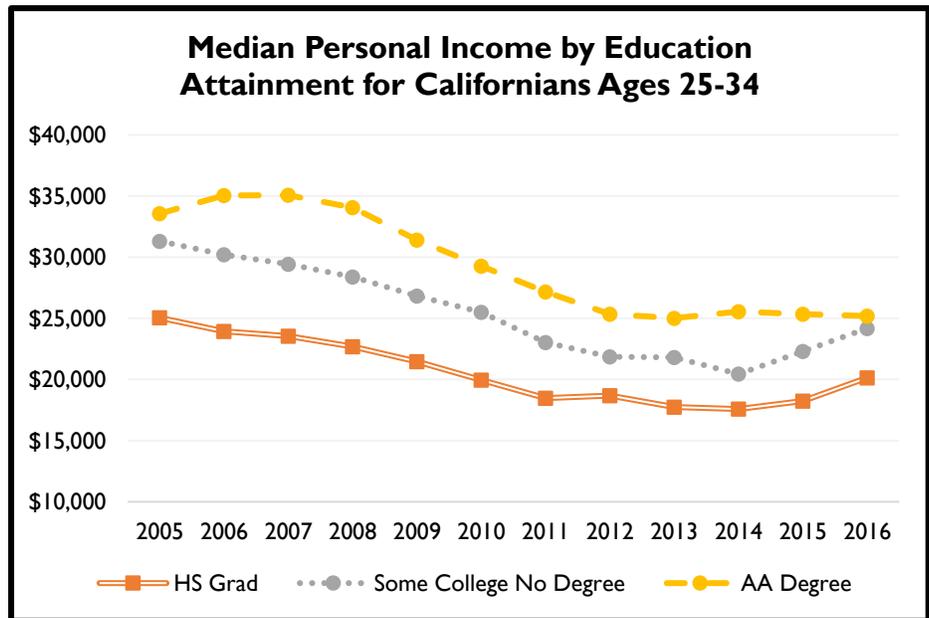


## Online Community College Proposal – Fact Sheet

**Economic factors underscore the need for working adults’ access to higher education.** Artificial intelligence, the rise of gig economy platforms, and the new wave of automation are changing the nature of work and the skillsets required to thrive in the workforce. Research from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce also shows the availability of good jobs for workers without bachelor’s degrees are shifting from traditional blue-collar industries to skilled-services industries that tend to require at least some postsecondary education and training. Adults with few or no postsecondary credentials will face the most difficulties in this new world of work.

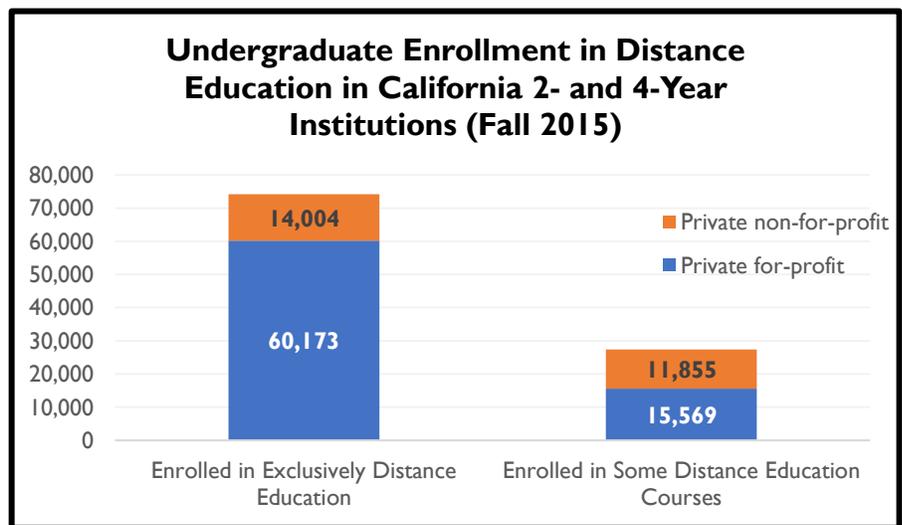
Californians have had a difficult time recovering from the Great Recession, but those with an associate’s degree made more money and fared better in the recovery than those with only a high school degree or some college. Furthermore, 60 percent of jobs created during the economic recovery (2010-2014) went to men versus 40 percent of jobs that went to women, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Labor force participation remains low among the working age population, and economists believe this is partially due to a skills mismatch. The risk of economic uncertainty from a recession underscores the importance of increasing working adults’ access to higher education.



