



**COLLEGE ACCESS  
FOUNDATION**  
*of California*

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*Opportunities for Students*

**Our Approach - Using Scholarships to Increase  
College Access and Completion**

Maintaining a high quality and highly accessible public higher education system is critical to California's future. In the next decade, two-thirds of all jobs created in California will require some form of post-secondary credential. Yet only slightly more than 50 percent of the state's high school graduates aged 18–24 go directly to college, ranking California 40<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

Once in college, only 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.

College Access Foundation of California views these challenges as significant, but solvable. It believes that scholarships are an important part of the solution—especially when they promote enrollment and graduation for students who would otherwise not seek a college degree. Since its inception in 2005, the Foundation has supported more than 20,000 scholarships for low-income and first-generation college students.

A key element of the foundation's approach is targeting its scholarship grants to organizations and programs that offer students non-financial tools for success. Its approximately 100 community partners throughout California award scholarships to low-income students, offer academic preparation and financial aid planning, and provide mentoring and other support to help students stay in school and graduate.

These organizations are reaching families new to higher education: 89 percent of their scholarship recipients in 2009 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.

Equally important, the foundation is examining ways to help students stay in school and graduate. In addition to funding organizations that provide mentoring and other support to students in college, the foundation is supporting efforts to determine whether scholarships themselves can encourage persistence and graduation among college students.

Last year, the foundation began to track the academic progress of students who received scholarships through its grants, to determine where they are enrolling, whether they remain in school and how many graduate. By understanding the enrollment patterns of various scholarship programs, the foundation can better direct its grants to support a diverse mix of students, while examining ways to raise rates of completion for all scholarship recipients.

One of the early indicators from this work shows that students who received scholarships place great trust in the state's public higher education system: more than eight out of 10 chose to enroll in California's public institutions.

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