



California's 115th Community College: *Fully Online for Equity and Economic Growth*

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Governor Brown's budget proposal to establish the 115th community college as a fully online campus will give California's stranded workers a flexible affordable learning option and the opportunity to advance in today's economy.

Creating Equity and Access for 2.5 Million Californians

Millions of California's stranded workers are currently at a career plateau because they lack the educational opportunities needed for economic mobility and are unable to attend a traditional brick-and-mortar campus. The fully online college will enable them to obtain the sub-associate degree certificates they need to advance their careers and improve their economic future. The working adults who have fallen through the cracks and will be served by this flexible affordable option include:

- More than 2.5 million Californians ages 25 to 34 who cannot access traditional higher education, or afford a private online college. The makeup of this population is 49 percent Latino, 31 percent white, nine percent Asian and seven percent African American.
- Another 6.2 million adults between 35 and 65 in a similar situation.
- Individuals from Spanish-speaking homes who are often the primary wage-earner and cannot afford to miss work, or have family responsibilities that prevent them from attending traditional college.

Fuel for California's Economic Growth

As the sixth largest economy in the world, California must invest in educating and training more students to meet the increasing demand for a skilled workforce and fuel our growing economy and the emerging technologies on the horizon. Through partnerships with employers, industry sectors, and organized labor, the fully online community college will build the skills that match the quality jobs that employers are looking to fill – and that California's economy needs to succeed. Consider these facts:

- In the U.S., 65 percent of jobs will require some type of credential or degree by the year 2020, according to estimates by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Two-thirds of those jobs available will only require less than an associate's degree.
- By 2020, the share of new jobs available in California requiring some college experience will equal the share requiring a bachelor's degree, according to PPIC. Research from PPIC shows that California workers with some college earn 20 to 30 percent more than otherwise similar workers with just a high school education.

Fills a critical void in our current higher education system

This proposed 115th community college is unlike anything currently offered in California and will complement, not compete with, traditional campuses, because it targets a population not currently being served. The fully online community college is a distinct offering from community colleges' existing Online Education Initiative (OEI), which focuses on traditional courses for degree attainment and transfer to a four-year university. While private institutions currently offer fully online programs, they often are unaffordable for working adults, with tuitions seven to nine times higher than community college.

The online college will provide a more accessible, affordable alternative by offering:

- The opportunity to enroll on a more frequent basis throughout the calendar year, allowing working adults to take classes at their own pace as their schedules allow and from where they choose.
- Greater flexibility for students to learn at the times most convenient to them.
- A price consistent with traditional community college in California – the lowest tuition and fees for community college in the country.

Building a System to Ensure Future Success

Over the next several months, California Community Colleges will conduct a transparent stakeholder process to further develop and fine-tune the fully online community college system and determine how to best address the unique needs of California's stranded workers. Key elements of the proposal include:

- **GOVERNANCE**: The online college will function as an independent district under the statewide Chancellor's Office, with the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges initially serving as the governing board.
- **FUNDING**: The governor has proposed to invest \$100 million over seven years to fund this effort, with \$20 million in ongoing funds.
- **FACULTY**: The college will hire faculty, student support service experts, and other staff to support the unique and diverse needs of students accessing the college's programs and to ensure student success in the current and future workforce.

Appetite and aptitude for online learning growing

A third of students in the California Community Colleges system now take at least one class online, and the success rate is more than 60 percent. This will be the first fully online public college in California, a model that is gaining traction across the country due to an increased market demand and improved educational delivery and student support approaches.

In other states, institutions like Arizona State University have already launched fully online public colleges and achieved impressive results. ASU Online – which offers six different start dates per year and ample student support programs – has enrolled nearly 75,000 students in just seven years since launching. By creating our own fully online college, California will meet the public's demand for a flexible and accessible online learning option that workers need to succeed in today's economy.