**Millions of Californians may be economically and educationally stranded.** In California, 2.5 million adults in the prime working ages of 25 to 34 have only a high school diploma or some college but no degree. Their economic insecurity and opportunities for career advancement must be addressed. While the new online college will focus on working adults between ages 25 and 34, an additional 6.2 million adults with the same level of educational attainment between the ages of 35 to 65 could also benefit from this college.

**Traditional higher education is not accessible for these Californians.**

Most of these adults—about 80 percent of the 2.5 million—are working. Their schedules do not fit into traditional classroom-based settings, due to work and familial obligations; some students are unable to wait until the start of the traditional academic calendar to begin coursework. Transportation time and costs further make traditional options less attractive.

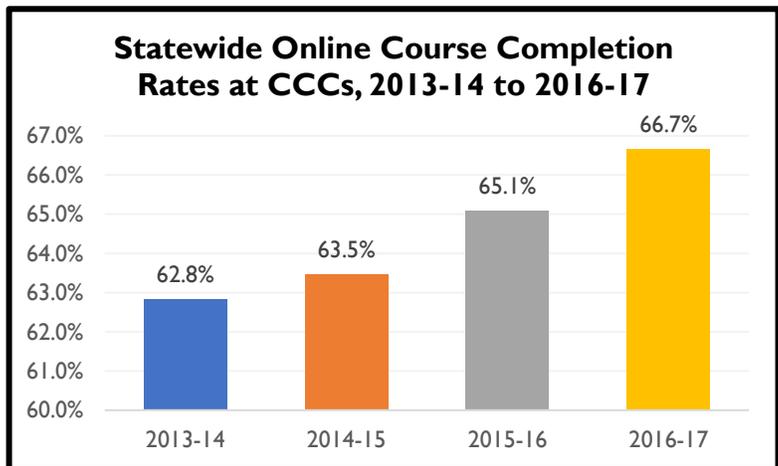


**Current online options are costly.**

Over 100,000 students are enrolled in online classes at private California institutions. The cost for Californians to access online credentials, certificates, and associate’s degrees at non-public or out-of-state institutions is typically much higher

than at a California Community College. These non-public options can be 7 to 9 times higher per unit, and high-cost options often result in burdensome levels of student debt upon completion of a program. Indeed, some students who have accessed higher education, but did not finish this degree, are burdened by student loans and other types of debt, limiting their ability to access courses needed to advance in their employment or stay relevant in their careers.

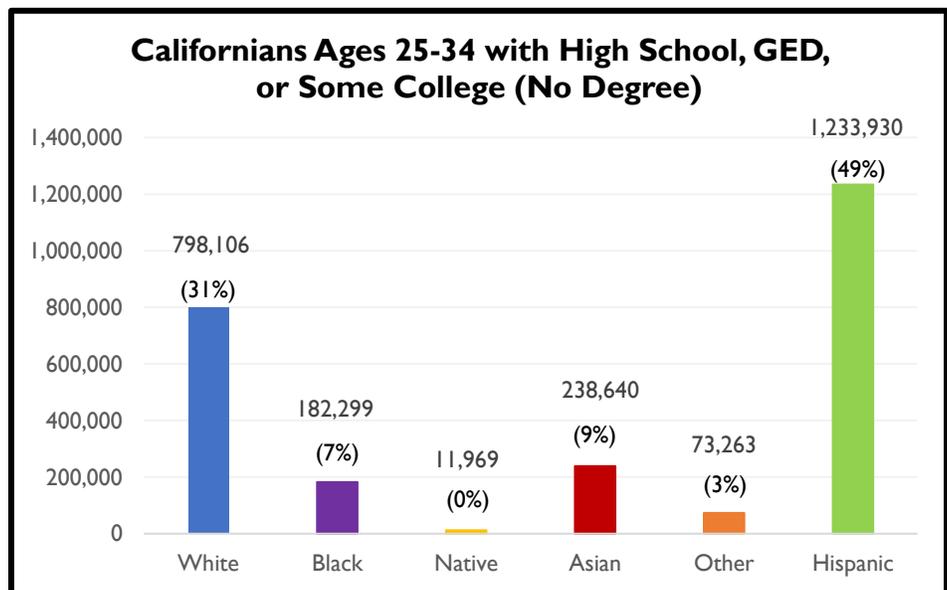
**The future of online education is here.** Online education is showing a trend of continued success over time. Data from the California Community Colleges show a trend of continued improvement in online course completion rates from 2013-14 to 2016-17.



