

WHAT COLLEGE COSTS FOR LOW-INCOME CALIFORNIANS

The total cost of college includes far more than tuition and fees. Textbooks, transportation, food, and housing are all costs of attending college.

The net prices shown here – for each of the nine undergraduate-serving campuses of the University of California and nearby California State University and community college campuses – reflect the colleges' own estimates of what low-income students have to pay, *after* subtracting available grant aid, to cover total college costs.

Colleges with low tuition may not have low net prices, and colleges with high tuition may not have high net prices. In none of the nine regions shown here does the lowest tuition school – the community college – have the lowest net price, and in seven regions the community college is more expensive than *either* public university option.

2 UC: \$8,500
CSU: \$10,900
CCC: \$15,700

1 UC: \$12,900
CSU: \$11,700
CCC: \$13,500

5 UC: \$8,500-\$9,500
CSU: \$8,700
CCC: \$12,400

9 UC: \$10,200-\$13,200
CSU: \$13,100
CCC: \$13,700

8 UC: \$9,600
CSU: \$12,300
CCC: \$11,300

4 UC: \$8,800
CSU: \$12,100
CCC: \$13,700

6 UC: \$9,900
CSU: \$11,900
CCC: \$15,200

3 UC: \$8,300-\$9,300
CSU: \$12,300
CCC: \$13,700

7 UC: \$12,900
CSU: \$11,300
CCC: \$12,600

Net Price Legend

- Lowest
- Midrange
- Highest

How Can Lower Tuition Colleges Have Higher Net Prices?

The total costs of college are not nearly as different for students across the segments as their tuition charges might suggest. The California Student Aid Commission estimates that in [2015-16](#), students at *any* college living off campus without parents – the way that most students at all three public segments live – incurred about \$18,000 in non-tuition costs. After adding these costs to the tuition and fees charged by each college, compared to the total cost of attending a California Community College (CCC), the total cost of college was only 23 percent more at California State University (CSU) and 59 percent more at University of California (UC).

The amount of grant aid available to students at each college also influences net prices. Grant aid – money that does not need to be repaid – reduces the amount that students need to pay out of pocket for college, and the amounts of grant aid available at each college type are quite different. In 2015-16, the average amount of grant aid available per low-income student (i.e., Pell Grant recipient) was approximately \$5,400 at CCCs, \$10,300 at CSU, and \$25,200 at UC. Per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, the average amount of grant aid was approximately \$2,300 at CCCs, \$6,400 at CSU, and \$10,200 at UC.

These wide disparities in grant aid, combined with the proportionally narrower disparities in total college costs, explain why the lowest tuition colleges in California are often the most expensive. UC students' total costs are 59 percent more than CCC students' total costs, but UC students get 300+ percent more grant aid. The additional grant aid more than covers the cost difference between the colleges, leaving UC students better positioned to attend college full time without excessive work or debt.

TABLE 1: AVERAGE GRANT AID PER UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AT CALIFORNIA PUBLIC COLLEGES, 2015-16

	Segment	Institutional Grants	State Grants	Pell Grants	TOTAL
Per Pell Recipient	CCC	\$1,700	\$400	\$3,400	\$5,400
	CSU	\$2,900	\$3,100	\$4,300	\$10,300
	UC	\$10,000	\$10,600	\$4,600	\$25,200
Per FTE	CCC	\$700	\$200	\$1,400	\$2,300
	CSU	\$1,800	\$1,900	\$2,700	\$6,400
	UC	\$4,100	\$4,300	\$1,900	\$10,200

Notes: Calculations based on data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office's Data Mart, California Department of Finance, the California Governor's 2016-17 state budget summary, the California Student Aid Commission, the California State University Office of the Chancellor, the Federal Student Aid Data Center, and the University of California Office of the President. For community colleges, state aid includes Cal Grants and Full-Time Student Success Grants; for CSU and UC, it includes Cal Grants and Middle Class Scholarships. Grant aid per student are intended to show relative aid availability for students at different colleges, not suggest average amounts of aid received by any given student. All figures are rounded to the nearest \$100. Totals may not add up to sum of individual categories due to rounding.

What Are the Implications of High Net Prices for Students?

Students pay their net prices by tapping their own family resources (income or savings), working to earn money, or borrowing loans. Students' ability to contribute towards college costs is most typically measured through a federal calculation of 'expected family contribution' or EFC. The lowest income students have EFCs of zero, meaning that the federal government estimates they cannot afford to put any resources towards college costs.

After student and family contributions, many students work to earn money to cover their costs. While there is some research that suggests working a modest amount while enrolled is not harmful, and may indeed be helpful, the research is very clear that working too much is detrimental to student success. More specifically,

students who work more than 20 hours per week are much less likely to graduate than those who work less.¹

Table 2 shows how many hours of work it would take each week throughout the academic year to cover the net prices shown in the map. At every public college in the state, low-income students would need to work more than 20 hours per week to cover their net price, and at more than half at least 30 hours are needed.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF WEEKLY WORK HOURS NEEDED FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS TO EARN THE NET COST

Region	Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Los Angeles	Merced	Riverside	San Diego	Santa Barbara	Santa Cruz
UC	32	21	21	21	22	24	32	23	29
CSU	29	27	30	30	21	29	28	30	32
CCC	33	38	33	33	30	37	31	28	33

Notes: Assumes the student is working 39 weeks out of the year (the number of weeks in a nine month academic calendar) for \$10.50 per hour in order to meet the costs shown in the map. Figures are rounded to the nearest hour.

