

Using Scholarships to Increase College Access and Completion

What We're Learning



California's Challenge

While California faces an economic crisis today, its future is at even greater risk. The shortage of highly educated workers threatens the state's competitiveness, economic vitality and quality of life. Improving access to higher education and increasing the number of college students who graduate will be critical to addressing this challenge in the years to come.

In California, slightly more than half of high-school graduates aged 18–24 go directly to college, ranking California 40th in the nation. Once in college, six out of 10 finish their college degree within six years. At community colleges, where more than two-thirds of California students enroll, fewer than three in 10 students receive a certificate or associate's degree or transfer to a four-year institution.

We face a widening achievement gap at a time when higher education is more important than ever before. In the next decade, two-thirds of all jobs created in California will require some form of post-secondary credential. If current trends continue, California will be one million short of the number of college graduates that its businesses and employers will require in 2025. Fewer college graduates means lower wages, declining tax revenues and a less competitive economy.

Reversing this trend will require commitment and investment by the public and private sectors. It will also require concrete strategies to make college attainable for a large and diverse student population. At College Access Foundation of California, we believe that scholarships are part of the solution—especially when they promote enrollment and graduation for students who would otherwise not seek a college degree.

This report examines results of the Foundation's grant making over the 2008–2009 academic year: how the organizations that we support used our scholarship grants to increase college enrollment, the types of students who received scholarship awards, and what we have learned that will inform our work moving forward.



California faces a widening achievement gap at a time when higher education is more important than ever before.



A key element of our approach is targeting our scholarship grants to organizations and programs that offer students other non-financial tools to succeed.

Key Facts

2008–2009

Grants from Foundation: \$7.3 million

Scholarship providers: 67

Scholarship recipients: 3,935

Average scholarship award: \$1,850

Who We Are

College Access Foundation of California funds scholarships aimed at increasing the number of young people attending and succeeding in college. Since our inception in 2005, the Foundation has supported more than 17,000 scholarships for low-income and first-generation college students. Our partners, approximately 100 community programs throughout California, select and award scholarships and assist students with academic preparation, financial aid planning, as well as mentoring and other support to help students stay in school and graduate. These scholarships address several critical needs of students and their families:

- Reduced financial burden—easing the economic costs of college placed on families, including the debt taken on by students.
- Greater choice—providing students with the flexibility to choose the school that fits with their academic and personal goals.
- More focus on academics—giving students the ability to reduce their work hours while in school, allowing them greater time to focus on their studies and progress in college.

Following Student Progress

The Foundation began a process this year to follow students who received scholarships as a result of our grant making: to determine where they are enrolling, whether they remain in school and, ultimately, how many graduate. With the help of our community partners throughout the state, we have compiled information on nearly 4,000 students attending college in the 2008–2009 academic year.

What We're Learning

The data here offers several lessons: how organizations are using scholarships to increase enrollment among groups underrepresented in higher education; the importance of scholarships to students receiving other forms of financial aid; and, young people's trust in California's public higher education system as means of achieving their career goals. Here's what we're learning:

Community organizations are effectively using scholarships to increase college access among populations where college-going rates are low.

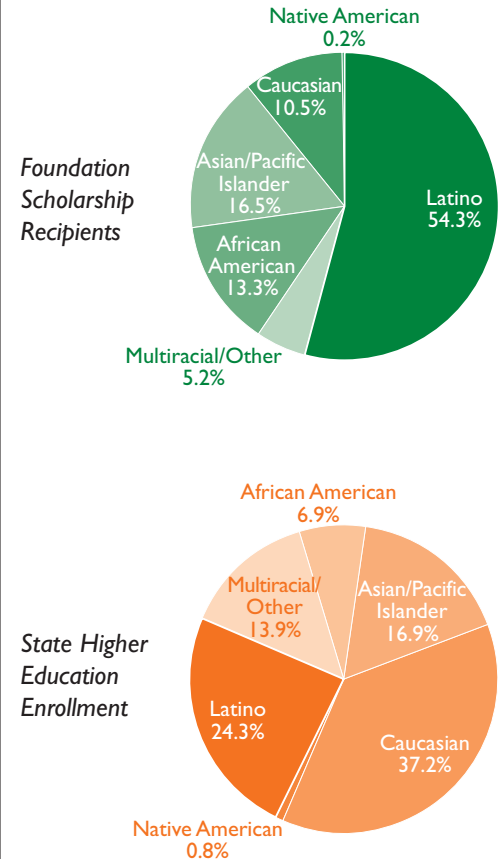
The 67 community programs and organizations that used our grant funds to award scholarships for the 2008–2009 academic year were effective in advancing critical goals: increasing college attainment among groups that are underrepresented in higher education; and, reaching students in areas of the state where rates of college attendance are low.

