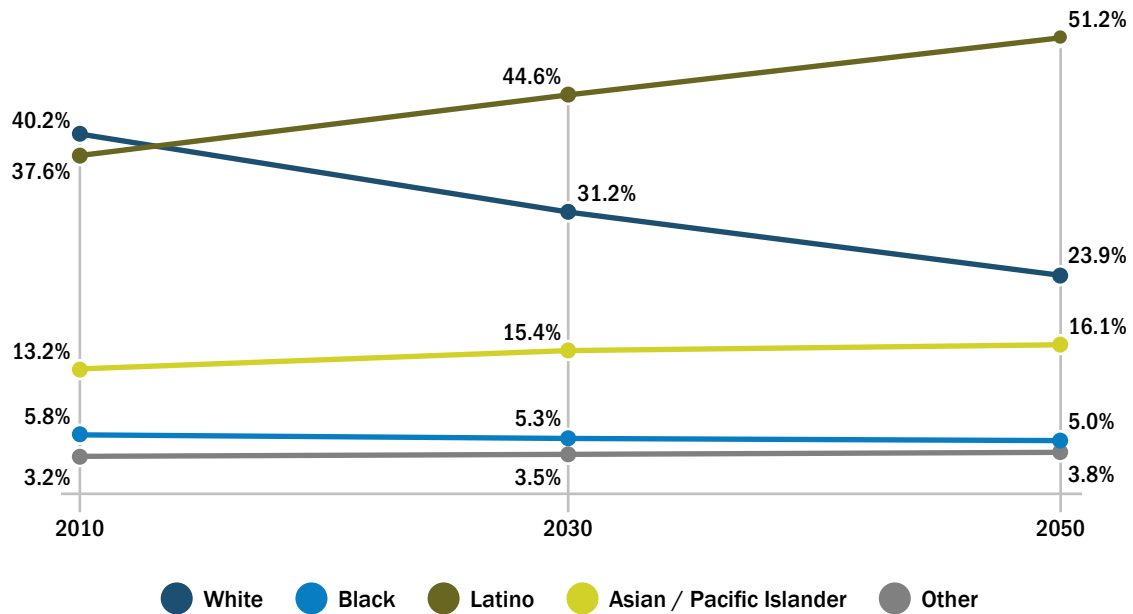
California’s rapidly changing demography provides many reasons to celebrate but we also need to ramp up efforts to ensure that populations traditionally underrepresented and underserved in postsecondary education gain the skills they need to meet labor market demands and survive in a competitive economy. We need to do a better job serving first-generation college students who need navigational and other critical supportive services, low-income workers returning to upgrade their skills, and immigrants who need English-language development to be successful both in school and work. These students and workers are California’s present and future. They need an educational system that is easy to navigate, provides both educational and non-educational supports, allows them to accumulate skills and credentials over time, and provides opportunities to both learn and earn. Creating such a system will require the involvement, collaboration, and innovation of both the public and private sectors.



By 2030, about 50 percent of California’s population will be Latino or black. In 2015, only 27% of U.S.-born Latinos and 11% of Latino immigrants had at least an AA degree, compared to 51% of U.S.-born non-Hispanic whites. Only 32% of U.S.-born blacks had an AA degree or higher.



