CALBRIGHT COLLEGE

Strategic Vision

Expanding Equitable Access to Better Jobs

2024–27

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California's tripartite system of higher education continues to lead the nation – from economic mobility and unrivaled access to world-altering research and academic excellence. The California Community Colleges system (CCC), which Calbright is part of, serves as the foundation for the state's higher education infrastructure.

As an open-access system, CCC provides an entry point for students who matriculate directly from high school as well as working adults who return to formal education to gain and refine skills and acquire new knowledge.

01

Messages

From the Board of Trustees President

From the President and CEO

Message From the Board of Trustees President

"Calbright addresses pernicious issues in higher education—equity and access—and remains an important innovation in our statewide higher education infrastructure."

As the president of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and Calbright College Board of Trustees, I have the opportunity to see the power and promise of Calbright and its unique role within the California Community Colleges system. On behalf of the Calbright College Board of Trustees, I am proud to introduce the College's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision.

Calbright addresses pernicious issues in higher education—equity and access—and remains an important innovation in our statewide higher education infrastructure.

In every part of California, there are students who seek flexible skills-based training and who cannot attend traditional community colleges or job training programs – whether because they are raising a family, have unpredictable work schedules, and/or can't participate in a curriculum built around a traditional academic calendar. This includes the 6.8 million Californians ages 25-54 with a high school diploma but no college degree, many of whom have college credits, and adults across the state whose economic prospects continue to diminish in the face of a rapidly evolving economy.

This equity issue is especially acute in Calbright's focus populations and serving these students aligns with the Chancellor's Office's Vision 2030 Roadmap, which calls for an intentional focus on non-traditional students. Adult learners left the California Community Colleges system at some of the highest rates during the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating an enrollment decline that began in the Great Recession. Regions like the Inland Empire, Central Valley, and rural communities throughout the state continue to face substantial gaps in higher education attainment, which limits access to the knowledge economy and impedes upward mobility for communities already too often left behind.

Governor Newsom's Higher Education Roadmap ambitiously aims to reach 70% post-secondary degree and certificate attainment for working-aged Californians by 2030. To meet this goal, we must do things differently. Our current system never envisioned, at scale, providing higher education to working adults.

Like many policy areas, California leads the way in providing equitable access to higher education for all Californians – notably working adults. This Strategic Vision pairs Calbright's early stage growth and development with the opportunity of a maturing and unique model for teaching, learning, and student support. It advances the audacious goals outlined in the system's Vision 2030 roadmap, and propels the College through and beyond its start-up period in service of a community of learners who have historically struggled in higher education. Calbright is the state's next great stride in providing meaningful access to higher education—and in turn economic mobility—to all Californians.

Amy Costa

Amy M. Costa
President

Message From the President and CEO

"This Strategic Vision is in service of the California Community Colleges system's Vision 2030 Roadmap, which highlights adult learners—Calbright's student body—as a priority for the system."

Calbright College's mission is to serve adult learners across California – those who have fallen through the cracks of the economy and traditional education systems, who seek to upskill to remain competitive in their industry or reskill into a new career. These learners have historically struggled in traditional higher education—here in California and across the nation—and are rarely the beneficiaries of data-driven solutions to nurture their success. The College's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision provides a bold path forward and reflects Calbright's evolution and substantial progress since first opening for enrollment months before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

I'm proud of the Calbright team and our growth and development since becoming president and CEO in the summer of 2020. We have met or exceeded every legislative milestone outlined in the College's founding legislation, notably receiving accreditation in July 2023, a year-and-a-half ahead of the statute's April 2025 deadline. Enrollment surpassed 3,700 at the end of 2023 and will increase in a sustained and intentional manner in the years ahead. We will also continue to launch new programs, evaluate and optimize our model and operations, and build and expand partnerships with sister campuses and mission-aligned economic and workforce development entities to advance and scale our work.

This Strategic Vision is in service of the California Community Colleges system's Vision 2030 roadmap, which highlights adult learners—Calbright's student body—as a priority for the system. It's critical that we not only enroll these students, but nurture their success through their academic journey and into the labor market.

As the leading edge of the learning curve for solving the complex equation of how to best support adult learners, Calbright's goals are aligned with Vision 2030, and seek to advance, amplify, and complement the system's integral work as we collectively build a more inclusive higher education system to catalyze economic mobility across the state.

I look forward to sharing Calbright's successes in the years ahead as we build this new college and model of education from the ground up, move through and beyond our seven-year start-up period, and accomplish the audacious goals outlined in this Strategic Vision.

Ajita Talwalker Menon
President & CEO, Calbright College

02

Overview

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Calbright College's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision advances the College's steadfast commitment and focus on serving adult learners across California. Many of whom lack access to traditional forms of education and workforce training and their economic prospects continue to diminish amidst a rapidly evolving economy and volatile labor market.

Building on notable enrollment growth, new program creation, and a focus on constant evaluation, iteration, and improvement, Calbright serves as the leading edge of the learning curve for solving the complex equation of how to best nurture adult learner success and address prevailing challenges in the labor market. This Strategic Vision—in service of the California Community Colleges system's Vision 2030 Roadmap—animates our mission and highlights the overarching priorities that will carry Calbright through and beyond its seven-year start-up period.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Vision includes priorities, which are a high-level roadmap that serve as the framework for six goals. These goals translate priorities into tangible mechanisms through which the priorities are advanced, and include both qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure progress and success.

Priorities

Goals

Institutional Values

1 Serve Students and Employers

Strengthen student outcomes to meet adult learners' needs as well as those of employers and industry in order to support entry or advancement into the knowledge economy.

2 Drive Institutional Excellence

Calbright aims to enhance its internal operations and to ensure the creation and implementation of robust structures, systems, and processes. This will position the team for optimal performance and drive better student outcomes.

3 Amplify Our Innovative Approach

Over the next four years, Calbright seeks to expand the reach of its educational model. The institution intends to utilize its comprehensive and differentiated approach as a blueprint that can serve as a foundation for competency-based education across the California Community Colleges system and nationwide.

Priorities

Goals

Institutional Values

The three priorities provide a high-level architecture that informs Calbright's six 2024-2027 Strategic Vision goals. These goals, which align to Vision 2030, translate broad ideas into distinct and measurable milestones and outcomes.

These goals collectively function in an ecosystem, and cascade onto each other – the order in which they are listed is of significance. Progress supporting student opportunities and positive outcomes, for example, advances partnership dynamics and expands institutional awareness.

