

2025 Milestone Report

California Education Code § 75009



California Community Colleges

Submitted by

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and

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Table of Contents

President’s Message	P. 6
Executive Summary	P. 9
Our Mission	P. 10
Exceeding Our Milestones	P. 12
Who We Serve Across California	P. 15
How We Serve Adult Learners	P. 18
Our Partners in Workforce Development	P. 24
How We’re Scaling Innovative Education	P. 28
Our Labor Agreements	P. 33
Conclusion	P. 34



President's Message

Imagine a college in California exclusively built to support the education needs and career goals of adult learners. One that harnesses the power of technology to enhance the student experience by aligning how hiring works now with the evolving demands of a skills-based economy. Somewhere Californians striving for economic mobility will never feel alone in their journey.

Calbright College is proud to be that college. We are the pathway for California's adult learners to confront rapid economic and technological changes with agency. We are committed to ensuring that working adults can enhance their ability to navigate transformations in communities across the state. And we are honored to be a state and national leader on how to blend technology, human-centered design, and competency-based education to meet both the needs of working-age adults and the skilled talent sought by California employers competing in the fourth largest economy in the world.

This Milestone Report highlights the hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff, and — most of all — students. We share our story of rapid growth and progress throughout the 2024-2025 fiscal year, demonstrating how a modern concept of higher education can serve adult learners in real time while informing institutional effectiveness in a shifting policy landscape, evolutions in the job market, and a growing affordability crisis in higher education.



This report reminds us that the most important voices are Calbright students. It's their experiences that speak to the need and value of Calbright's highly flexible, self-paced, competency-based model. And they want more Californians to benefit from our education and job skills training too.

Calbright students' endorsements and achievements are a big reason why our enrollment increased by 66% in the last year. Our student body stands at just over 7,660. And we have now awarded more than 1,550 certificates. Higher education is proving a worthy enterprise for individuals who want their progress to be measured by skill mastery, not semester attendance.

- More than 92% of students are over the age of 25
- 21% of students are parents or caregivers
- 74% of students identify as members of the Black, Indigenous, Asian, and other people of color communities
- Students come from 57 out of the 58 California counties

With 6.8 million Californians aged 25-54 holding a high school diploma but lacking a college degree, alongside millions more working-age adults aiming to upskill or pivot careers, Calbright's charge by the California Legislature is to provide accessible and relevant education and job skills training. And this is crucial to the success of local communities and the state's economy.

Our mission and work delivers on the action plan of Chancellor Dr. Sonya Christian's California Community Colleges' Vision 2030, calling policy and education leaders to remove barriers to higher education and respond to the changing needs of our learners and our communities. Calbright is also uniquely positioned to advance Governor Newsom's State Master Plan for Career Education and his priority of strengthening skills-based mastery beyond traditional academic learning as a gateway to economic opportunity.

Calbright approaches the end of our start-up period with vigor. We are partnering with regional and state leaders such as the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), Inland Empire Economic Partnership, and Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development to reach more businesses and learners. As a board member of the national Competency-Based

Education Network (C-BEN), I'm also uniting with workforce, education, and policy leaders to scale and expand models like Calbright that are innovative, flexible, and skills-based for learners and employers. As a testament to our growing impact in innovative education, Calbright was recognized as one of America's Top Online Learning Providers for 2025 by Newsweek.

We are grateful for continued support from Governor Newsom, the California Legislature, and partners across the state, as we work together to advance economic opportunities for more Californians. As we champion the future of higher education, Calbright is dedicated to collaborative innovation that challenges conventional wisdom. We will continue to channel a human-centered approach to technology, all in service of communities across California and the adult learners who lead our workforce every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ajita Menon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Ajita Talwalker Menon
President & CEO of Calbright College



Sacramento, Sacramento County

More than 1,030 students served across
Colusa, El Dorado, Glenn, Placer, Sacramento,
Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties as of June 30, 2025

Executive Summary

Calbright College stands at a pivotal moment of urgency for innovation within the higher education landscape. There's demand for greater collaboration among workforce development partners to build a pipeline of skilled workers. And there's a critical need to increase economic mobility for California adult learners, at the same time Calbright is asked by national leaders how to expand adult learner success nationwide. Our rapid enrollment growth of 66% in the last year and total certificates issued now over 1,550 shows that California working-age adults are yearning for tailored education and job skills training that prepare them for labor market shifts and technological advancements happening across California's industries and economy.