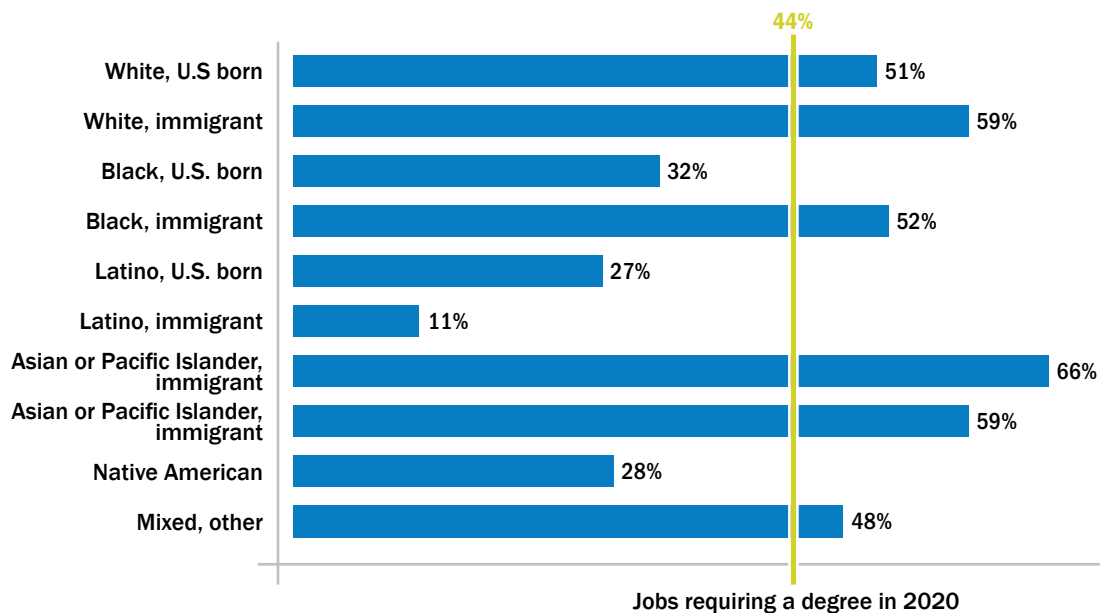
California's Changing Demographics: 2010-2050



Source: Policy Link, National Equity Atlas, <http://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/California>

Meeting the Demand for Skilled Labor by 2015

Percentage of California Workers by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity with Associate or Higher Degrees in 2015 Compared with Percentage of California Jobs That Will Require Degrees in 2020.



Source: Policy Link, National Equity Atlas, <http://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/California>

All evidence suggests that workers ill-prepared for today's middle-income jobs will be increasingly disadvantaged as automation and globalization eliminate low-skill occupations and raise the requirements of middle and high-skill ones. The emerging jobs will require skills such as greater digital literacy, the ability to work collaboratively, and higher-order reasoning.

In an era when the world of work is changing at stunning speed, we also need bold new approaches to skills development. Eliminating the artificial distinction between “academic” and “career” education and creating opportunities for students to engage in lifelong learning will make it easier to continually upgrade skills and certifications, change occupations, and complete higher levels of educational attainment. But this requires incorporating foundational skills in all programs and demands a better understanding of careers and the multiple pathways to middle-income jobs.

Given the pace of labor market changes, skills acquisition is a life-long project. Individuals acquire skills in a range of settings, not just traditional classrooms. Employers provide both formal and on-the-job training, and community organizations offer a range of skill-development opportunities often with targeted, integrated supportive services. Options for online education are growing fast, and while they expand access opportunities for many, too few provide the kind of support many learners need.

The California EDGE Coalition's new policy agenda – *Maintaining California's EDGE: A Policy Agenda for Shared Prosperity* – builds on past efforts of policymakers and practitioners to respond to the needs of learners and employers. Our goal is to strengthen, improve, and broaden the lens of traditional education and training to address the pace and breadth of change in our communities and in the labor market.



POLICY AGENDA





I. Support Career Education

The Challenges

California has historically undervalued career education and has not viewed it as integral to the core mission of postsecondary education, resulting in unpredictable and insufficient funding for these programs. High-quality career education programs frequently are more expensive than traditional academic programs; however, many also are high reward in terms of graduates' salaries. After a two-year course of study or less, students with degrees in dental hygiene, cardiovascular technology, computer programming, mechanical drafting, and many more career education fields are earning middle-class incomes.

At the K-12 level, funding for career education has been declining for some time and implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in the

2013-2014 fiscal year discontinued categorical funding for regional occupational centers and programs. More recently, supplemental funding for K-12 career education grants to school districts has been included in the state budget and there is hope for longer-term program funding, but concerns remain about the adequacy and sustainability of program funding, the quality and scale of career education program offerings, and career education teacher shortages.

In contrast, attention to career education has been on the rise in California community colleges. In 2015, the CCC Board of Governor's Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation, and a Strong Economy made major strides forward in recognizing and strengthening career education. Task Force

More than Three Million Californians without Bachelor's Degrees Have Middle-Income Jobs

Middle-income jobs that do not require a BA or BS are in both blue-collar and white-collar/service industries. The top five are:

- Manufacturing (419,000)
- Health care (389,000)
- Information, financial, and real estate (371,000)
- Construction (351,000)
- Retail trade (315,000)

Career Education Works!

