



# California Competes

Higher Education for a Strong Economy

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**California Needs Two Million More College Completions to Stay Economically Competitive**

*Report from business and civic leaders outlines steps to improve higher education to better serve students and taxpayers even in tough economic times*

**Long Beach, CA** – If current trends continue, California’s higher education system won’t produce the college degrees that the state needs to maintain its vitality and economic leadership, according to a report released today by business and civic leaders. The state’s public and private colleges and universities will graduate more than three million students with bachelor’s degrees and technical credentials between now and 2025, according to the report. However, the state will need more than five million to stay economically competitive, leaving a gap estimated at 2.3 million.

The new report, *The Road Ahead: Higher Education, California’s Promise, and Our Future Economy*, calls for streamlining community college management and increasing coordination across all types of colleges to fill this gap in degrees and technical credentials. The recommendations were developed by the California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy Council, a group of business and civic leaders who met over the past year to take stock of the higher education needs of the state.

“The greatest source of jobs for California comes from our residents’ talent and creativity,” said Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster and California Competes Council Chair. “On our present path, we will fall far short on the number of degrees and certifications necessary for our future economy. We must ensure that higher education equips Californians with the skills they need to succeed; it is those skills that will fuel the economy of the future,” he added.

Council member Paul Hudson, Chairman of Broadway Federal Bank, called on state officials to recognize that “we must embrace pragmatic solutions that help students make their way through college and compete in California’s new economy. Our future economic growth depends on us preparing students for the high-skilled labor market. We need strong leaders who are willing to advance innovative solutions and insure accountability for the success of students and the state.”

Responding to the report’s findings, Eloy Ortiz Oakley, Superintendent-President of Long Beach City College, acknowledged some of the political barriers to change. “Colleges are complex organizations that value tradition and have entrenched interests which can make change difficult. But the status quo will not serve the interests of students, the taxpayers, or the economy. College leaders must accept the challenge of increasing the number of degree and certificate holders and embrace policy decisions that will help us confront that challenge.”

Among the proposals set forth by the Council is **streamlining and improving community college management** to better address the needs of students and to be more responsive to California’s economic and workforce needs. The group argues for both transforming the California Community College system office so it can more effectively lead the colleges in its purview, and restoring clear accountability for decision making to local boards and administrators to grow the number of degree and credential holders in the state.

The report also highlights the need for state policy makers to have a mechanism to help them prioritize funding to increase transfers, degrees and certificates across all state colleges and universities. That would be achieved by chartering an independent **Higher Education Investment Board** that would also take over responsibility for managing the state’s scholarship programs.

To view a fact sheet of the report’s findings, please visit <http://bit.ly/cacomexec>.

To view the full report, please visit <http://bit.ly/cacom>.

See below for quotes on the importance of this report for California’s business, civic and education leaders:

**Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, California’s 6<sup>th</sup> District**

“Despite the hurdles of an economy still struggling to recover, we cannot sacrifice our state’s future. This report shows that we have a high bar to remain competitive on a national and global playing field and underscores the need to ensure we help students get where the economy needs them to go.”

**Assemblymember Marty Block, Representing California’s 78<sup>th</sup> District and Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee**

“California’s continued economic leadership depends on graduating more than two million more students with a four-year degree or technical certificate by 2025. A degree or certificate is the starting point for success in today’s economy. I commend California Competes for its efforts to rally resources and attention to this critical need.”

**Scott Himmelstein, President, California Community Colleges Board of Governors**

“This report reinforces the imperative that California must act now to increase attainment rates for certificates, degrees and transfer and close the achievement gap for historically under-represented students. The California Community Colleges Board of Governors is committed to improving student success and welcomes the engagement of California Competes and other stakeholders committed to achieving these goals.”

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**California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy** develops non-partisan and financially pragmatic recommendations for improved policies and practices in California higher education. Opportunity, creativity, enterprise, efficiency, and growth are the hallmarks of economic development and the lens through which California Competes helps the state improve postsecondary education in order to drive economic growth and vibrant communities today and tomorrow. California Competes is a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc.

More information on California Competes can be found at: <http://californiacompetes.org/>.