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CSU Sets the Standard for Public Higher Education Through New Strategic Plan

Comprehensive Systemwide Strategic Plan and Student Success Framework chart a new roadmap for the CSU.

(September 9, 2025) – The California State University (CSU) today unveiled a comprehensive strategic plan that will change the way the CSU defines student success and fulfills its role as California’s most powerful engine of opportunity, economic mobility and inclusive excellence. Designed to meet the needs of California’s diverse students and evolving tech-driven workforce, the CSU’s Systemwide Strategic Plan is a new roadmap to guide the CSU’s future as the state and nation’s preeminent public regional university system.

The system’s first strategic plan in more than a decade, “CSU Forward: Thriving Students, Thriving University, Thriving California,” provides a shared vision to best position the system to adapt to changing student, workforce and societal needs while holding firm to the CSU’s long-standing mission and core values.

“By aligning our long-term strategic vision with a bold new framework for student success, the CSU is charting a path that no other university system has pursued at this scale,” said Chancellor Mildred García. “The strategic plan is student-focused, tomorrow-minded and actionable. And significantly, it taps into the collective power of our 22 universities. The CSU’s ‘systemness’ is our greatest strength and—leveraging that unmatched power—we will shape the future of the CSU for the benefit of our students, California and our nation.”

The strategic plan centers on four performance objectives: economic mobility engine, sustainable affordability, employer of choice and statewide impact. The objectives translate the CSU's bold vision into measurable outcomes with a set of milestones to achieve by 2028, among which include:

- Serve at least 50,000 students annually through flexible, modular, career-integrated programs.

- Ensure debt-free graduation for students from families earning under \$75,000.
- Achieve measurable gains in graduation and employment outcomes.
- Improve retention and engagement of CSU's 63,000+ employees.
- Mobilize 100,000+ alumni to support student career advancement.
- Strengthen CSU's statewide influence and role in regional economic development.

The plan's progress will be tracked through clear systemwide success measures focused on the value of a CSU degree, affordability and access, maximizing California's investment, creating a premier educational workplace, and strengthening California's competitive advantage.

Reimagining Student Success

As a companion to the Systemwide Strategic Plan, the CSU presented its final report on its Year of Engagement to develop a new Student Success Framework, which will be officially launched as the next iteration of Graduation Initiative 2025. The new framework expands the definition of student success beyond retention and graduation rate metrics to include student satisfaction, career earnings, socioeconomic mobility and alumni engagement. Core to the framework is the "CSU Promise" that every student will graduate with the opportunity for a first career job and/or a clear path to further study.

"Student success has always been the measure of our impact," said Dilcie Perez, deputy vice chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs, who led the Student Success Framework development process. "This framework sets forth a collective vision to ensure that every CSU student graduates and is prepared for a career, with the knowledge, experience and support to thrive."

Developed following two deeply consultative engagement efforts that involved thousands of CSU students, employees, alumni and other stakeholders, the new Systemwide Strategic Plan and Student Success Framework work hand-in-hand to create a new CSU student experience focused on the CSU's commitments to affordability, personalized journeys to success, experiential learning and adaptive and responsive teaching and learning. Together, they:

- **Redefine student success beyond graduation:** Outcomes will be measured not only by degrees earned, but also by job placement, career earnings and social mobility.
- **Ensure equitable, high-impact support:** Every CSU student will have access to seamless academic and administrative support, experiential learning opportunities and career pathways.
- **Align systemwide efforts:** The framework connects leadership, faculty, staff and alumni across 22 universities into a single, student-focused vision with shared accountability.

- **Expand access and affordability:** The CSU is committed to debt-free graduation for more than 300,000 low-income students and to reinvesting efficiencies into the student experience.

CSU Rolls Out New Career Exploration Platform

As an early demonstration of the Systemwide Strategic Plan and Student Success Framework in action, the CSU also announced the roll out of [Futurenav Compass](#), a new AI-driven career exploration and placement platform developed by ETS. The tool will be available beginning in fall 2025 at seven CSU campuses—CSUDH, Cal State Fullerton, Cal State Long Beach, Cal State Los Angeles, CSUN, Cal Poly Pomona and Cal State San Bernardino. ETS will work with CSU staff to develop dashboards and resources to assist them as they work one-on-one with students to link skills, abilities and career goals directly and in real time to what employers are seeking in internship placements and job hires.

For more information about the CSU Systemwide Strategic Plan, visit www.calstate.edu/Strategic-Planning-for-the-CSU.

The Student Success Framework will launch in October when its official name and website is unveiled during the Graduation Initiative 2025 Symposium October 15 and 16.

Online press release [here](#).

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About the California State University

The [California State University](#) is the nation's largest four-year public university system, providing transformational opportunities for upward mobility to more than 460,000 students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. More than half of CSU students are from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, and more than one-quarter of undergraduates are first-generation college students. Because the CSU's 22 universities* provide a high-quality education at an incredible value, they are rated among the best in the nation for promoting social mobility in [national college rankings](#) from U.S. News & World Report, the Wall Street Journal and Washington Monthly. The CSU powers California and the nation, sending nearly 125,000 career-ready graduates into the workforce each year. In fact, one in every 20 Americans holding a college degree earned it at the CSU. Connect with and learn more about the CSU in the [CSU newsroom](#).

** Transition to 22 universities in progress (Cal Poly and Cal Maritime integrating).
The integration process is anticipated to be complete by fall 2026.*