Many community college career education degrees and certificates are in high-demand, high-reward fields. Californians also can get the skills they need through workplace-based education, such as apprenticeships, and other types of training. Here are the average salaries of community college degree graduates in some high-wage fields five years after certificate or degree completion.

- Biotechnology and Biomedical Technology: \$59,603
- Computer Networking: \$65,291
- Diagnostic Medical Stenographer: \$82,611
- Civil and Construction Management Technology: \$63,643
- Electrical Systems and Power Transmission: \$110,829
- Industrial Electronics: \$58,853
- Construction Inspection: \$55,677
- Cardiovascular Technician: \$73,479
- Dental Hygienist: \$64,030
- Paramedic: \$76,345
- Radiation Therapy Technical: \$98,185
- Water and Wastewater Technology: \$86,391

recommendations resulted in what is now a \$248 million annual allocation to support career education efforts in the community colleges. Recommendations also included policy actions such as creating common workforce metrics for all state-funded career education programs, establishing a student identifier to track workforce progress and outcomes across institutions and programs, and speeding up the curriculum-approval process. The task over the coming decade is to build on this work, ensuring that these investments keep pace with a rapidly changing economy and that high-quality career education remains an important component of California's postsecondary system.

At the same time, we recognize and support the blending of the traditional lines between career and "academic" education. This means both honoring the importance of providing all students the skills they need to pursue whatever educational and vocational pathway they choose and recognizing that most students' ultimate goal is a job.

Our Vision

Develop a high-quality and well-funded career education system in California that is responsive to industry needs, and eliminate the artificial divisions between career and academic education.

Our Recommendations

1. Ensure that funding streams for career education are adequate, reliable, and coordinated and that policy implementation takes into account the special needs and requirements of career education programs.
2. Improve processes to allow postsecondary education programs to respond to rapidly changing labor markets.
3. Grow the pool of qualified career education instructors both at the secondary and postsecondary levels by addressing career education faculty recruitment and hiring practices, including options that would allow highly skilled industry professionals into career education instructional programs.
4. Expand access, availability, and the quality of online courses so that working adults and others who need more flexible scheduling can obtain workforce skills and college credits.
5. Allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in high-demand career-education fields where limited capacity exists at four-year institutions.



II. Link Career Education and Workforce Training Programs to Create Pathways to Middle-Class Jobs

The Challenges

For many Californians, there are no visible paths to a middle-class job. **The complexity of California's education and training systems makes it difficult to navigate and complete a sequence of courses to achieve a certificate, credential or degree that will lead to a career with a future.** Learners often waste time and money, and a great many become disconnected. English-language learners, those who require remediation in English and math, first-generation college students, and low-income learners are particularly at risk because they need a broad range of support services to succeed.

In the last decade, progress has been made to address these concerns with implementation of dual

enrollment between high schools and community colleges, the expansion of career pathways, the creation of local adult education consortiums to link adult schools and community colleges, and the development of the Associate Degree for Transfer between the community colleges and California State Universities. However, **exit and entry points both within and across systems are still frequently misaligned, K-12 career technical education courses are rarely articulated to community college pathways, lower-level community college courses often do not count toward higher-level credentials and degrees, and institutional incentives rarely favor or compel collaboration. This results in educational segments that are often competitive rather than collaborative.**