Our community partners were successful in reaching families new to higher education: 89 percent of scholarship recipients were the first in their families to attend college. Scholarships also benefited students that have disproportionately low rates of college attendance in California, such as Latino and African-American students.

Our partners were also able to reach into communities where rates of college-going are low, and which lack the financial aid infrastructure present in California's big cities: areas such as the Coachella Valley, the Central Valley and rural counties of Northern California. Nearly four in 10 scholarship recipients resided in communities outside of the major population centers of Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Higher education is especially important in these regions, which seek to diversify their industries and economic base.

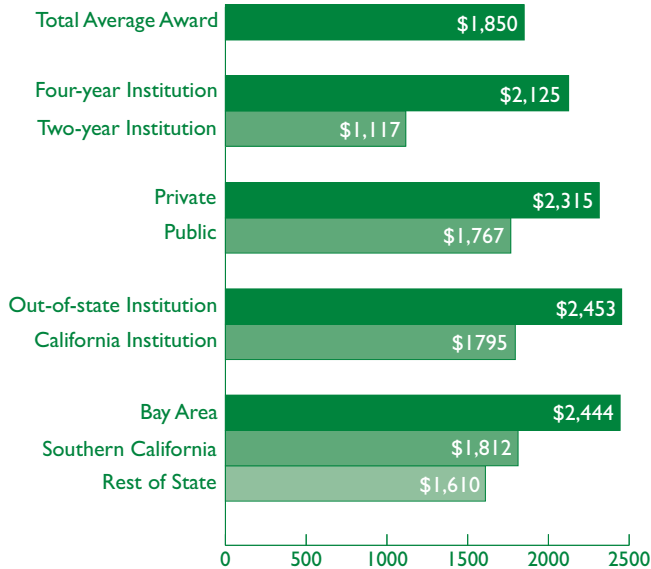
A key element of our approach—and what we believe contributes to our partners' effectiveness—is targeting our scholarship grants to organizations and programs that offer students other non-financial tools to succeed. These include providing young adults with college preparation before they apply to school, and connecting students to mentoring and other forms of support once they are enrolled in school.

Scholarship Recipients by Ethnicity



Source: www.cpec.ca.gov (2007-08 Higher Ed data)

Average Scholarship Award by Institution Type



Our scholarship dollars address critical financial needs, even for students receiving state and federal financial aid.

For middle-income families, college is a stretch: they will pay up to a quarter of their income for their child to attend a two- or four-year institution. Low-income families face an even bigger hurdle: even with financial aid, these families must allocate as much as half of their wages to pay for a year of college.

Our scholarship grants—the average award made by our partners in 2008 was \$1,850—help to close this gap and to increase the affordability of college. With federal and state financial assistance as the core, our scholarship funds offset other college costs beyond basic tuition and fees.

For many scholarship recipients, this combination of public and private financial assistance means the difference between going to college or not, attending community college or enrolling in the four-year college of their choice, and working multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet or focusing on school full-time.

Our Strategy

The Foundation aims to increase college access and completion rates in California. Three core strategies guide our grant making:

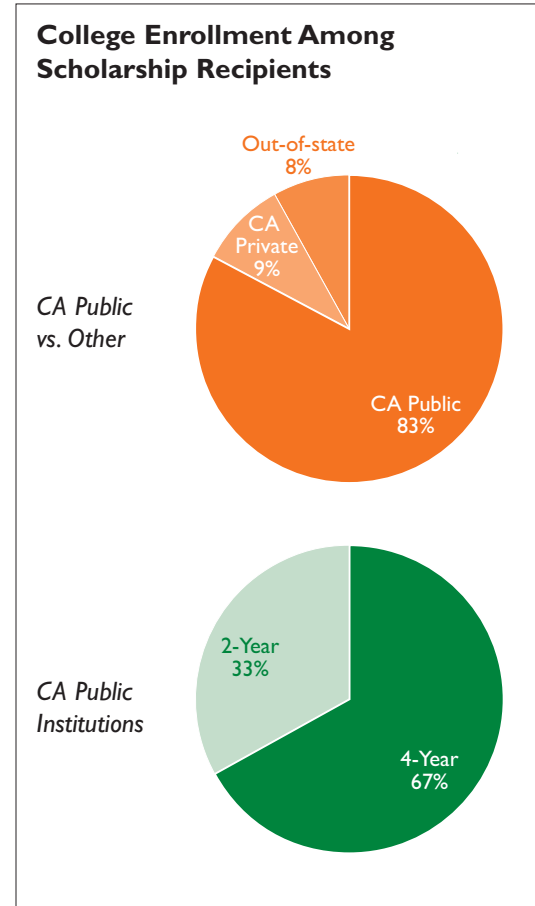
1. Support programs that offer college advice and academic support to young adults with significant need, including first-generation college goers and groups that have historically low enrollment or completion rates.
2. Support and test new and innovative approaches to scholarship giving that have the potential to increase college enrollment and persistence in school.
3. Foster greater networking and sharing of best practices among scholarship programs in the state, and offer evidence that will increase scholarship giving and promote a more effective public financial aid system.

