



Modernizing Statewide Coordination on Education: Ensuring Collaboration and Accountability Between TK-12, Higher Education, and Workforce Partners Through a Higher Education Coordinating Body

Overview

Across the country, states have established systems of governance for higher education. These structures oversee a state's institutions of higher education (IHEs) and provide policy leadership to help states create and attain postsecondary education objectives that address state needs and demands. Up until the recent passage of AB 1098 (Fong) and SB 638 (Padilla), which will establish a higher education coordinating body in California, California has been in the minority of states without a higher education coordinating body, agency, or governing board, to the detriment of its students, families, and workforce.¹ While California has taken meaningful steps to better understand TK-16 student and employment pathways and outcomes through state initiatives, such as the recently established California Cradle-to-Career Data System, the state has lacked a dedicated venue to bring its higher education systems together to analyze this data, coalesce around broader shared goals, coordinate and monitor progress, and provide the governor and legislature actionable policy recommendations to fuel improved education and workforce outcomes for all Californians.

A higher education coordinating body in California that provides the state with the appropriate policy, fiscal, and programmatic analysis of current TK-16 education and workforce investments will help ensure that these investments are being allocated wisely in support of expanding college access, workforce preparation, and economic mobility for all Californians.

Problem

There is currently no state entity that brings together California's postsecondary and workforce systems to address, strategize, and plan towards helping California meet its

larger education and workforce needs.² The lack of a state entity that coordinates across these systems has led to persistent challenges among state higher education systems, between TK-12 and higher education systems, and between TK-16 and the state's workforce. For example, some of the persistent challenge areas faced among higher education systems that a California higher education coordinating body could address are:

- Improving student transfer³
- Closing persistent equity gaps in college access, completion, and post-graduate success⁴
- Academic program review and approval⁵
- Addressing postsecondary capital infrastructure needs⁶
- Providing oversight and accountability for postsecondary budget allocations.⁷

Between TK-16 and the state's workforce, key challenge areas a coordinating body could address include expanding TK-16 educational opportunities to meet regional and local workforce needs and building comprehensive data systems linking education and workforce outcomes. A state entity could tackle these challenges while monitoring and setting new state goals to benefit California's students, families, and economy – including the state's ambitious objective for 70% of Californians to earn a college degree or credential by 2030, a target we are currently not on track to meet.

Solution

The goal of the coordinating body is to bring together higher education and workforce systems through a higher education coordinating entity, ensuring statewide collaboration and accountability across these sectors. A higher education coordinating body does not automatically ensure better outcomes or equity. However, an entity with substantial statutory or constitutional authority to oversee the state's higher education and workforce systems, collaborate with the TK-12 system to set long-term policy priorities, and advise the governor and legislature on cross-system strategies could help California make significant progress in improving education and workforce results.

The California State Legislature has approved \$1.5 million in ongoing funds, beginning in the 2025-26 Fiscal Year (FY), to establish a higher education coordinating body.⁸ And, the recent passage of AB 1098 (Fong) and SB 638 (Padilla) establishes the framework for this body as the California Education Interagency Council. Below, we provide further details on the structure and make up of the coordinating body based on this state legislation and the important role of the governor in establishing this new entity.

The coordinating body membership will include:

- 10 members: The President of the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the President of the University of California, the Chancellor of the California State University, the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the Director of Consumer Affairs, the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, the Director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, the Director of Finance, and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.
 - The Governor must designate one member from the ten listed above to serve as the council's chairperson.
- A chief executive for the Office of the California Education Interagency Council - The coordinating body will be overseen by a managing entity, the Office of the California Education Interagency Council, which will be housed within the California Government Operations Agency. An executive officer will oversee the office. The governor will appoint this individual.

Coordinating body responsibilities:

- Advise the governor and state legislature on higher education issues, advocating for the needs of Californians.
- Establish a strategic plan to guide the body in achieving its goals. These goals are outlined in AB 1098 (Fong):
 1. Proactively evaluate and address the changing nature of work and the economy, and support the advancement of state educational attainment, equity, and workforce goals.
 2. Integrate and align efforts across elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, employers, and the statewide workforce system, and maximize the impact of federal and state funding investments to ensure effective student pathways to quality work and well-paying careers and to contribute to economic growth.
 3. Increase collaboration across postsecondary education and workforce development systems statewide, as well as with employers, to ensure flexibility and support for meeting the skill-building and upskilling needs of adults.
 4. Work in regions throughout the state to ensure that education supply and statewide workforce demand are aligned.
 5. Serve as a forum to discuss the impacts of proposed intersegmental and cross-sector issues, including, but not limited to, changes to elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education graduation requirements,

including California State University and University of California admissions changes.

- Establish a work plan, in consultation with the governor, chair of the Assembly Committee on Education, chair of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, chair of the Senate Committee on Education, and other interested parties.
- Establish a principal advisory committee comprising practitioners from transitional kindergarten through secondary education, postsecondary education, the workforce, and business to assist the council in achieving its goals. Additional representatives, including California students, parents, teachers, faculty, staff, associations, employers, labor organizations, experts, and other public entities with relevant content jurisdiction or expertise in TK-16 education and the workforce, can be appointed to the committee. The committee will center access and equity for underserved populations in council discussions.
- Regularly report to the legislature on progress towards meeting the Council's work plan.

The coordinating body can provide recommendations to the legislature and governor on, but not limited to, the following:

- Develop budget recommendations for the higher education sector for the governor and the legislature, including the development, modification, implementation, and operation of any funding formulas and outcome-based funding programs.
- Review and prioritize the capital needs of California's higher education systems, including the approval of new physical locations for these systems.
- Review and set higher education tuition rates by considering institutional revenue needs, college affordability for students, student success, and statewide TK-16 education and workforce goals.
- Review, evaluate, and make recommendations on available state education and career data from a variety of data sources, including, but not limited to, California's Cradle-to-Career Data System.

With intensifying federal uncertainties and multi-year state budget constraints, we can no longer afford for each state agency and entity to be driven by institutional self-interest and operate in isolation. Every dollar must work harder, reach further, and deliver more. Establishing a coordinating body and increasing intentional coordination will do just that—connecting our systems, from higher education to the workforce, to

ensure alignment, reduce duplication, mandate shared ownership and accountability for the success of California’s learners, and help more Californians gain the skills to secure good jobs and achieve economic mobility.

References

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