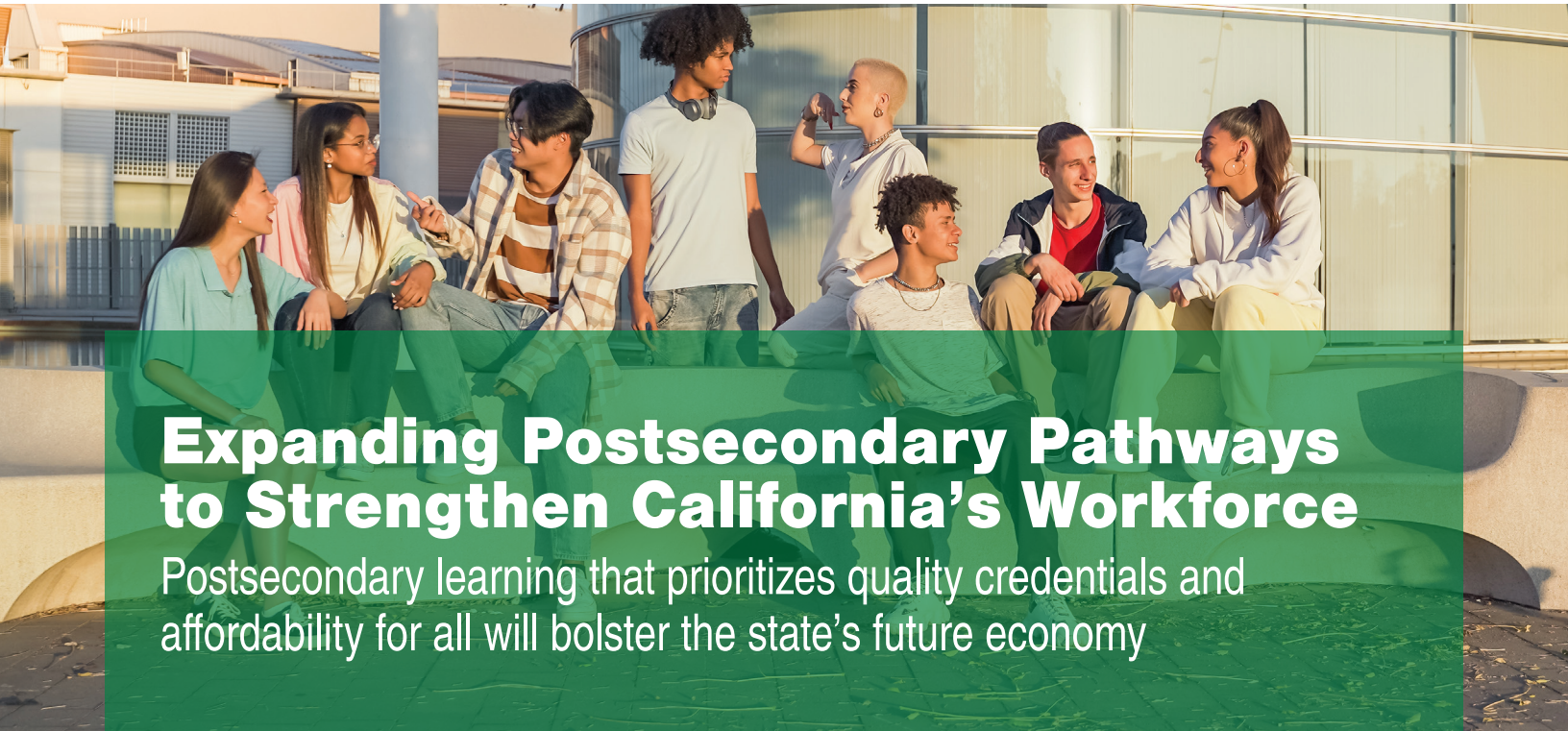




Expanding Postsecondary Pathways to Strengthen California's Workforce

Postsecondary learning that prioritizes quality credentials and affordability for all will bolster the state's future economy

Summary

California business leaders know that the state's labor market faces a talent gap that requires a focus on access to postsecondary education. Governor Newsom has set a goal of 70 percent of adults having a high-quality postsecondary degree, certificate, or credential of value by 2030.¹ To secure our future economy, we must equip all Californians today with the skills and credentials they need to compete in the workforce tomorrow. Pathways to and through postsecondary education—particularly dual enrollment—will help ensure that we achieve this goal, so our state's economy thrives in the future.

Despite Progress, California Suffers from an Attainment Gap

From 2009 to 2021, the percentage of Californians who completed a postsecondary credential rose 17.1 percentage points, up to 55.8 percent.² However, our state still has a long way to go toward meeting our goal of

 Providing dual enrollment opportunities for our students sets the foundation for a stronger economy and future workforce where all Californians can thrive.”



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70 percent by 2030. One way to meet this goal is by ensuring more students participate in dual enrollment.

In 2016, Assembly Bill 288 was introduced, creating the College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP). This legislation allowed more high schoolers to take college courses on their high school campuses, with the goal of getting students through college and into the workforce sooner. Assembly Bill 30 was signed in 2019, providing expansion and protection for dual enrollment in our state through 2027.

Dual enrollment allows high school students to enroll in community college courses and earn credit towards a college degree. Dual enrollment can provide students with an accelerated college path, allowing them to save both time and money.³ During the 2017-2018 school year, the majority (82 percent) of public schools nationwide with students in grades 9-12 offered dual

enrollment opportunities to students.⁴ While all of California's community colleges offer dual enrollment, the number of programs offered in high schools is much lower: only 36 percent of students attended high schools where dual enrollment courses were offered in 2018-2019.⁵

Expanding Dual Enrollment Opportunities Will Grow the Future Workforce

Research shows that dual enrollment has positive impacts on both college enrollment and attaining a college degree.⁶ Over 80 percent of California dual enrollment students enrolled in a postsecondary institution within one year of graduating high school, a rate 19 percentage points higher than that for all graduates statewide.⁷ CCAP (21 percent) and other dual enrollment students (25 percent) attending community colleges are more likely than non-dual-enrollment students (14 percent) to earn associate degrees or certificates.⁸

Educational attainment, in turn, has positive impacts on employment and earnings. Californians with training beyond high school experience lower levels of unemployment. In 2022, the average annual unemployment rate for adults over 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher in California was 2.7 percent, compared to 4.5 percent for high school graduates who did not attend college.⁹

On average nationwide, jobs that require an associate degree have an annual wage of more than \$52,000, compared to \$44,000 for those requiring just a high school diploma.¹⁰ Students who receive a certificate or degree from a California community college have the potential to double their earnings within three years of graduation.¹¹

Given these statistics, postsecondary education has a high return on investment (ROI). One study of dual enrollment programs found that, over four years, these programs cost schools about \$3,800 more per student than traditional high schools, but the estimated ROI was nearly \$34,000 in increased lifetime earnings for each student.¹² For each dollar California invests in helping students complete college, there is a \$4.50 ROI to taxpayers.¹³



Conclusion

To increase postsecondary attainment, we must invest in evidence-based approaches that continue to increase the number of people who earn credentials beyond high school. California must invest in dual enrollment programs and pathways, such as the Cal Grant Equity Framework, the Golden State Pathways Program, and dual enrollment investments made in the 2023-24 budget.¹⁴

The future workforce and economy of our state depend on equipping all students with the skills and credentials they need. By investing in our students today, our businesses and economy will thrive tomorrow.

Endnotes

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