1 Expand Multidimensional Opportunities for Adult Learners

Calbright seeks to expand and optimize its academic and student services and success programs. Our priority is to ensure students have the opportunity to engage in development opportunities, experiential learning, and career preparation built around their personal and professional needs and goals.

2 Foster Skills that Drive Achievement

Economic mobility and equity remain at the core of Calbright's mission. Whether it be a new job, keeping their current job, transitioning to a new career, earning a raise, and/or expanding their current portfolio, positive labor market outcomes for students are central to Calbright's success.

3 Build and Maintain a Culture of Improvement and Innovation

As a new institution, the Calbright team has the opportunity and responsibility to build and cultivate an organizational culture that will serve as the foundation for the College's future. Systems and structures play a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining culture, and it's essential that Calbright fosters a two-way relationship with its students in which the College continues to learn, refine, and improve based on student feedback.

4 Develop a Sustainable Funding Approach

As California's first and only fully online and competency-based public college, part of Calbright's mandate is to identify a sustainable public funding model for competency-based education. This model would maintain and prioritize student affordability, champion equity, and create an environment in which students are supported and empowered to succeed. No such model currently exists in the state's public higher education sector.

5 Cultivate Institutional Awareness

Calbright is the leading edge of the learning curve for solving the complex equation of how to best nurture the success of adult learners. Following initial accreditation, the College is positioned to expand its mission to serve as a research and development asset for the CCC system. Our vision extends beyond the boundaries of the institution and the College will continue to proactively share lessons learned, original research, and best practices with regard to our unique education model, alignment with workforce needs, and focus on supporting adult learners.

6 Forge and Expand Strategic Partnerships

As Calbright engages with other mission-aligned organizations, partners gravitate toward our outcomes-focused orientation and flexible and nimble design. Calbright is interested in collaboration to expand the College's collective reach and impact. Target partnerships will focus on co-creating new solutions that serve a shared community of learners and goals and advance education and economic mobility in geographic focus regions like the Inland Empire, Central Valley, and rural parts of the state.

Priorities

Goals

Institutional Values

While high-level priorities drive toward an end goal, how the College approaches this work is also critical. Calbright's institutional values provide guidance for the manner in which we'll work together to advance these goals.

1 Human-Centered

- Design to meet the needs of every learner
- Empathy and equity guide our relationship with students and each other
- The student journey and workforce outcomes are Calbright's central products outcomes

2 Innovative and Collaborative

- Build together – within Calbright and beyond
- Serve as the leading edge of the learning curve
- Focus on continuous improvement

3 Impact

- Build a new standard for inclusive higher education
- Leverage data and evidence – promote evaluation and rapid iteration
- Identify and celebrate success

03

Calbright in Context

Mission and Identity

Institutional Values

About Our Students

Vision 2030 Alignment

State Alignment

Calbright In Context

California's tripartite system of higher education continues to lead the nation – from economic mobility and unrivaled access to world-altering research and academic excellence. The California Community Colleges system (CCC), which Calbright is part of, serves as the foundation for the state's higher education infrastructure.

As an open-access system, CCC provides an entry point for students who matriculate directly from high school as well as working adults who return to formal education to gain and refine skills and acquire new knowledge.

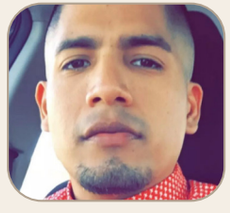
Despite this open-access mandate, adult learners have historically struggled within the state's community colleges system as well as across higher education. Here in California, three year completion rates for students who are at least 25 years old are in the single digits. These completion rates were exacerbated by an enrollment decline that began during the Great Recession and accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At its peak during the pandemic, California's higher education enrollment decline represented 26% of the nation's decline. According to a **March 2023 memo** submitted to the CCC Board of Governors by Dr. John Hetts, executive vice chancellor of the Office of Innovation, Data, Evidence and Analytics, CCC enrollment declined by 20% between the fall of 2019 and fall of 2022. Declines were substantial among "students of color, male students, students with disabilities, and older students."

Adult learners are rarely the beneficiaries of data-driven endeavors to nurture their success. In recognition of the necessity to support the 6.8 million Californians who have a high school diploma (many of whom have some college credits) but no college degree, Calbright College was created to serve as a statewide workforce catalyst.

"I'd decided that cloud systems is a hot field, and so I wanted to go into that. It only took about six months, and I passed my CompTIA Cybersecurity exam on the first try. While I was studying for Calbright's cybersecurity certificate, a recruiter reached out to me on LinkedIn about a job in cloud systems. Everything we'd done worked: soon I had a job offer and I really like my new work."

William Flores
Cyber Security Graduate



The College's unique model is designed around the needs and goals of adult learners. These students, who are at least 25 years old, make up about **36% of CCC** enrollment, but more than 90% of Calbright's student body. While adults across the state may enroll, Calbright focuses on historically underrepresented communities – regions like the Inland Empire, which has one of the lowest higher education rates in the state, as well as the Central Valley and rural counties, where access to formal education and workforce training may be limited either due to geography and/or institutional schedules.

Calbright's Mission and Identity

Calbright College is California's pioneering statewide and online community college. A catalyst for workforce development, the College is fully virtual, provides rich student support, utilizes a competency-based education model, and offers workforce-focused programs designed to prepare students to upskill, re-skill, and/or transition to a new career in high-demand fields.

Rural Need: Calbright focuses on historically underrepresented communities – regions like the Inland Empire and Central Valley, which have some of the lowest higher education rates in the state.

Our mission is clear: Calbright College is committed to increasing economic mobility and closing equity gaps for working adults who lack easy access to traditional forms of higher education. We provide flexibly paced programs, a reimagined design that recognizes competing priorities in adult learners' lives, and holistic support systems integrated across the student journey tailored specifically for working-age Californians.

Calbright was established by statute with a distinct purpose: to provide a high-quality, affordable, public option for adults who lack meaningful access to traditional institutions and workforce training programs. Our innovative, responsive, and student-centered approach provides a pathway for students to achieve their goals while they continue to work, raise a family, and juggle competing priorities in their lives. Programs not only lead to positive labor market outcomes for graduates, but our model and operations serve as a research and development initiative for the community colleges as we collectively build a more inclusive system and solve the shared challenge of engaging adult learners and nurturing their success.

"I breezed through the coursework in about six months. I took the first CompTIA A+exam, and I passed, and started to look for a job, and I ended up landing one! I got a job with a company that is a managed service provider for IT."