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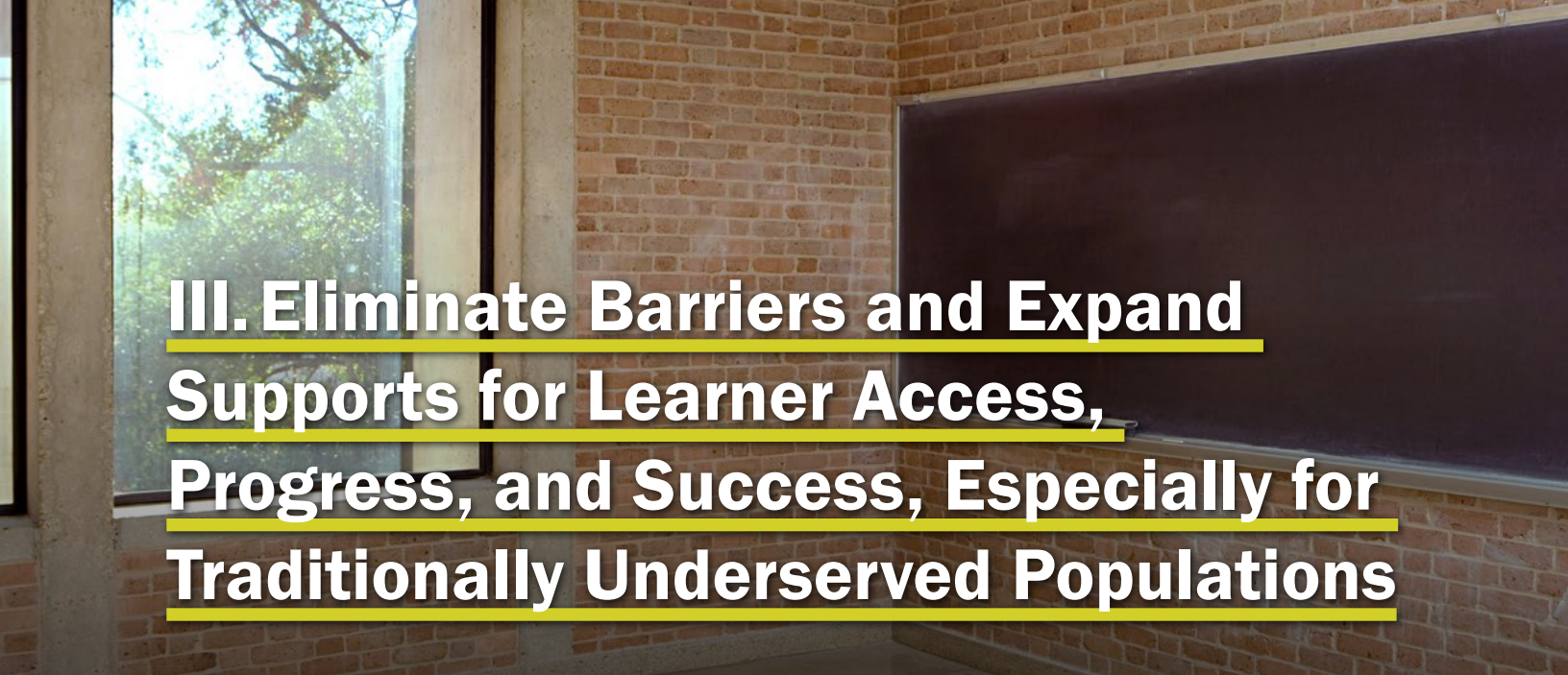
The adult education system remains disconnected from the higher education system, divided between the community colleges and adult schools at the local level and with uneasy shared governance between the Community College Chancellor's Office and the California Department of Education. There is growing but still relatively limited collaboration between community colleges, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act career centers, and adult schools.² The divide between the credit and non-credit divisions of the community colleges can be hard to navigate, disadvantaging lower-income students, students of color, and older students who tend to enroll in non-credit programs. These formal institutions of education and training have only minimal connections to the training carried out by employers themselves or community-based organizations.

Our Vision

Provide all Californians pathways to middle-class jobs by aligning today's disjointed education and job-training programs to create a coherent system of skill development that is responsive to needs of the California economy. Move from program thinking to system thinking and from institution-focused programs to learner-centered ones.

Our Recommendations

1. Better align career technical education curricula and pathways from high school to community colleges, from short-term to long-term certificate, credential, and degree programs, and between non-credit and credit programs. Where appropriate, ensure alignment and articulation of two-year CTE degrees with baccalaureate programs.
2. Embed existing industry and professional certifications into career technical programs and develop more consistent policies for awarding credit for certifications to ensure greater portability.
3. Consolidate and leverage federal and state adult education funding sources; ensure California's adult education system provides on-ramps into postsecondary education; and align data definitions, assessment and placement policies, and outcome metrics among multiple providers.
4. Integrate basic skills and career preparation education by focusing developmental education, adult education, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding on co-requisite, contextual, and integrated education and training programs.
5. Develop pathways with clear program roadmaps, portable curricula, modularized programs, stackable credentials, and integrated student support services so adult school and community college students can more easily complete their programs of study, navigate among institutions, and increase their skills and earnings capacity over time.