More than eight out of 10 scholarship recipients chose to enroll in California’s public institutions—demonstrating their trust in the state’s higher education system and the need to maintain it.

The choice of where to attend college is the first of many important decisions in a young adult’s life. The fact that 83 percent of students who received scholarships through our grants attend California’s public colleges and universities is evidence of both the strength of the public higher education system and students’ trust in it.

Two-thirds of the scholarship recipients at public institutions attend schools in the CSU or UC system, with one-third enrolled in the state’s community colleges (96 of the 110 schools).

In the future, the status of California’s colleges and universities as a “first choice” for many young adults may rely as much on their continued trust in the viability of the system as their ability to pay.



Where We're Headed—Persistence and Completion



We want to see more students graduating, and will continue to follow those who received scholarships.

The data presented here is promising: it shows that scholarships, combined with academic support to students before and after they enter college, can open doors to higher education, even for young people who previously did not see college as a viable option. Our grantee partners, organizations that connect with youth and families in communities throughout the state, are effectively putting our resources to work to increase college access.

Equally important, we want to see more students staying in school and graduating. Moving forward, we will continue to follow the students who received scholarships last year, as well as those who will receive awards from the Foundation's future grants.

Our goal is to foster higher rates of college completion. By understanding the enrollment patterns of various scholarship programs, we can make grants that support a mix of students, while taking into account that some groups will have different rates of completion than others.

Over time, we hope that knowing the enrollment and completion patterns of thousands of these and future scholarship recipients will add knowledge about what works to increase college access and completion for different populations of young adults.



COLLEGE ACCESS
FOUNDATION
of California

Opportunities for Students

Scholarship Providers, 2008-2009

A Place Called Home
Barrio Logan College Institute
Bay Area Council
Bright Prospect
California Academic Decathlon
California Cash for College
California Dollars for Scholars
Cal-SOAP Central Coast
Cal-SOAP Central Valley
Cal-SOAP East Bay
Cal-SOAP Long Beach
Cal-SOAP Los Angeles
Cal-SOAP Merced
Cal-SOAP North County
Cal-SOAP Northcoast
Cal-SOAP Sacramento
Cal-SOAP San Diego
Cal-SOAP San Francisco
Cal-SOAP San Jose
Cal-SOAP Santa Barbara
Cal-SOAP South San Joaquin Valley
Cal-SOAP South County
Campaign for College Opportunity
Catch the Dream
Central Valley Higher Education Consortium
Centro Legal de la Raza
Cerritos College Project HOPE
College Bound
College Match
College Track
Community Foundation of the Verdugos
California State Summer School for
Mathematics and Science (COSMOS)
Diablo Valley Educational Talent Search
East Bay College Fund
East Oakland Youth Development Center
Eastside College Preparatory School
Educating Young Minds
First Graduate
Franklin High School IB Program
Fulfillment Fund
Habitat for Humanity East Bay
Hispanic Scholarship Fund
I Have a Dream LA
Larkin Street Youth Services
Level Playing Field Institute
Meritus College Fund
Motivating Our Students Through
Experience (MOSTE)
Mountain View/Los Altos Community
Scholars
Omega Boys Club
One Voice
Pasadena Educational Foundation
Project BEST
Project Grad Los Angeles
Salvadoran American Leadership and
Education Fund (SALEF)
San Diego Education Fund
San Diego Foundation
Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara
Shasta Union High School District
Stiles Hall
Summer Search
United Friends of the Children
UNITE-LA
University of Southern California, CHEPA
University of Southern California, MedCOR
University of Southern California, NAI
University of Southern California, STAR
Watsonville College Success Fund
YWCA Santa Monica

College Access Foundation of California

One Front Street, Suite 1325

San Francisco, CA 94111

Tel: 415.287.1800

www.collegeaccessfoundation.org