



FEBRUARY 11, 2021



## Untapped Opportunity

### Understanding and Advancing Prospects for Californians without a degree

Feb 2021, California Competes

**California has 6.8 million potential graduates, who are mostly people of color.**

*The equity imperative to center adult learners in CA*

- [Full report](#)

### Report Outline:

#### High-level view of CA's potential graduates

- Half of potential graduates have attended some college
- Few potential graduates have industry-recognized certifications
- Potential graduates are similar in age to college graduates
- Potential graduates tend to be male and Latinx
- Nearly a third of potential graduates are immigrants
- Potential graduates earn less than half of what college graduates earn

#### Location of potential graduates

#### Current employment realities for potential graduates

- Potential graduates are less likely to be in the labor force than college graduates
- Potential graduates lag in employment and full-time employment
- Potential graduates' employment rates vary considerably by race and ethnicity and less so by gender
- Potential graduates are more likely to work in lower paying service sector and production positions and less likely to work in higher-paying management positions than their counterparts with degrees

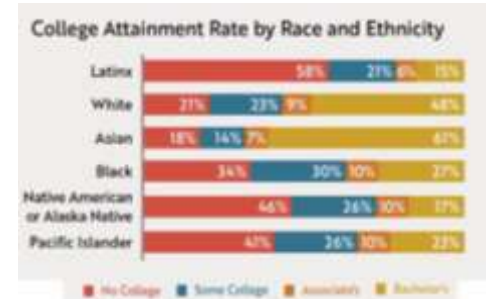
#### Challenges potential graduates face in accessing higher education

- Childcare
- Low digital literacy
- Access to high-speed internet
- Poverty

#### Comparison chart across a number of characteristics comparing potential graduates with college graduates

**Snap Shot: California's Untapped Opportunity** (see next page)

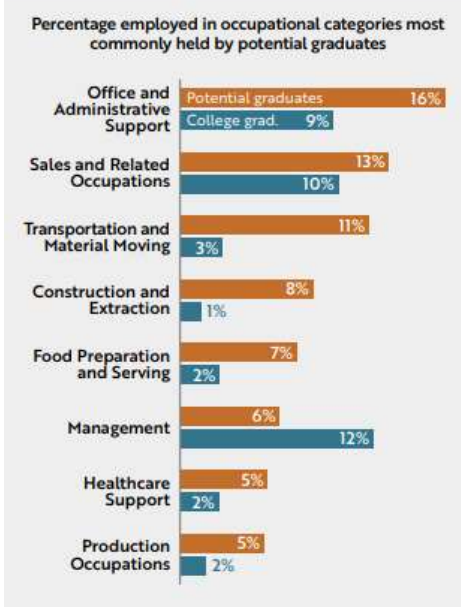
**Recommendations** (see final page of summary)



More Californians of color are potential graduates. 71% percent of Latinx Californians and 61% of Black Californians are potential graduates.



**Figure 9: Potential graduates are clustered in lower-paying service sector and production jobs.**



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates (2014–2018).

# Snapshot: California's untapped opportunity

## WHO ARE CALIFORNIA'S POTENTIAL GRADUATES?

Higher education in California focuses on the young adult population. However, there are 6.8 million adults ages 25–54 who graduated high school but have not completed a postsecondary degree. Targeting these potential college graduates presents an opportunity to accelerate California's stability and resilience.

More Californians of color are potential graduates. 71% percent of Latinx Californians and 61% of Black Californians are potential graduates.



57% of potential graduates have dependent children.



Potential graduates are more likely to be men (53%) compared to women (47%).



**50%** of Californians ages 25–54 are potential graduates

Potential graduates face hardship at high rates. Though they make up 50% of Californians ages 25–54, they are:

- 74%** of those receiving public assistance
- 72%** of those without health insurance
- 68%** of those in households earn less than a living wage
- 63%** of those without high-speed internet access



**43%** work in sales, transportation, construction, and food preparation

## WHERE ARE THEY?

Most potential graduates live in urban regions. However, rural regions like Central Sierra, Northern California, and the Upper Sacramento Valley have much higher concentrations of potential graduates and far fewer educational facilities.

### Concentration of Potential Graduates by Region





## Institutions should develop policies and structures with potential graduates' needs in mind.

Postsecondary institutions should consider how their policies and structures serve as barriers for potential graduates and explore, design, implement, evaluate, and refine policies, programs, and curricula to increase access and support for this population. Policies such as the following would ease or eliminate some of the obstacles that stand between potential graduates and college degrees.

- » **Offer credit for prior learning.** Also known as prior learning assessment, this policy formally recognizes college-level learning outside the classroom, sends a signal that potential graduates belong in higher education, helps adult students stay engaged, reduces their time to degree, and eliminates wasteful duplication.<sup>9</sup>
- » **Allow students to progress as they demonstrate competency.** Competency-based education (CBE) programs confer credit for showing proficiency in specific knowledge and skills rather than requiring a minimum amount of “seat time” (attending a fixed number of hours each term). Students in CBE programs progress at their own pace. They have higher persistence, complete degrees more quickly, and pay less in tuition and other educational expenses than students in traditional degree programs based on seat time.<sup>10</sup>
- » **Recognize previous college experience.** Target potential graduates with postsecondary experience—the 51 percent of potential graduates (3.5 million) who left college without a degree—using tailored recruitment efforts and policies that maximize recognition of previously earned college credits.<sup>11</sup>
- » **Provide realistic estimates of childcare expenses.** Including childcare in cost of attendance estimates enables the 22 percent of potential graduates (975,000) with young children to budget for this necessity and to qualify for enough financial aid to help cover its substantial cost.<sup>12</sup> Typical childcare costs vary widely by region, facility setting, and the child’s age, but they are not trivial and sometimes far exceed the tuition and fees charged by public institutions. To illustrate, the 2018 median price for nine months of care in a licensed California childcare center ranged from \$6,869 (infants) and \$5,574 (preschoolers) in several rural counties to \$17,457 (infants) and \$13,128 (preschoolers) in San Francisco.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, requirements for reduced capacity and additional safety measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to raise California childcare providers’ costs by 60 percent, which will likely lead to price increases as these costs are passed on to consumers.<sup>14</sup>
- » **Adopt policies that recognize potential graduates’ challenges.** Implementing proven educational innovations (and those showing significant promise) would aid potential graduates and other students who tend to struggle in traditional academic settings. A few examples of successful practices include establishing shorter academic terms, which give potential graduates more opportunities each year to enroll or reenroll and leave fewer opportunities for life’s challenges to interrupt courses;<sup>15</sup> offering options for evening, weekend, and on-demand online instruction for students with weekday work and family obligations;<sup>16</sup> providing extra advising and tutoring, which can help students avoid mistakes like taking unnecessary courses;<sup>17</sup> and encouraging year-round enrollment, which speeds up the completion of degrees.<sup>18</sup>