III. Eliminate Barriers and Expand Supports for Learner Access, Progress, and Success, Especially for Traditionally Underserved Populations

The Challenges

California prides itself on having the largest and most diverse public higher education system in the nation and its open-access mission, guided by the Master Plan for Higher Education, is visionary in its ambition to provide Californians entry to postsecondary education. But despite our historic commitment to college for all, Californians face significant financial, educational, and navigational barriers to completing the education and training they need to succeed in today's labor market.

California's community colleges have the lowest tuition of any in the nation, are tuition-free for low-income students and can be free for one year for first-time students who enroll full-time. However, a recent study by The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS) found that **our state's financial aid program, Cal Grant, disadvantages community college students as compared to those attending four-year institutions because they are less likely to get financial aid that includes living expenses and other non-tuition costs.**³

The majority of community college students also face significant educational barriers, despite an important and growing movement within the colleges to address this problem.⁴ Remedial sequences have traditionally been long, increasing a student's time to completion by roughly three semesters. As a result, most students placed into remediation have poor outcomes.⁵ English-language learners have been particularly disadvantaged by our traditional approach to remedial education and by the failure to adequately integrate the adult education program into the wider postsecondary education system. In addition, navigating educational institutions is complex and difficult. Most students accumulate many unnecessary credits, wasting both time and money. Students need a broad range of educational and other support services to succeed, including financial aid, student advising, navigation assistance, transportation, childcare, job-placement assistance, trauma-informed healing, mental health services, and mentorship.

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Despite our historic commitment to college for all, Californians face significant financial, educational, and navigational barriers to completing the education and training they need to succeed in today's labor market.

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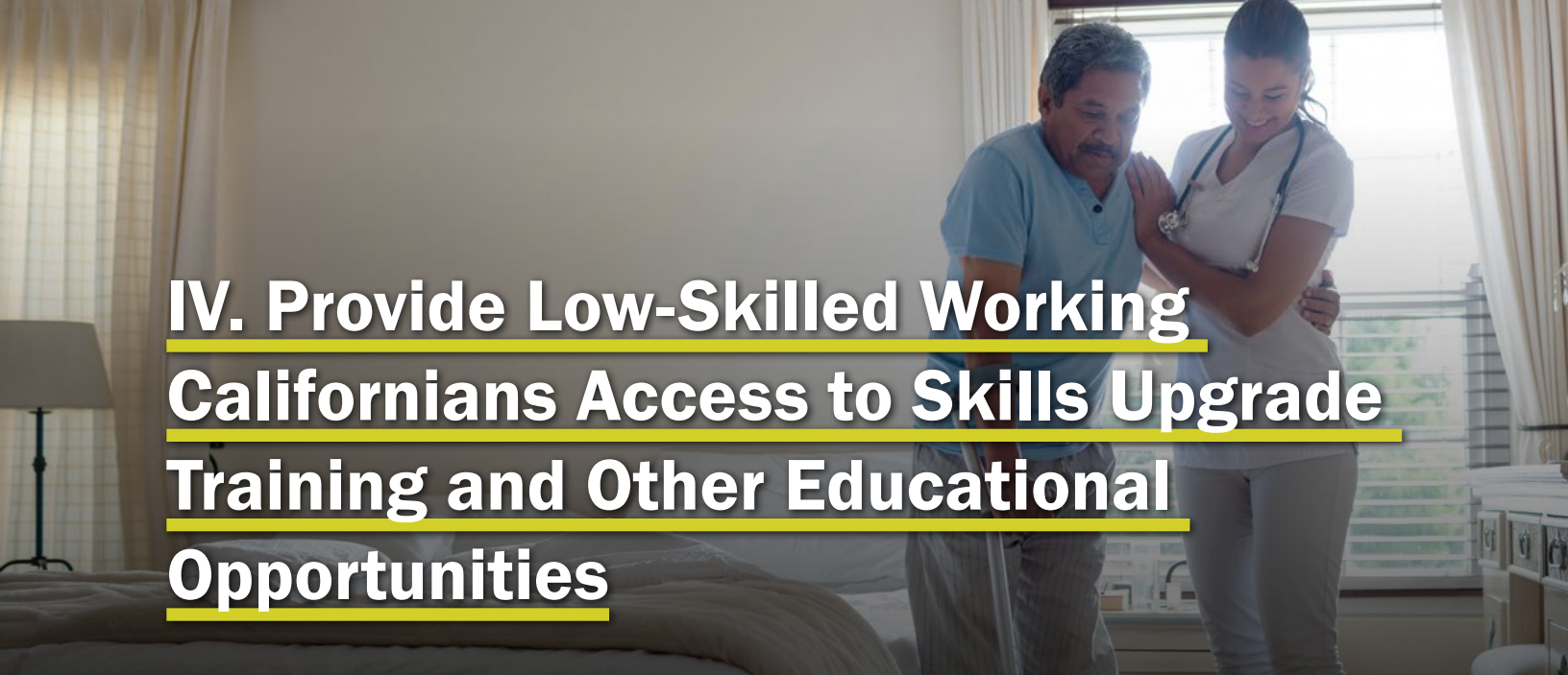
To succeed, students need guidance and other supports.