Many students reduce their need to work by borrowing. Table 3 shows borrowing rates for each of the colleges shown in the map. These rates are for all undergraduates, and likely underestimate borrowing rates among low-income students who are more likely to borrow.

TABLE 3: SHARE OF UNDERGRADUATES BORROWING FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS, 2014-15

Region	Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Los Angeles	Merced	Riverside	San Diego	Santa Barbara	Santa Cruz
UC	26%	39%	42%	35%	55%	54%	39%	40%	53%
CSU	37%	38%	31%	32%	37%	41%	34%	42%	46%
CCC	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	2%	10%	3%

Notes: Figures from the U.S. Department of Education, College Navigator for 2014-15, the most recent data available.

Students who are unable to cover their net price with a manageable amount of part-time work, and who are uninterested in borrowing loans, may reduce their enrollment intensity to make more time for employment. Table 4 shows the share of undergraduate students at each college that attends full time. Full-time enrollment rates at the community colleges are much lower than at the universities. While many community college students choose to enroll part time, the fact that their net prices are more than what could reasonably be covered with part time work, in addition to the fact that few community college students borrow loans, indicates that attending full time may not be a viable option.

TABLE 4: SHARE OF UNDERGRADUATES ENROLLED FULL TIME, FALL 2015

Region	Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Los Angeles	Merced	Riverside	San Diego	Santa Barbara	Santa Cruz
UC	97%	97%	98%	98%	99%	98%	97%	98%	97%
CSU	85%	80%	82%	87%	84%	89%	89%	85%	93%
CCC	21%	26%	35%	37%	47%	27%	18%	42%	33%

Notes: Figures from the U.S. Department of Education, College Navigator for Fall 2015, the most recent data available.

¹ For more on how working long hours can impede academic success, see: King, Jacqueline E. 2002. *Crucial Choices: How Students' Financial Decisions Affect Their Academic Success*. American Council on Education. <http://bit.ly/1RVX00b>. Perna, Laura. 2010. *Understanding the Working College Student*. American Association of University Professors. <http://bit.ly/1UO6zEa>. Torres, Vasti, Jacob P. K. Gross, and Afet Dadashova. 2010. *Traditional-Age Students Becoming At-Risk: Does Working Threaten College Students' Academic Success?* <http://bit.ly/1qyl6Gd>.

Conclusion

Low-income students at public colleges in California cannot afford to pay for college costs through their own resources, grants, and a moderate amount of work, and their affordability challenges present themselves in different ways. For UC undergraduates, who are required to attend college full time, borrowing may be a necessity, and leave low-income students disproportionately burdened by student loan debt. Indeed, UC data show that low-income students' likelihood of graduating with debt is three times higher than that of students with the greatest resources.¹

Affordability challenges can also present themselves in low rates of full-time enrollment, as seen at the community colleges, which hinders students' ability to persist, graduate, and transfer. Attending college part time reduces the amount of time needed to be a student, and frees up more time to work. However, spending more time engaged with school – whether in classes or focusing on course material – increases students' ability to learn, pass their courses, and graduate.

To the extent that California policymakers seek to reduce students' need for debt, or increase graduation rates, the net prices for low-income students at public colleges across the state should be of great concern. While these two problems are distinct, their solution is the same. Increasing the grant aid available to students who would otherwise need to borrow heavily or attend college part time will reduce the burden of student loan debt on low-income students, and enable low-income students who do not want or are not able to borrow loans to take more classes and graduate.

Net Price Map Notes:

Figures are from each school's Net Price Calculator (NPC) for a dependent student from a family of four (with one child in college) with parental income of \$18,000 and student income of \$2,000 (or family income under \$30,000 at the community colleges), living independently off-campus. Among dependent students attending California public colleges with family incomes between \$0 and \$30,000, \$18,000 is the median parental income and \$2,000 is the median student income (from the U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2008). NPCs were accessed in December 2016; figures are rounded to the nearest \$100.

Each of the nine undergraduate-serving University of California (UC) campuses is paired with a local California State University (CSU) and the nearest California Community College (CCC) campus. The colleges in the nine regions numbered on the map are as follows:

- 1: UC Berkeley, CSU – East Bay, Berkeley City College
- 2: UC Davis, CSU – Sacramento, Woodland Community College
- 3: UC Irvine, CSU – Fullerton, Irvine Valley College
- 4: UC Los Angeles, CSU – Los Angeles, Santa Monica College
- 5: UC Merced, CSU – Stanislaus, Merced College
- 6: UC Riverside, CSU – San Bernardino, Riverside City College
- 7: UC San Diego, CSU – San Diego, San Diego Miramar College
- 8: UC Santa Barbara, CSU – Channel Islands, Santa Barbara City College
- 9: UC Santa Cruz, CSU – Monterey Bay, Cabrillo College

¹ University of California. 2016. *Annual Accountability Report 2016*. Indicator 2.5.3. <http://accountability.universityofcalifornia.edu/2016/chapters/chapter-2.html#2.5.3>.