Alanah Rueh, IT Support Graduate

Institutional Values

As a new college, Calbright is reimagining what an accessible public institution of higher education can look like. Our operations are intentionally designed to traverse departments and remove legacy assumptions and boundaries that determine where formal learning may occur within an institution. While our integrated approach to teaching and student support is a pillar in our design, how we pursue this work is also critical. It's essential that we seek to break down traditional silos with the understanding that every department's role and focus is woven into the fabric of Calbright's central product: the student experience.

The ethos through which Calbright builds this new model of public education will embody the values outlined below. Our values guide our approach to this work and how we collectively build experiences and solutions to nurture the success of our students and advance Calbright's mission.

Human-Centered
- Design to meet the needs of every learner
- Empathy and equity guide our relationship with students and each other
- The student journey and workforce outcomes are Calbright's central products

Innovative and Collaborative
- Build together – within Calbright and beyond
- Serve as the leading edge of the learning curve
- Focus on continuous improvement

Impact
- Build a new standard for inclusive higher education
- Leverage data and evidence – promote evaluation and rapid iteration
- Identify and celebrate success

While online, Calbright is a **human-centered institution** and recognizes that our community of learners thrive when they feel seen, heard, and empowered. People build relationships – our instructors, faculty, and support team engage with Calbright's learners, and place the student body at the center of decision making. While automation and tools like artificial intelligence may help scale and bolster operations, our design, solutions, and processes will always be rooted in the power of human connection and centered on the learner, their needs, and their goals.

Expanding on our human-centered design, Calbright's unique education model requires **innovation and seamless collaboration** to solve the complexities of nurturing the success of adult learners. Collaboration is not just about working closely together, but about the diversity of experiences and voices at the table when we co-create solutions. Curiosity, revision, iteration, evaluation, and improvement are part of Calbright's DNA – innovation is always in service of providing continuously evolving opportunities and improvements that empower every single student who puts their trust in the College.

Lastly, what we build must scale and have an **impact** that advances our mission, the CCC system, the field of learning sciences, and the state. As the leading edge of the learning curve in the area of public and online CBE models, Calbright must leverage data and evidence, adopt what works and leave behind what doesn't, as part of the College's mission to create a more inclusive higher education system.

About Our Students

Calbright's student body reflects the College's unique model and mandate. More than 90% of students are at least 25 years old, compared to roughly 36% across the California Community Colleges system (CCC), and nearly a third are parents or caregivers, compared to 10% across the CCC system.

As the system's only statewide and fully online institution, Calbright's student body calls 52 of California's 58 counties home and represents the diversity of the state: 35.4% identify as Latinx, 22.3% as Black, 22% as Asian, 4.8% as Native American, and 3.1% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Amidst a long and sustained enrollment decline across CCC—beginning in the Great Recession and amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic—nearly nine in ten Calbright students cite the College's accessible model as the reason they were able to enroll. Calbright's enrollment increased from 481 students in July 2021 to more than 3,700 at the end of 2023, and we are planning for sustained and intentional growth through the end of the College's seven-year start-up period and Strategic Vision timeline.

Alignment with Vision 2030 Roadmap

In the summer of 2023, the new chancellor for the California Community Colleges system announced the CCC system's Vision 2030 Roadmap. This multi-year plan outlines audacious goals to grow the community colleges system, improve student outcome metrics, lead in areas like climate resilience and artificial intelligence, and to do so with equity as a central component.

Aligned with the Vision 2030 Roadmap, the goals and priorities outlined in the College's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision advance this system-wide endeavor. Vision 2030 specifically highlights the importance of adult learners—Calbright's student body—and in doing so, validates Calbright's work, the shared challenge for how to best engage adult learners, and addresses the persistent issue that growth in enrollment is not enough, but that there must be throughput to completion and positive labor market outcomes.

Where pertinent, Calbright's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision goals and metrics match or exceed the goals in Vision 2030.

Alignment with Statewide Priorities

In 2023, Governor Newsom issued a bold **executive order** calling for the state's higher education system, workforce development entities, and industry to collaborate and break down traditional silos in order to widen the doors of economic opportunity.

"The goal of this integrated system," the executive order reads, "must be to allow each individual, whether through a bachelor's degree or other educational or training program, to obtain the skills and experience necessary to pursue a good paying career within diverse sectors of our economy, and to connect individuals with employers hiring for those skills… Such alignment and integration has the potential to provide a new foundation for education that: prioritizes pathways to careers of all types, including the trades and careers in education, healthcare, climate, and technology; centers on the intersection between students' aspirations and future employer demand; and realizes equity and an inclusive workforce…"

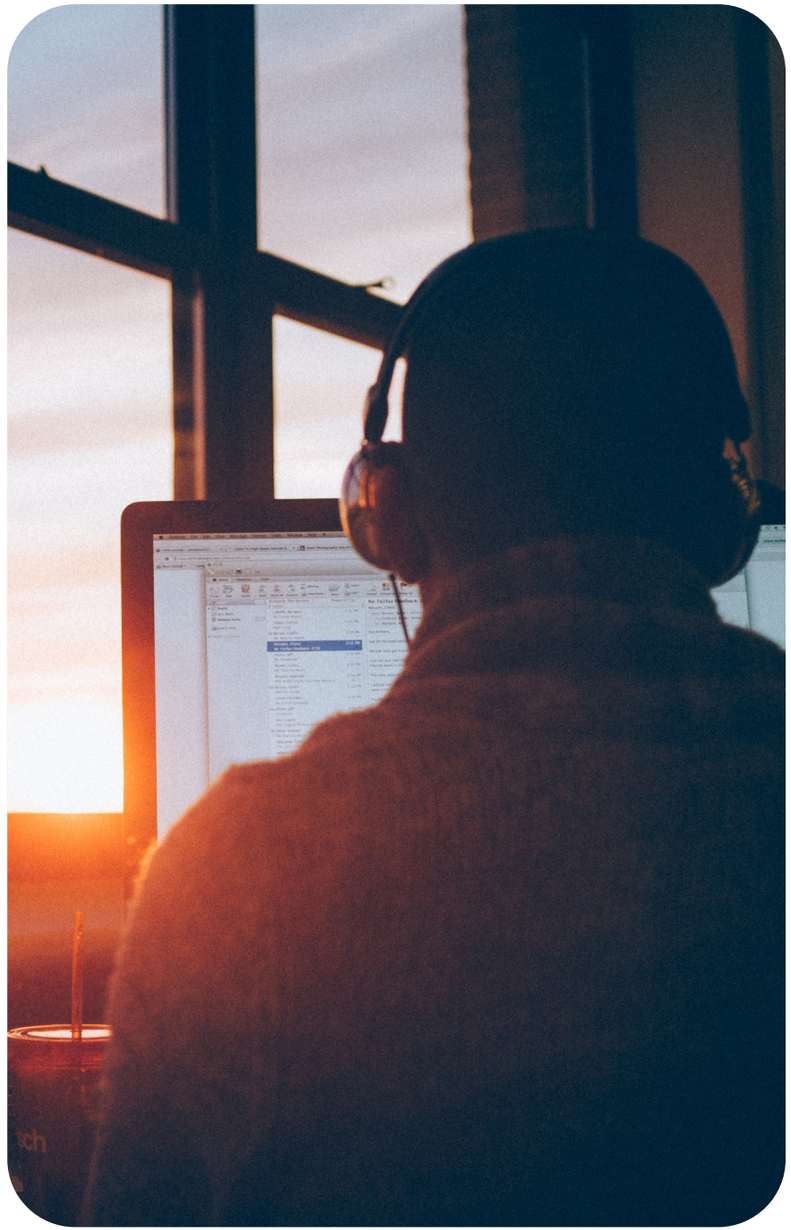
This builds on Governor Newsom's continued priority of reaching 500,000 active apprentices in the state by 2029 and allocates $2.9 billion for education workforce pipelines. In addition, the order includes $1 .7 billion for healthcare workforce pipelines, like the Licensed Vocational Nurse program Calbright is developing with the SEIU-UHW labor union. These investments seek to address collective workforce shortages and future demand in the critical fields of education, healthcare, and technology.

