

California Competes

Higher Education for a Strong Economy

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New Report on Higher Education Governance Finds that California is One of Two States Without the Necessary Infrastructure to Guide and Improve Its Colleges and Universities

The report, "Charting a Course for California's Colleges," was prepared by California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy and provides recommendations on how to build on current efforts to streamline, strengthen and improve higher education in California

Oakland, CA – Today, **California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy** released a new report that analyzes higher education leadership structures nationally and finds that California is currently is not systematically planning to address the current and future needs of its students and economy. Specifically, while California has one of the most complex higher education systems in the nation, it is only one of two states without a system of coordinated higher education leadership.

"California has one of the finest systems of higher education in the world, and we must do everything in our power to maintain and improve our state's colleges and universities," said Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez. "This report shines an important light on the need to have a central body whose sole focus is guiding the Legislature, Governor and our three higher education segments as we plan and build for the future."

Currently, there is no coordinating body specifically tasked with or accountable for identifying the state's higher education needs. A coordinating body would help the state reach overarching decisions about higher education, such as whether the state needs a new college campus, which system that campus should be in based on employer needs and student demand, and where that campus should be located. California Competes stressed in the report that the state has an opportunity to develop a unique approach to higher education leadership that maintains institutional autonomy while providing systemic coordination.

"For California's continued economic growth, we must graduate **5.5 million** degree and technical certificate holders who can succeed in the high-skilled labor market by 2025," stated Robert Shireman, Director of California Competes. "Right now, we are off-track by approximately 2.3 million. Consistent and coordinated leadership for our colleges and universities can help us close the gap."

California Competes' report also provides recommendations for what state leaders should incorporate into a higher education governing body, citing that it should be coordinated yet autonomous, independent from political influence, informed by data, focused on outcomes and effective in articulating its goals, and able to work with policymakers.

Ultimately, the report argues, a system of coordinated leadership can guide progress made by colleges and universities in meeting the state's needs over the short-term and long-term. It can establish priorities for higher education that help the colleges make decisions about how to allocate funding in tight budget years, and it can play an important role in helping drive the growth of essential degrees and technical credentials.

"The business sector needs more high-quality degrees in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics" stated Ken McNeely, President of AT&T California and a member of California Competes' advisory council. "Stronger coordinated leadership in higher education is one of the best ways to guide the attainment of these types of degrees and credentials."

The 2013 legislative session provided evidence that the time for such a coordinating body may have come. Governor Brown called for the UC and CSU systems to begin reporting on a standardized set of performance outcomes, but there was no clear direction about whom the data should be reported to or analyzed by. The Governor also signed SB 195 (Carol Liu), calling for the state to develop goals for postsecondary education, but there was no guidance on who would monitor progress toward those goals.

Speaker John A. Pérez, who serves as a UC Regent and a CSU Trustee, and who authored California's Middle Class Scholarship Act, has introduced AB 1348, which establishes a new state oversight and coordinating body for higher education. AB 1348 passed the Assembly an overwhelming margin, and it will be considered by the Senate this year. Many hope this report will continue to drive action in the State Capitol.

California Competes plans to use the report in the coming months to launch an education effort across the state to help residents understand the importance of coordinated leadership in higher education. The organization believes this dialogue will help California establish a strong leadership approach that can help more students graduate on-time and receive the degrees and technical credentials necessary for success.

To view the full "Charting a Course for California's Colleges" report, visit: www.californiacompetes.org/news_and_events/charting-a-course/

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About California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy: California Competes 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 fiscally-sponsored project of Community Initiatives. More information on California Competes can be found at: <http://californiacompetes.org/>.