Our Vision

Dramatically improve student success rates, especially among traditionally underserved Californians, while also expanding access to high-quality education and training programs and a broad range of support services.

Our Recommendations

1. Set meaningful, ambitious goals for improving student certificate, degree and credential outcomes and closing equity gaps, both system-wide and for institutions, and use data to drive continuous improvement.
2. Provide a debt-free pathway for students with the greatest financial need to attend community college by increasing the number of Cal Grant awards, increasing the size of the award to cover non-tuition costs, and extending the criteria for eligibility for adult students who are not recent high school graduates.
3. Lower remedial education barriers in community colleges by using multiple measures for student placement and by implementing proven practices that reduce or eliminate the time students spend in remediation while providing the extra integrated supports they require.
4. Improve navigational assistance to K-12, adult school, and community college students by expanding and enhancing the career exploration, guidance support and wrap-around services students receive; increase funding for career-development staff and student resource centers; provide work-based learning experiences; and explore the use of technology to increase student access to information and services.
5. Provide students with access to childcare, mental health services and other integrated support programs, including through partnerships with community-based organizations that have deep roots in underserved communities and can provide culturally-competent support services to help ensure student success in education and training programs.



IV. Provide Low-Skilled Working Californians Access to Skills Upgrade Training and Other Educational Opportunities

The Challenges

Rapid labor market changes will require individuals to continue their education and skills training to either enter or stay in well-paid jobs and to meet the skill needs of our state's business and industry. This is particularly true for California's almost five million low-wage workers, many of whom lack the fundamental math, English, workplace readiness, technology, digital literacy, and critical thinking skills employers require.⁶ Of these low-wage workers, 54 percent have only a high school education or less.⁷ The barrier to well-paid employment is especially high for workers with limited English.⁸

California's large immigrant community totals about 10 million people and about 80 percent of them are working-age adults. While some come to this country

highly educated, about one-third of California's immigrants age 25 and older have not completed high school.⁹ Immigrants bring cultural and entrepreneurial dynamism to California and are essential to our state's vibrancy and economic success, yet many immigrant workers' opportunities and contributions are limited by their lack of English proficiency and skills training.

Providing low-skilled workers with education and training reaps benefits to the individual, the family, the community and thousands of California businesses. Workers with solid middle-level skills are able both to find good jobs and to take advantage of opportunities for advancement offered by their employers. To do so, however, they must overcome serious barriers to pursuing further education and

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Invest in new strategies for skill development for low-income workers, including approaches that are competency-oriented, career-focused and workplace-based, across institutions and in partnership with employers.