This new Master Plan for Career Education that education and workforce development leaders must develop as part of this mandate recognizes and propels forward the work Calbright has already begun. It is critical that higher education programs align to the needs of the labor market – not just for today, but for decades into the future. This does not mean that traditional programs should cease to exist, but recognizes the growing need for institutions and programs that are flexible and can evolve to meet new innovations, students, and sectors.

"I really enjoyed being able to get in there and go at my own pace. I charged right into it And when I graduated, Calbright's career services helped me to rewrite my resume to get a job for an online company that provides cyber secutirty training."

David Stupar
Cyber Security and
IT Support Graduate

Through 2027 and beyond, Calbright will continue advancing this gubernatorial priority and work alongside sister CCC campuses and economic development partners to ensure this new wave of opportunity reaches our student body and those historically left behind.



04

Highlights

Building a New College
From the Ground Up

Accomplishments

Timeline

Building a New College From the Ground Up

In the dynamic landscape of California's community colleges and adult education, Calbright College takes a unique and forward-looking approach. Our competency-based education (CBE) programs are tailored to the needs of adult learners seeking economic mobility and workforce training that fits into life's complexities. Central to our philosophy is an unwavering dedication to equity. Adult learners face unique challenges as they juggle responsibilities like childcare, commuting to and from work, and managing multiple jobs.

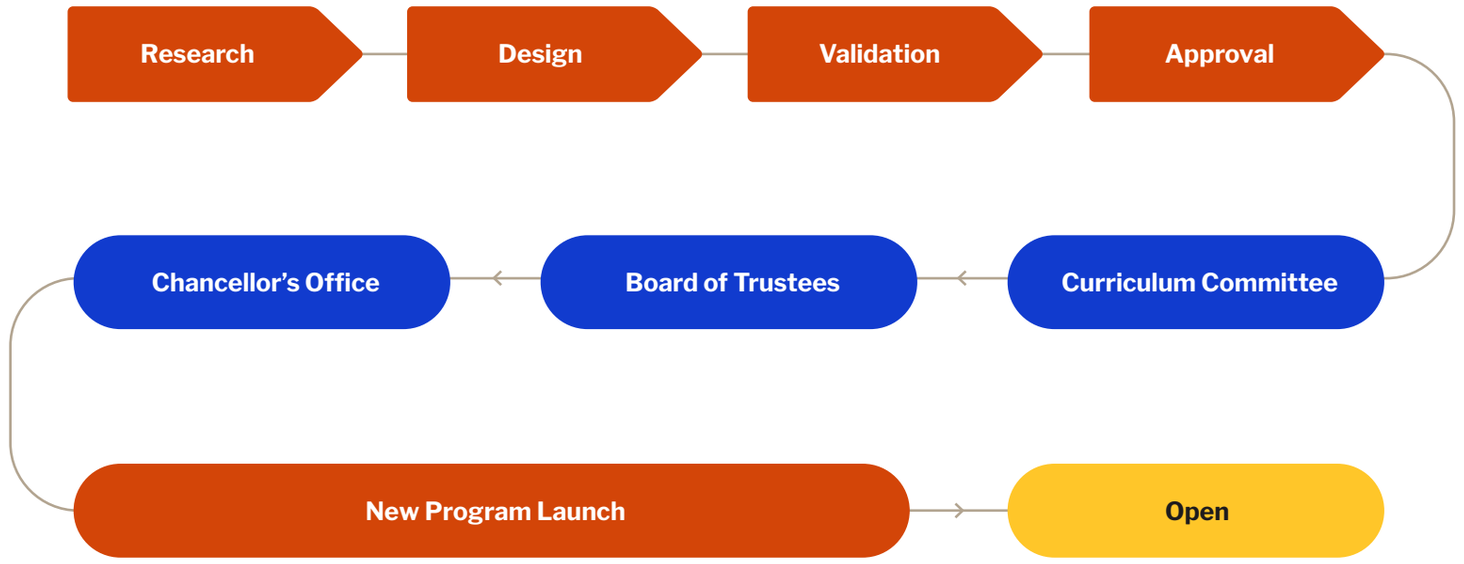
> *"Calbright truly hones in on its mission. While the online platform and remote learning hold significance, the more captivating aspect of Calbright pertains to its broader mission—cultivating a culture of lifelong learning and catering to specific student demographics, notably mature learners and those with prior work experience, closely intertwined with workforce and career outcomes—reflects the direction that everyone should be pursuing."*
>
> **Calbright Partner**

Calbright's seven-year start-up period concludes in early 2026, and the College has made notable progress as the first new CCC district launched in 40 years. Many of the components of a College that are taken for granted at an established institution—student information systems, human resources and payroll systems, student portals and learning platforms, a full team of faculty and staff, and academic programs, to name just a few—did not exist when Calbright was created in 2018.

Expanding on our human-centered design, Calbright's unique education model requires innovation and seamless collaboration to solve the complexities of nurturing the success of adult learners. Collaboration is not just about working closely together, but about the diversity of experiences and voices at the table when we co-create solutions. Curiosity, revision, iteration, evaluation, and improvement are part of Calbright's DNA – innovation is always in the service of providing continuously evolving opportunities and improvements that empower every single student who puts their trust in the College.

