

California Competes

Higher Education for a Strong Economy

Contact: Remmert Dekker
510-444-0144

rdekker@californiacompetes.org

Los Angeles Area Lags in Community College Capacity, Report Finds

Additional Seats Proposed by Governor Brown Should Go to L.A., Inland Empire, and Central Valley

With state lawmakers poised to increase community college funding for the first time since the recession, a new report finds that the greatest need for additional enrollment is in the Los Angeles area and the Central Valley region that includes Bakersfield and Fresno. The report, from the Oakland-based nonprofit **California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy**, finds that based on unmet need, the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino should receive 24,000 of the 40,000 added seats proposed by Governor Brown, with 10,000 of the remaining 16,000 allotted to the Central Valley.

“While there are pockets of need across the state, residents of the Bay Area and San Diego are for the most part highly educated and their community colleges still have high enrollments,” says Robert Shireman, executive director of California Competes. “Community colleges have such a broad mission that every college can make a case for more classes of various types. But if our goal is equity and expanding opportunity, the new funding should be targeted to serving the neediest communities.”

The state’s 112 community colleges are controlled by 72 districts with elected local boards. The report finds that 30 percent of students enroll in a college outside of their own home district, complicating the question of how state lawmakers should allocate the proposed \$155 million increase. Governor Brown suggested a priority for areas with unmet need but did not address how to make sure those who would most benefit actually enroll and are served well.

“Many colleges enroll students from well beyond their district boundaries, so the state should not allocate funds as if there are walls around their territories. The State Chancellor should work with the colleges in each region to develop plans for reaching out to the most under-served populations,” says Shireman.

The California Competes report is the first-ever statewide analysis of student enrollment across district lines. Nearly half (47 percent) of community college students who live in the territory of the nine-college Los Angeles district actually attend surrounding colleges in communities such as Santa Monica, Pasadena, and Glendora (Citrus College). “While some argue that students travel out of a district by choice, it is difficult to know if that is because the Los Angeles district did not have the money to enroll the students,” says Shireman. “Cause and effect is unclear. Furthermore, if Los Angeles had been allocated the enrollment, different people may have been inspired to enroll, such as those living in the impoverished area around L.A. Trade Tech.”

Missing from the report are any data on enrollment at for-profit colleges, extensions operated by the two public university systems, and other programs that offer programs similar to community colleges. “Because California lacks any central coordination across colleges, we cannot adequately analyze what is happening with California students or what is needed,” says Lande Ajose, Deputy Director of California Competes. The group is supporting creation of a Higher Education Investment Board that would assess state needs and monitor progress.

The full report on community college needs, entitled *Educating Julio*, will be available at http://californiacompetes.org/news_and_events/educating-julio/

###

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>