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training. Most have families to support, so accessing training programs outside of work hours can be difficult, and cutting back on work hours is a strategy few can afford. Paid training opportunities, including apprenticeships, are extremely limited. **Workers are most likely to secure higher-wage jobs if the training they receive responds directly to employers' needs;** however, effectively engaging employers in the design, development, and funding of upgrade training is challenging. Conversely, many employers provide workers on-the-job training, but it is rare that workers can receive certifications acknowledging the skills they obtain, or credit from educational institutions, for their workplace-based learning.

Our Vision

Provide working Californians, particularly low-skilled workers, access to skills upgrade training and other educational opportunities by redesigning programs, expanding workplace learning, and building partnerships with business and industry to develop training tailored to their needs.

Our Recommendations

1. Expand job-focused basic skills training by conducting English as a second language (ESL) and other basic skills programs at the workplace.
2. Invest in programs that are competency-oriented and workplace-based with a focus on developing and expanding pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in traditional and non-traditional occupations.
3. Support accelerated learning for students by redesigning two-year programs into shorter-term certificates, offering dual enrollment in adult education and career education programs, and more efficiently aligning programs across multiple institutions and systems in a region.
4. Create processes for recognizing and validating skills learned in other venues, especially employer-provided training, and develop a uniform policy for awarding college credit for prior learning.
5. Make legislative and administrative changes to allow Employment Training Panel funds to better serve low-skilled, low-wage workers.
6. Develop new strategies for adults to receive a high school equivalent diploma (HSED), including HSED programs that allow students to concurrently work toward a postsecondary degree.
7. Create an infrastructure of community partnerships to recruit, prepare, and support low-income Californians access to and completion of skills education and training.
8. Provide easily accessible and better consumer information about available jobs and their education and training requirements, costs, and outcomes so students are able to make more informed choices.



V. Bring Disconnected Adults and Youth Back into Education or Training and into the Labor Market

Challenges

In addition to the Californians who are working but have limited prospects, there are a great many who are disconnected from both school and work. These include high school dropouts, formerly incarcerated men and women, recipients of CalFresh and CalWorks benefits, workers with disabilities, and others whose lack of skills attainment results in long periods of unemployment. If California is to achieve its skill-attainment targets and equity goals, it will be important to bring many of these potential workers back into the labor market. **Often, the first step is a high school credential or equivalent followed by or linked to postsecondary education or training with a rich array of integrated supportive services.**

In 2014, California's high school dropout rate was almost 12 percent.¹⁰ That year there were approximately 700,000 young people in California who were not in school and not working.¹¹ Some local areas, such as Los Angeles and San Diego, have aggressive, integrated approaches to finding and serving out-of-school youth. The Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act allows for a range of services that can be provided to out-of-school youth with federal dollars, and the California Workforce Development Board is encouraging local areas to develop partnerships to provide coordinated services utilizing this funding stream. But California is still a long way from having an overarching framework for dropout recovery.

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If California is going to close its looming skills gap, it will be important to bring back disconnected adults and youth into education and training and the labor market.

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California has made some strides in addressing the training needs of prison inmates and aligning that training with labor market needs. California's local Workforce Boards also are serving large numbers of CalWORKs recipients. In 2014-15, over 32,000 CalWORKs recipients received degrees or certificates from community colleges, and more than half of these were AA degrees.¹² Over the next decade, we must make it a priority to expand these efforts through braided funding, support for broad partnerships, and other means.

Our Vision

Ensure that Californians disconnected from school and work have opportunities for high quality education and training and pathways to good jobs.

Our Recommendations

1. Engage organizations representing disconnected populations in program design and supports needed for entry, retention, and successful completion of education and training programs designed to serve disconnected populations.
2. Establish a statewide dropout-recovery initiative to support the development of local partnerships and the leveraging of local resources around reengagement strategies to serve disconnected youth.
3. Develop, replicate, and scale evidence-based dropout-recovery programs that create bridges into the community colleges.
4. Build close collaboration across education, workforce, and criminal justice silos to ensure the effective access, delivery, and continuity of education and training during and after incarceration.
5. Prioritize and provide incentives for public/private partnerships that offer paid work experience, including paid internships, summer job programs, service projects, transitional and subsidized employment.
6. Scale-up the skill-building component of the Cal Fresh programs so that participants can receive education and training resources to move them into employment and the state can leverage additional federal funding.
7. Provide work-based learning opportunities, including earn and learn programs, for Californians disconnected from school and work.