Our competency-based education programs empower students to chart their own educational journey. They may take as much time as they need to master new content and skills and also move as quickly as they are able through familiar material. In addition to Calbright's unique mandate to serve working-age Californians, what sets the College apart is our integrated approach to teaching, learning, and student support. We seamlessly blend academic and career support so that there is no line between learning that happens within the formal curriculum and learning that occurs with peers or under the guidance of non-instructional faculty. This ensures students feel welcome and empowered to succeed, and also that their entire support team understands their needs and experience. We create clear connections between course content and career aspirations, positioning students to gain entry into the knowledge economy and thrive in a dynamic job market.

New Program Development Roadmap



Calbright's Accomplishments

Calbright's momentum is palpable – enrollment grew by more than 670% between July 2021 and the end of December 2023. This is notable as it runs counter to long-term declines in community college enrollment both in California and across the nation. Only open since late 2019, we also continue to see leading indicators that support the efficacy of Calbright's model and operations. Between October 2019 and June 2021, the College awarded 116 cumulative certificates. In the 2021-2022 fiscal year alone, Calbright awarded 170 certificates, and is on pace to award more than 200 certificates in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Continued enrollment and completion growth are central metrics within this Strategic Vision.

This success comes after early stumbles by previous leadership that were magnified by opposition to the College's initial existence. Under the leadership of President Ajita Talwalker Menon, the College has reached or exceeded every legislative milestone outlined in statute, including receiving accreditation in July 2023, a year-and-a-half ahead of the April 2025 legislative requirement.

Building a new institution from the ground up is rarely done in the CCC system. As part of this, everything Calbright creates is done from scratch. Labor unions must formally be established and then complete initial collective bargaining. New programs must be researched, identified, and then move through the system's approval process. Staff and faculty must be hired and simultaneously build this new system of education while also supporting students, creating curriculum, and evaluating and optimizing systems that nurture success.

> *"At Calbright, I had the freedom to learn at my own pace while receiving the support I needed. Whether reaching out to my teachers or consulting peers on Slack, I never felt alone in my studies. This collaborative environment greatly contributed to my satisfaction with Calbright."*
>
> **Calbright Alumna**

Calbright's Journey

2019-2020

October 2019
Calbright opened for enrollment with three inaugural programs: Introduction to Cybersecurity, Medical Coding, and Introduction to IT Support

February 2020
Ajita Talwalker Menon named interim president and CEO of Calbright College

March 2020
Resignation of the College's inaugural president and CEO, Heather Hiles, takes effect. COVID-19 pandemic begins

July 2020
Ajita Talwalker Menon confirmed as Calbright's second president

October 2020
The Calbright Faculty Association, the College's first labor union, is formally recognized

2021-2022

April 2021
2021-2023 Strategic Vision published, outlining bold goals and direction amidst ongoing global pandemic

May 2021
California State Auditor's report is published, outlining missteps made by Calbright's initial leadership and also reaffirming that the College is non-duplicative within the CCC system and is a valuable asset to California

August 2021
Customer Relationship Management Platform Administration program launched under new leadership

November 2021
Partnership with UC Irvine School of Education and ideas42 established to advance adult learner success

March 2022
Student body exceeds 1,000 students for first time in history

April 2022
100th certificate of competency awarded; local chapter of California School Employees Association welcomed as classified staff union

June 2022
Calbright meets or exceeds all milestones required in College's founding legislation for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Enrollment reaches 1,078

September 2022
Experiential Learning and Leadership (ExLL) program created – student peer mentors nurture student success and support community building across the College

2023

January 2023
200th certificate of competency awarded; Student Body Organization established

March 2023
Student enrollment reached 2,000 with three new approved programs

June 2023
Calbright meets or exceeds all milestones outlined in the College's founding legislation for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Enrollment reaches 2,875

July 2023
Calbright achieved initial accreditation, 18 months ahead of the timeline required in the College's founding legislation

September 2023
Data Analysis program, co-developed with Bakersfield College, launched to the public

November 2023
Following accreditation, Calbright's website shifts from calbright.org to calbright.edu