Source: CCC Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart.

**California Community Colleges can lead the way.** To ensure the future economic resiliency of California's communities, existing higher education infrastructure must be augmented with learning options that are "working learner"-centric—i.e., affordable, designed to be flexible for the schedule of working adults, and competency-based to facilitate portability of employable skills. A new online community college can focus on these underserved, though technologically-enabled working learners. With an open access mission, the California Community Colleges are positioned to work with this diverse population to increase wages and improve social mobility in a rapidly changing economy.

**How much will it cost?** To establish the college, the 2018-19 budget proposes allocating \$20 million in ongoing funding and \$100 million in one-time funding. Funding for the online college will be supported by Proposition 98 funds. The ongoing costs will support the ongoing licensing and maintenance of technology, professional development and training, the continuous assessment of student program pathways, and salaries paid to college staff (including faculty). The one-time costs will include, but are not limited to, the design, development, and investment in the technological infrastructure (including student-centered supports and mobile-friendly technology), seeking and securing accreditation, the design and evaluation of demonstration pilots, and establishing competency-based and prior learning assessments.



Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

The college may establish an experimental tuition model for students, such as a subscription-based model (unlimited learning within a period of time) or no fees upon demonstration of mastery. Any such experimental models should include fee waiver options that fulfill the intent of existing fee waivers.

## **How can California address this critical need?**

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In order to provide critical educational and economic opportunities for underserved working learners, the California Community Colleges will establish an independent, fully online, and technology-supported community college, guided by the following principles:

- Offering working adults additional access to higher education opportunities with **labor market value**.
- Providing working adults with **flexible course scheduling and start times**.
- Supporting student success by developing and implementing **innovative teaching and student support** methodologies and technologies.
- Enhancing system-wide student success efforts by using the college's innovative teaching and student support methodologies and technologies to inform **professional development opportunities** available to the rest of the system.
- Aligning the college's efforts with the broader goals outlined in the System's *Vision for Success* and holding the college **accountable for its students' outcomes**.

**Why now?** Many factors make the creation of an independent, online community college timely and possible. The foundation of the Online Education Initiative, with its common technology platform and student and professional supports, has recently been established. Access to broadband and smartphones has significantly increased in California.

According to the Public Utilities Commission's 2016 annual report, approximately 95 percent of California households have wired broadband availability. Recent legislation authorized an additional \$330 million in broadband funding (bringing the total to \$645 million) for the establishment of regional goals to promote broadband access for unserved and underserved areas, with the intent of reducing urban-rural disparities in broadband access. Additionally, the annual budget provides approximately \$2.5 million to support access through public libraries to high-speed internet networks. Furthermore, 2016 survey data from the Pew Charitable Trusts shows more Americans have become smartphone-enabled over time, which opens up new ways to reach and deliver services. Moreover, Americans with less than a bachelor's degree and low-income Americans are more likely to rely on smartphones for Internet access, and these phones may enable Internet access to computers through hotspot technology.