VI. Invest in Regional Workforce Strategies to Build Prosperous Communities and Competitive Industries

The Challenges

California is a nation-state with multiple regional economies. To be effective, workforce education and training institutions must work in concert with business, labor, and community organizations to be responsive to the different labor market needs of each region of the state. For the last decade, policymakers have been trying to address this challenge. For example, the community colleges' Strong Workforce program mandates regional cooperation and focuses funding on regions' key industries; the California Workforce Development Board requires a regional approach to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act planning, and has implemented innovative programs to bring stakeholders together to identify and address regional needs; and the Adult Education Block Grant initiative mandates regional cooperation among community colleges, adult schools, and other stakeholders.

These efforts have been aimed at making education and training programs more responsive and relevant to regional economies. Moving forward, California needs to build on – but also refine – this work. One outcome of past well-intentioned policy has been a proliferation of legislatively mandated regional bodies and regional planning processes. Some are quite effective but others have failed to meaningfully engage business, labor, and community stakeholders. In fact, the profusion of “tables” at which education and training providers, as well as business and labor, are expected to sit has become a problem in its own right and can divert resources from much-needed direct services into participation in multiple planning processes. Significant structural barriers to collaboration among educational segments and institutions also remain. And, most importantly, the voices of many members of the community remain underrepresented.

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To be effective, workforce education and training institutions must work collaboratively and in concert with business, labor, and community stakeholders to be responsive to the different labor market needs in each region of the state.

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Viable strategies require collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Our Vision

Strengthen California's regions with an ongoing commitment to an agenda of economic growth based on the skill base of all its residents.

Our Recommendations

1. Create viable vehicles for regional business, education, workforce, and community partners to understand current and future skill needs, identify occupations with skill gaps, and develop a shared strategy to meet the economic and skill needs of the region and its inhabitants.
2. Organize multiple regional infrastructures into multi-stakeholder, multi-purpose consortia.
3. Leverage all available resources, including employer contributions, philanthropic investment, and federal and state discretionary funds to support these regional structures.
4. Develop rational divisions of labor among education, training, workforce, community-based and other organizations to maximize what each has to offer to individuals and employers and to conserve limited resources.



VII. Develop a Shared Vision, Measurable Goals, and Longitudinal Data to Monitor the Progress of California's Education and Training Systems

The Challenge

California does not have a shared vision of what we want our postsecondary education and training systems to achieve or a way of understanding educational progress and outcomes across institutions and over time to inform policymaking, close equity gaps, and improve educational outcomes for all. In contrast, many states effectively use data to understand how learners progress from early childhood services through K-12, postsecondary education, workforce programs, and into the workforce. These data systems protect individuals' private information while allowing policymakers to evaluate aggregate results. In some cases, states' efforts are overseen by interagency data councils that include representatives of the participating institutions and agencies, as well as business leaders and others. Data systems are supported

by state funding levels sufficient to ensure maintenance, technology upgrades, data security, and research and evaluation. In turn, these integrated data systems produce information and create tools that can inform decision-making by both policymakers and the public.¹³

Our Vision

Articulate a clear vision for California's future and set measurable goals for achieving that vision. Invest in an integrated, longitudinal infrastructure across education and training institutions and programs that will allow educators, policymakers, and the public to make informed decisions and track progress toward our goals.

“

California must articulate a clear vision for what its education and training systems will achieve and set measurable goals for achieving that vision.

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Our Recommendations

- 1.** Develop state outcome and equity goals for California's education and workforce development systems to achieve a shared vision of California's future and to ensure accountability.
- 2.** Create a unique student identifier for use across institutions and programs.
- 3.** Develop and fully fund an integrated longitudinal data system that can match data across systems, institutions and programs and provide information on closing the equity and skills gap, program-specific outcomes information, and aggregate performance outcomes across institutions and programs.
- 4.** Improve access to data for the public, civic leaders, policymakers, and researchers to inform student choice, public investments, and the development and scaling of best practices.
- 5.** Support regions in being able to develop data infrastructures and use of data to drive program improvements at the regional level.
- 6.** Use data to inform decision-making and improve program and institutional effectiveness

Notes

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