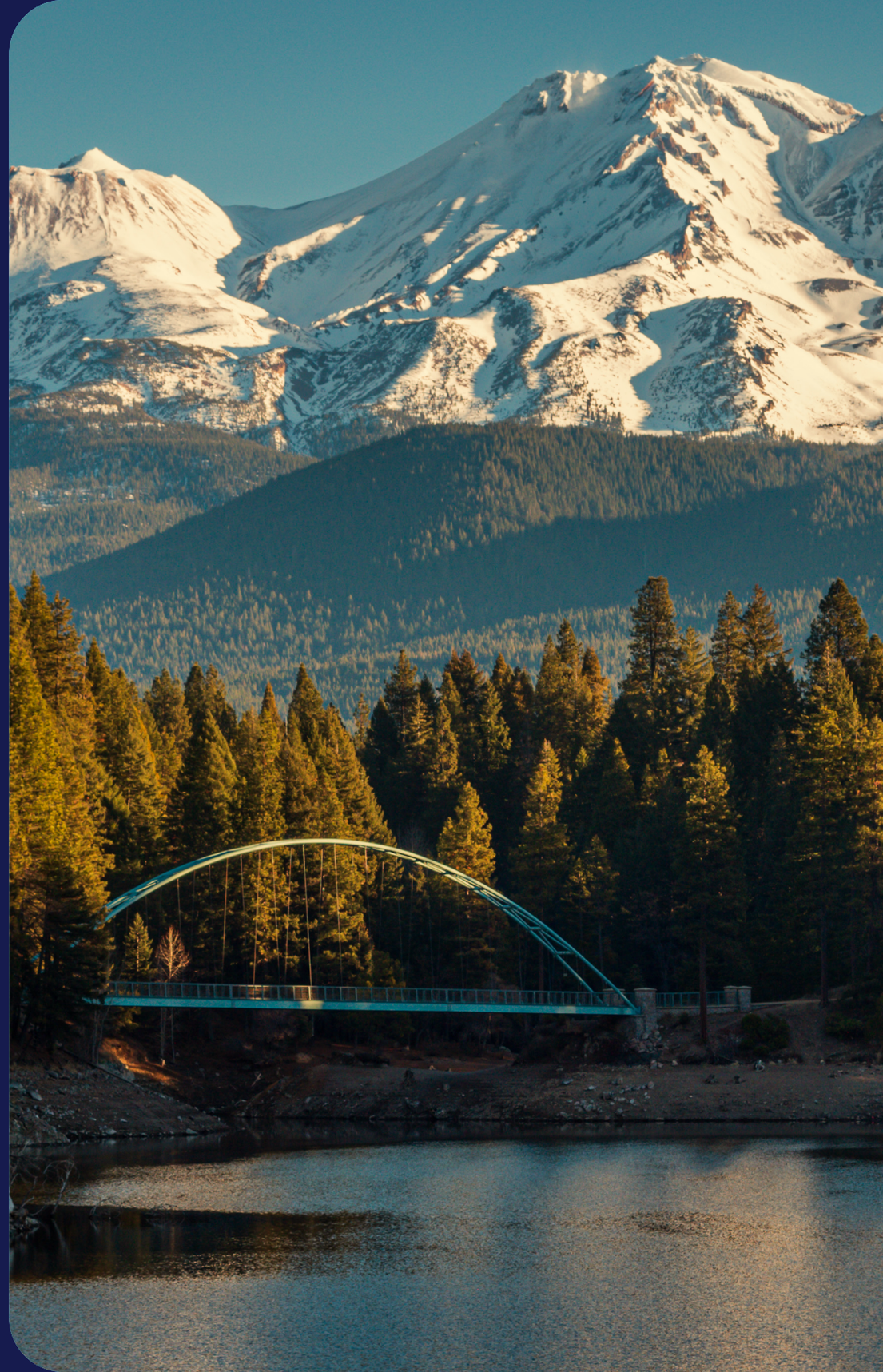
06

Strategic Vision

Summary

Priorities

Goals



Strategic Vision

Calbright's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision spans a critical period in the College's operations: the second half of our seven-year start-up period—which concludes in January 2026—through the initial years following the start-up period. The Vision outlines institutional priorities, which align with the CCC system's Vision 2030, our founding legislation, accreditation requirements, and the critical responsibilities associated with building a new and unique college from the ground up. While the goals and correlated metrics for measuring success are established in this Strategic Vision, Calbright must remain nimble and flexible and may adjust goals and metrics to meet our own internal needs, those of the CCC system and State, and address new opportunities that may emerge in the future.

Collaboration, evaluation, and improvement are part of Calbright's DNA, and this Strategic Vision reflects that central ideology and commitment to participatory governance. Workshops, focus groups, interviews, and supplementary surveys were administered to form a central understanding and narrative regarding the environment in which Calbright operates as well as the College's past struggles, current success, and future areas of opportunity. Every part of the Calbright community participated in this process, including:

- **Calbright College Board of Trustees**
- **Calbright College leadership**
- **Calbright faculty**
- **Calbright staff**
- **Calbright staff affinity groups**
- **Calbright Student Body Organization**
- **CCC Chancellor's Office**
- **Leadership of CBOs focused on economic development**
- **CA state government department leadership**
- **Philanthropy leaders**
- **Labor unions**

This research supported a landscape analysis that highlighted Calbright's strengths and weaknesses, the College's unique role within California's higher education infrastructure, and value proposition to the community of learners Calbright serves.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Vision includes three main priorities, which are overarching themes that will guide our work at the highest level. These priorities then shift into goals, which provide a tangible and focused framework the College will use to align initiatives and advance our mission. To translate these goals into measurable and achievable actions, each has metrics that outline both near-term and longer horizon achievements.

Priorities

As a young institution, Calbright has the opportunity to build differently – to design around student needs and goals and ensure a culture of cross-college collaboration, all in pursuit of building this new college and supporting our students. Like much of Calbright's work, these priorities are part of an ecosystem and play into each other. Progress in one area nurtures success in another.

These priorities serve as the foundation for Calbright's Strategic Vision. They embody our institutional values and provide a roadmap for how we will continue to build, evolve, and advance Calbright's mission.

1

Serve Students and Employers
Strengthen student outcomes to meet adult learners' needs as well as those of employers and industry in order to support entry or advancement into the knowledge economy.

2

Drive Institutional Excellence
Calbright aims to enhance its internal operations and to ensure the creation and implementation of robust structures, systems, and processes. This will position the team for optimal performance and drive better student outcomes.

3

Amplify Our Innovative Approach
Over the next four years, Calbright seeks to expand the reach of its educational model. The institution intends to utilize its comprehensive and differentiated approach as a blueprint that can serve as a foundation for competency-based education across the California Community Colleges system and nationwide.

Goals

2024 - 2027 Goals

The goals in Calbright's 2024-2027 Strategic Vision grow out of our high-level priorities and shift into more specific methods through which the College will achieve the Vision. These goals serve as the scaffolding for translating abstract and audacious concepts into measurable milestones. Each goal is crafted to be quantifiable and trackable, enabling the organization to gauge progress and level of accomplishment in relation to specific objectives. This not only facilitates ongoing assessment, but also allows us to demonstrate tangible results as we continue to evaluate, iterate, and evolve in pursuit of better outcomes for adult learners.

These six goals, like the three overarching priorities, flow into each other and are listed in a considered order – progress in one area spurs growth in another. This ecosystem approach facilitates integration throughout the College and cohesion within and across teams and departments. While each goal is uniquely critical, they collectively focus on adult learners' needs and outcomes for Calbright's student body.

Strategic Vision Framework

Mission

Calbright College is committed to increasing economic mobility and closing equity gaps for working adults who lack easy access to traditional forms of higher education. The College offers online, flexible, affordable, skills-based programs that provide tangible economic value for both working adults and hiring managers.

Institutional Values

- Human Centered
- Innovation & Collaboration
- Impact

→ Priorities	→ Goals	
Serve Students and Employers	**Grow Multidimensional Student Opportunities**	**Foster Skills and Drive Achievement**
Drive Institutional Excellence	**Build and Maintain A Cohesive Culture**	**Develop A Sustainble Funding Approach**
Amplify Our Innovative Approach	**Cultivate Institutional Awareness**	**Forge and Expand Strategic Partnerships**

Goal

1 Expand Multidimensional Opportunities for Adult Learners

In California alone there are 6.8 million students between the ages 25 - 56 with a high school diploma and no college degree, and almost 4 million are interested in attending college online. Calbright is charged with reaching those whose life circumstances may prevent them from attending a traditional institution—whether that be due to geography, scheduling, or the limitations of a rigid academic calendar—and Californians whose employment prospects are increasingly limited due to changes in the labor market and economy. The College is designed to serve adults with busy lives, like a working parent who only has time to learn after they've put their kids to bed, or an individual who holds multiple part-time jobs and has a variable schedule.

Higher education, while a proven engine of economic mobility, was not built for adult learners. The credit hour, the semester and quarter, and the academic calendar were built around the needs of individuals who matriculated to higher education shortly after completing high school. As such, CCC and national data shows that adult learners have struggled to return to school and complete their degrees and they are rarely the beneficiaries of data-driven endeavors designed to support their needs.