**What programs or curriculum will be offered and when?** The college's focus will be to develop quality new content, courses, and programs that provide students with an opportunity to learn skills that align with the needs of employers, industry sectors, and/or industry partners. The college will plan to enroll students by the last quarter of 2019. Core goals for the college's programs and curriculum will include:

- **Expanding working adults' access to higher education.** Expanding access could include incorporating stackable credential opportunities that enable students to access additional educational opportunities and badging that enables students to easily identify and demonstrate specific competencies and accomplishments. As a first step, the college will seek employer partnerships, as well as input from community-based organizations and working adults, to validate its offerings. The college will develop at least three program pathways within the first three years of implementation and plans to enroll students by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019.
- **Providing working adults with opportunities to access courses and programs that will increase their wages and improve their economic and social mobility.** The college will be tasked with creating program pathways that provide vocational training, upskilling opportunities, and credentialing support for careers in growing industries, in order to create opportunities for students to increase wages and improve social mobility. Initial program pathways can focus on growing fields, such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, the service sector, in-home support services, and child development.
- **Establish competency-based educational opportunities that recognize a student's prior learning and help a student advance toward a credential.** Competency-based education incorporates the knowledge and skills students acquired at a prior time to help older and more experienced adults to more quickly attain credits.
- **Reducing students' total cost-of-attendance.** The college will strive to incorporate career exploration and pathway opportunities, and, where feasible, offer Zero-Textbook-Cost Degrees and use Open Educational Resources. Additionally, the college will strive to integrate opportunities for students to develop employability skills, in addition to technical and/or academic skills, and to utilize contextualized general education.

## **How will this online college be structured?**

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The Chancellor's Office will embed these features into a new local, online college that will be under the jurisdiction of a newly established, independent district under the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. As a local district/college, the college's operational costs will be supported by Proposition 98. However, costs for the Chancellor's Office to provide guidance and direction to the college will be supported by the General Fund.

**Who will teach and support this online community college?** The college will hire faculty, student support service experts, and other staff to support the unique and diverse needs of students accessing the college's programs and to ensure student success in the current and future workforce. Initially, the college will meet and confer with representatives of its employees, and as the college becomes more established, it will transition to collective bargaining with representatives of its employees.

**What will be the governance model for this new online community college?** Initially, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges will serve as the college's governing board.

The new district will have the authority to (1) create new online program pathways to serve the targeted student population; (2) coordinate the creation of online learning resources and student supports; (3) identify shortcomings in the student experience for the underserved working learner and develop solutions to address the gap; (4) leverage the technology infrastructure made available through the Online Education Initiative and other Chancellor's Office-funded integrated technologies endeavors, or partner with reputable commercial providers for services; (5) re-design transcripts to link certificates, courses, and competencies, and provide them in a digital, verifiable format that students can quickly access and can follow the students; (6) develop quality assurance frameworks for employability as part of its outcomes requirements, such as the Quality Assurance Common's Essential Employability Qualification Certification, to establish quality rubrics informing the curriculum development, the student experience, and student support structures; and (7) build a Research and Development Unit to evaluate pilot models, demonstration projects, and technologies used by the online college, such as machine learning, virtual/augmented reality and intelligent student supports, to ensure the models and technologies work for the communities they are intended to serve, give agency to students along their lifelong learning journey, and provide technology-enabled student supports (which will include having qualified people available to talk with students).

**Who will the new online college partner with?** Leveraging the momentum of the Strong Workforce Program, it is vital for the college to work closely with other agencies, industry partners, and experts to ensure the success of the college. These partnerships will include:

- The college will collaborate with community-based organizations to identify strategies to apprise underserved working learners of the opportunity to enroll in the online college. Additionally, a primary focus of the college will be engaging with students to ensure the college appropriately meets the needs of students.
- The college will work with industry partners, including state associations and regional consortia of employers, to inform content that is driven by the demands of the labor market and relevant to regional needs, building upon the momentum established under the Strong Workforce Program.
- The college will work through elements identified by Connecting Credentials as needed to support working adult students. These elements include, but are not limited to, financial aid, dealing with working learners' prior educational debts that may impede release of transcripts and credits, pathway navigational help, contextualized academic preparation, navigation of family needs and other supports, and coaching/mentoring.
- The college will partner with an existing national provider of prior learning assessment to establish business processes that simplify recognition of prior learnings into the student onboarding experience.
- The college may identify partnerships with consortia of 2-year and 4-year institutions willing to recognize these skills towards degree pathways as a way to increase student access to additional higher educational opportunities.
- The college can explore partnerships with other accredited institutions within California and across the nation.