The College has demonstrated exceptional performance in its seven-year existence and during the 2024-25 fiscal year serving adult learners, including but not limited to:

- Exceeding all legislative milestones ahead of set deadlines
- Reaching and serving a diverse community of adult learners, including parents, caregivers, and working professionals across California's 58 counties
- Customizing and tailoring support so adult learners feel empowered in their education and job skills training journeys, increasing student progress and retention
- Strategically partnering with entities such as Riipen, TechSF, ideas42, and UC Irvine to boost student progress, strengthen support services, and drive workforce outcomes
- Prioritizing work-based learning opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships so students gain practical, job-ready skills through direct employer partnerships

Calbright is quickly establishing itself as a state and national leader, serving as a critical research lab for adult online higher education and workforce development. By centering adult learners in all our efforts, Calbright is contributing to a stronger, more prosperous, and competitive California while advocating for adult learner solutions across the country.



"I love the Calbright program and I love what I do, and I'm going to keep reinventing myself as I go along. I've always been what you might call a non-traditional student, but you just don't stop learning. You never stop learning."

— Deborah, Data Analysis Student and
Calbright Student Body President

Sacramento



Our Mission

Calbright College is a new kind of college built for working-age Californians. As a statewide, online, and flexible California Community College, Calbright offers programs that align with real workforce needs, from IT to Project Management to Data Analysis. Designed in partnership with employers and industry experts, our programs focus on building in-demand skills that lead to good jobs. Through a competency-based model, Calbright learners advance at their own pace and gain job-ready experience through work-based learning. Calbright empowers Californians to upskill, reskill, and thrive in the modern workforce — without putting their lives on hold.

The College is committed to increasing economic mobility and removing education and career advancement barriers for Californians who lack easy access to traditional forms of higher education and workforce training.

There are roughly 6.8 million Californians ages 25 to 54 who have a high school diploma but no college degree. And many other working-age Californians find their employment prospects increasingly limited in a changing labor market.

Building a statewide public, online, skills-based college designed around the unique needs of working-age adults is critical to the state's long-term prosperity. Calbright is advancing new solutions responsive to the realities facing its community of learners and is meeting the challenge of helping students navigate a rapidly evolving economy.



“I was an electrician for almost 10 years and I started under the premise I might be able to work with computers eventually, and get paid to learn that area of the company. But in the process of becoming a really good electrician, I forgot about the tech aspect. Then I came to Calbright and took the IT courses, and once you have the CompTIA A+ certificate showing you have IT skills, it's like a golden ticket. Employers saw I was able to articulate what I knew and the IT skills I can apply. And Calbright played a big part in that.”

— Chris, IT Support and Network Technology Student

Monrovia



Why Competency-Based Education?

Competency-based education — often called CBE — is a flexible approach to teaching and learning based on knowledge and skills that are transparent and measurable. Progress is based on demonstrated mastery of what students are expected to know and be able to do, rather than hours spent in class. This is crucial for adult learners who constantly juggle responsibilities separate from their education. Competency-based education gives learners the ability to demonstrate their existing skills while learning new career-aligned ones at a flexible pace.



“Calbright is a great way to get back into the swing of learning with all the student supports and integrated systems of learning available for students. The fact that it’s competency based so it’s not the rush of getting things done on this artificial timeline we set for students sometimes. That just doesn’t exist at Calbright. Calbright is there for you. Wherever you’re at, whatever your goals are.”

— **Bill Rawlings, Board of Trustees Vice President and Mt. San Antonio College Academic Technology & Infrastructure Coordinator**



Calbright served 2,590 Los Angeles County students as of June 30, 2025

Monrovia, Los Angeles County



Exceeding Our Milestones

Calbright's founding legislation outlines milestones the College must achieve throughout its seven-year start-up period, which concludes in early 2026. Calbright achieved all milestones ahead of the set deadlines and our start-up period. The milestones Calbright reached and exceeded include:

- **Accreditation by a recognized agency.** Calbright received accreditation from the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) in July 2023 — nearly two years ahead of the deadline of April 2025. In addition to recognizing and validating the College's mission, academic offerings, and operations, this pivotal accomplishment acknowledges institutional accountability and consumer protection for students and the public by ensuring integrity, quality assurance, and institutional effectiveness.