Calbright's model for teaching, learning, and support meets students where they are and places their needs and goals at the center of our design and decision making. Instead of forcing students to mold to the requirements of the institution, we build to fit into their lives and recognize the unique and valuable experiences students bring with them. For many adult learners, returning to higher education is a vulnerable act – and it's incumbent that Calbright's student experience assuages initial hesitancy and discomfort and validates their goals and dedication to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Metrics:

1

Achieve student persistence rates that exceed the CCC system's persistence rate (60%) for adult learners who move from their initial term of enrollment to the subsequent term.

2

Through the end of 2027, launch an average of two new programs each year.

3

For every 10 new programs Calbright designs and validates, co-develop one with another community college in California.

4

See year-over-year expansion of, and student engagement with Calbright's student services and support programs.

Goal

2 Foster Skills that Drive Achievement

Economic mobility and equity remain central to Calbright's mission: the College only succeeds if its students succeed. Success means that students complete Calbright programs and, more importantly, that they are better off in the labor market as a result.

Early data highlights the efficacy of our approach – alumni survey responses show that more than half of graduates experience a positive labor market outcome within a year of program completion. While not a perfect comparison, roughly 28% of adult learners across the CCC system move from unemployed to employed after program completion. These two statistics provide a baseline for the College as more students graduate, current programs are evaluated and optimized, new programs are launched, and new employer and industry partnerships are expanded.

Calbright's programs are designed to empower graduates to work across industries, as opposed to completing a unique and discrete set of tasks that may be automated or irrelevant in the future. This ensures transferability of skills and provides the ability to move into growing areas of the economy. An IT Support program graduate, for example, is equipped to work supporting the IT infrastructure for a large box store as well as for a hotel group or college. They may work for all three of these hypothetical employers in their career as they advance their skills and knowledge.

While technical skills are critical, the 21st century economy also requires that employees have durable skills—teamwork, communication, and problem solving, for example—so that they can work effectively across departments, projects, and groups of people.

Calbright's programs build acquisition and validation of these skills into the curriculum so that graduates are prepared to succeed in their initial role as well as in future endeavors where they may be managing a component of their employer's business, or a team.

As new programs are developed and launched, a central component of Calbright's approach is to engage directly with employers and individuals who work in the field. This allows us to identify central skills for the role and then reverse engineer the academic components of the programs. As part of this, we analyze economic opportunity for entry level roles and anticipated growth as well as alignment with California's priorities and labor market needs. This work will continue to be central to Calbright's operations so that our students are prepared for in-demand opportunities that not only spur economic mobility, but also advance the state.

Metrics:

1

Aligned with Vision 2030, increase, with equity, the number of Calbright certificates awarded by an average of 12% (based on FY '22-'23 baseline) each year through fiscal year 2026-2027, for a total increase of 48+%.

2

By January 2026, create a process through which Calbright can award credit for prior learning as well as badges and micro credentials within program pathways.

3

By January 2026, establish a scalable system to effectively track details regarding graduates' labor market outcomes over time (types of jobs and income levels, for example).

4

Exceed CCC system's 28% adult learner employment rate for students following program completion.

5

See year-over-year growth and expansion of apprenticeship and other experiential learning opportunities through 2027.

Goal

3 Build and Maintain a Culture of Improvement and Innovation

As a new institution, the Calbright team has the opportunity and responsibility to build and cultivate an organizational culture that will serve as the foundation for the College's future. Systems and structures play a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining the Calbright culture, and it's essential that Calbright fosters a two-way relationship with its students in which the College continues to learn, refine, and improve based on student feedback. Faculty, staff, and students all have a voice in shaping how we fulfill a shared commitment to success.

Through the end of the College's start-up period, we'll focus on expanding operational capacity in step with enrollment increases and the creation and launch of new programs. Complementing this growth, we'll remain committed to evaluation and optimization – exploring new ways of engaging with students to nurture their success, and building the technology platforms necessary to reimagine teaching, learning, and support within the context of Calbright's model.

In a rapidly evolving educational landscape and economy, it will be critical that our culture embraces ambiguity and uncertainty – that multiple approaches to the same problem can be correct. Instead of shying away from instances in which there is no clear "best" next step, we'll continue to embrace them as an opportunity to explore, innovate, adopt what is most effective, and leave behind what doesn't work well. By acknowledging that there are often no clear-cut answers, Calbright encourages its team members to ask questions, experiment, and learn from both successes and failures.

Complementing our dedication to experimentation and innovation, it's central to our culture that this work be done in a collaborative manner, so the greatest number of community members—students, faculty, and staff—can benefit. This not only drives internal growth, but helps advance the learning sciences field by providing additional mediums through which we can collective work to solve the complex equation of how to best support adult learners.

Metrics:

1

Continue to expand the Calbright team to meet the needs of a growing student body. By the end of 2025: formalize best practice for forward-looking staffing needs based on new programs under development and new cost and funding models.

2

Complete the next cycle of collective bargaining with labor units.

3

Implement organizational health scorecard to establish baseline satisfaction levels and identify opportunities for improvement. Following initial implementation, establish annual improvement metrics through the end of 2027.

Goal

4 Develop a Sustainable Funding Approach

As California's first and only fully online and competency-based public college, part of Calbright's mandate is to identify a sustainable public funding model for competency-based education. Similar to the CCC system as a whole, this model would maintain and prioritize student affordability, champion equity, and create an environment in which students are supported and empowered to succeed. At present, no such model exists, which is why we were founded with defined ongoing and start-up dollars.

Across the CCC system, a majority of institutional funding is driven by enrollment – colleges count their students a few weeks after the start of a semester and then receive funding based on this census figure.

Higher education funding models also rely heavily on the use of time as a key metric – the credit hour, the academic calendar, and the census period, for example, all utilize time in order to gauge student progress and engagement.

In Calbright's case—especially in the non-credit arena—time is removed from the equation. Two students may complete the same program, for example, but one did so in six months and the other took a year. This begs the question: what funding model or formula works best to adequately account for and support these two students?

In addition to working with the state of California and the CCC Chancellor's Office to develop a dynamic and sustainable funding formula for this innovative delivery model, Calbright will allocate resources in a manner that advances its mission and the success of its unique operations and student body.

The College will also prioritize the diversification of funding sources to complement state funding and provide the opportunity to advance initiatives that are beyond the scope of ongoing operations and funding.

