



CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE for STUDENT PARENT SUCCESS

Empowering Bright Futures: A First Look at The Alliance's Policy Agenda

As a preview to a more comprehensive policy agenda, this first look provides key strategies for policymakers to support student parent success.

As California's higher education system shifts to better support today's college students, and in particular those who have been underserved, we must also elevate the needs of student parents and their families. Student parents are more likely to be students of color, have greater financial need, and are less likely to complete a degree or certificate despite having higher GPAs than their nonparenting peers.¹ To close equity gaps in higher education completion and attainment for multiple generations² and to strengthen California's economy, we must address the needs of the 400,000+ student parents³ enrolled in California's colleges and the 3.9 million Californians who have children but no college degree.⁴

To support student parents and their families on the path to earning meaningful credentials and securing gainful employment, the California Alliance for Student Parent Success urges California policymakers and higher education leaders to work with us on the following four core strategies:

- 1. Increase the availability of affordable, quality wraparound services** that support attendance and success
- 2. Strengthen financial aid programs and policies** to make total college costs affordable
- 3. Advance student-parent-friendly institutional policies and practices** that enable multiple generations to thrive
- 4. Collect and share data on student parents** to better understand and improve their educational experience, well-being, and success

To establish equitable policies that best support student parents, especially those who are Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American and are from other traditionally marginalized backgrounds, student parents must be consulted throughout the entire policy process, from generation through implementation.



The California Alliance for Student Parent Success is led by [California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy](#) and [The Education Trust-West](#) with support from an Advisory Committee that will include student parents and other field experts.

¹ See, for example: Contreras-Mendez, S., & Reichlin Cruse, L. (March 2021). *Busy with purpose: Lessons for education and policy leaders from returning student parents*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Busy-With-Purpose-v2b.pdf>; Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend at the Aspen Institute. (April 2019). *Parents in college: By the numbers*. https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C481_Parents-in-College-By-the-Numbers-Aspen-Ascend-and-IWPR.pdf

² Ascend at the Aspen Institute. (n.d.) *The 2Gen Approach*. <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/2gen-approach/>

³ California Competes's calculations of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2021 five-year estimates.

⁴ California Competes. (February 2021). *Untapped opportunity: Understanding and advancing prospects for Californians without a college degree*. <https://californiacompetes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Untapped-Opportunity-Report-final.pdf>