This will include:

- **State and federal grants**
- **Philanthropic engagement**
- **Partnerships with workforce development entities**
- **Research partnerships**
- **Partnerships with mission-aligned organizations supporting similar communities**
- **Partnerships with sister CCC campuses and higher education institutions**

Throughout Calbright's start-up period, it is difficult to separate the College's ongoing expenses from those distinct to the start-up nature. Every part of Calbright's operations during the seven-year period are connected to building the institution while simultaneously serving the daily needs of students. However, large-scale initial investment in core infrastructure like a student information system, data storage, learning management systems, and staffing support shift to ongoing maintenance, the College will establish a sustainable cost model in tandem with the funding model.

Metrics:

1

By January 2026: establish a baseline sustainable cost model that provides an initial benchmark for Calbright's annual/ongoing funding needs to nurture student success. This is expected to serve as a general Competency-Based Education cost model across the CCC system.

2

Develop and implement a state funding model that supplements the $15 million in annual funding Calbright receives.

3

Continue to assess effectiveness of cost and funding model and work with state and CCC Chancellor's Office to adapt model to other applicable instances within the system and address legacy hurdles for funding higher education CBE models.

Goal

5 Cultivate Institutional Awareness

Calbright is the leading edge of the learning curve for solving the complex equation of how to best nurture the success of adult learners. This is a shared challenge across the CCC system and higher education in general. Here in California, students who are 25+ years old have a three-year completion rate for Chancellor Approved Certificates of roughly 5%.

Following initial accreditation in the summer of 2023, Calbright is positioned to expand on its legislative mandate to serve as a research and development asset for the CCC system. Our vision extends beyond the boundaries of the institution and the College will continue to share lessons learned with regard to our unique education model, focus on supporting adult learners, and research enterprise.

Evaluation, iteration, and improvement are part of Calbright's DNA. It's critical to not only implement innovative new ideas that will drive student success, but to then test those interventions and initiatives, formally adopt and expand what works, and equally important, leave behind what was ineffective. Calbright must also share—through white papers, conferences, collegial engagement, earned media, partnerships, and collaboration with the Chancellor's Office, for example—the results of these endeavors in order to bolster the system's collective understanding of CBE and how to best support adult learners in the pursuit of replicating, scaling, and adopting best practices within the context of other institutions.

As the CCC Vision 2030 Roadmap notes, adult learners will be a continued area of focus for the system, and Calbright can serve as a catalyst for flattening the learning curve so that more adult learners feel that community college is a viable option for them and a proven vehicle for them to achieve economic mobility and accomplish their academic and career goals. This will not only serve Calbright and the system well today, but provide a solid foundation as we approach the next 50-100 years and change the trajectory for success for adult learners.

Metrics:

1

Aligned with Vision 2030, grow Calbright's enrollment by an average of 25% annually, based on a baseline of Calbright's student body at the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

2

Aligned with Vision 2030, 70% of Calbright's student body will reflect the College's focus population of learners.

3

For notable research endeavors, Calbright will publish white papers and holistic summaries of the activities in order to share findings with the system and higher education sector. Calbright staff/faculty/leadership will speak at 2-3 conferences each year on topics related to the College's leadership and innovations in program design, pedagogy, technology integrations, and student success.

4

By the end of 2026: complete the accreditation renewal process.

Goal

6 Forge and Expand Strategic Partnerships

As Calbright has deeper conversations with other mission-aligned organizations, partners immediately gravitate toward the College's outcomes-focused orientation and our flexible and nimble design. Calbright can identify, build, and launch a new program much faster than many traditional institutions, and because programs are shorter, several enrollment and completion cycles can take place in the same time frame of a traditional degree.

Calbright is interested in collaborating with partners in order to expand our collective reach and impact. As opposed to fitting an external entity into our operations, we want to co-develop and mold the partnership to meet the needs of students and amplify shared missions and goals. It's critical that Calbright builds a system to cultivate long-term career success for students, and integrates the work of community based organizations, workforce development entities, business groups, employers, sister campuses, and state agencies into our service as a statewide workforce catalyst.

This work will continue in areas aligned with current programs, like IT Support and Salesforce Administration, but will also adjust and evolve in the years ahead as artificial intelligence and climate-related sectors expand and mature. Traditional higher education hasn't always been the most responsive partner for the business community. Colleges are often limited by legacy policies and operational hurdles and don't always listen to, and work with, partners in order to build better, more inclusive, and scalable systems that can be replicated across a region or state. This responsive work will grow out of the accomplishments outlined in the prior goals of this Strategic Vision and extend Calbright's reach as we become a choice partner for any organization that seeks to expand economic opportunity.

Metrics:

1

Increase and expand partnerships with workforce and economic development entities, philanthropic organizations, and other mission-aligned entities to support Calbright's growth, innovation, research, and development.

2

By the end of 2027, publish a comprehensive report regarding opportunities for the public sector to embrace skills-based hiring and other tactics that would make the knowledge economy more accessible to all Californians.

3

Use Calbright's research enterprise to advance and measure skills-based hiring and mechanisms for economically stranded Californians to enter the knowledge economy.

Conclusion

Calbright College was created not only to move the needle with regard to supporting adult learners across California, but to also recalibrate the scale that weighs talent and an individual's capabilities. A scale that has continually tipped away from communities in Calbright's focus regions of the Central Valley, Inland Empire, and rural counties across California, and those who are economically stranded. For decades, American society has used the bachelor's degree as a gatekeeper to the knowledge economy, using a four-year degree as a proxy for intellectual capacity and the ability to learn, disregarding the practical and transferable skills individuals with less than a bachelor's degree have acquired through professional and personal experience.

The Calbright College 2024-2027 Strategic Vision is in service of these communities and individuals across California, and will advance the CCC system's Vision 2030. It provides a clear framework for the College's priorities, goals, and measurements of success, as well as our approach to achieve these critical objectives.

As a nascent institution, the College has built much of the fundamental systems, platforms, and human expertise and capital to propel us into 2027 and beyond. Calbright's future is bright. The fundamental infrastructure for our unique model of education is in place, and we will continue to measure, evaluate, iterate, optimize, and improve, while also launching new programs, increasing enrollment and completion, forge new partnerships, and establish a mission critical financial model that can serve as a blueprint for funding CBE within the California Community Colleges system.

At the center of Calbright's design is the student journey – a seamless experience that recognizes adult learners' needs and goals and fits into their lives' competing priorities.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Vision advances this paramount requirement and sets audacious goals to reimagine higher education and workforce training and empower a community of learners who are too often left behind. These goals will carry the College through and beyond the seven-year start-up period outlined in our founding legislation and set a path for long-term sustainability and success.

CALBRIGHT
COLLEGE

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