As is standard, the accreditation period is three years, covering Calbright through June 2026. Calbright has already started the accreditation renewal process, incorporating faculty, staff, students, and the board of trustees in the renewal.

- **Enrolling students into college program pathways.** Calbright aligns its program offerings with in-demand jobs across California industries, from technology support to business operations, as well as opportunities that will provide students economic mobility in the years to come. The College's Research and Development team works with labor market data from leaders such as Lightcast, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and California's Labor Market Information Division.

This labor market data, alongside industry advisory councils and feedback from employer insights, guides program development and curriculum to ensure California adult learners invest their time in program pathways that meet their education and career goals and set them up for success as the workforce evolves.

- **Incorporating student feedback to improve the college's instruction, technology, and student support services.** Calbright's 2024 Annual Student Experience Survey found 78% of students reported the College has supported them in making progress toward their educational and career goals. Student feedback paired with labor market research drives Calbright's prioritization of new and expanded programs to Calbright's curriculum, such as Network Technology and Human Resources Learning and Development, in early 2025.

This is the second year of the Calbright Annual Student Experience Survey, which is just one way Calbright listens to adult learners and gathers real-time data to improve programs and support services and help them reach their education and job goals.

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"Student feedback is essential for ensuring we meet our mission, and it's rewarding to know that our efforts are resonating with learners. Calbright's grounding in human-centered design always prioritizes data and student participation to inform how we continuously evolve to help learners achieve their education and career goals in this rapidly changing world."

— Don Orth, Calbright Vice President for Student Services and Success



"Calbright's programs are amazing, and industry relevant. [The programs] give good examples and opportunities to practice in digital playgrounds, that is something very useful. Data Analytics, Cybersecurity, Networking, IT Support ... these are things that someone can learn and apply and get into a job in that industry. I'm spreading the word. Calbright is such an amazing resource."

— Pratima, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Platform Administration Alumna and Data Analysis Student

Saratoga



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Redding, Shasta County

"While my extensive work history provides a lot of information, these Calbright certificates immediately signal to employers I possess up-to-date skills."

- Richard, Data Analysis and IT Support

Who We Serve Across California

California's economic vitality and social well-being are linked to the success of its adult learners. Calbright students, encompassing communities with diverse needs and experiences like parents, caregivers, and working-age adults across the state's 58 counties, are eager for education and job skills training that will lead to quality jobs in their regions.

Adult learners are also crucial to the state's evolving labor market. As a report by the Public Policy Institute of California noted: "Changes to the state's economy are on the horizon, driven by factors like climate adaptation and technological advancements in automation and AI. Preparing California's workers and businesses for these transitions requires strengthening the ecosystem that enables businesses to create jobs — and that helps Californians prepare for and access jobs."

Calbright College stands as a leader in preparing and empowering working-age Californians to upskill and thrive in the modern workforce without disrupting their lives.

As an open access institution, Calbright welcomes and accepts all eligible applicants — California residents over the age of 18 with a high school diploma or GED equivalent — who apply. The College's outreach initiatives focus on students who are at least 25 years old, and likely to be underserved by traditional education institutions.

Calbright also recognizes that many populations face structural barriers to accessing education and inclusion in today's workforce. In reaching more adult learners, Calbright seeks to narrow gaps in enrollment and outcomes by race, ethnicity, and gender, and to lower barriers based on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, national origin, veteran status, justice involvement, and rural residency.

Student Data

Calbright’s enrollment growth over the 2024-25 fiscal year is a testament to the need for affordable, flexible education and job skills training that fits the lives of today’s adult learners.

As of June 30, 2025, Calbright’s enrollment sits at just over 7,660 students. This student body reflects the College’s mission of enrolling underserved adult learners from across the state.

Enrollment and Programs*

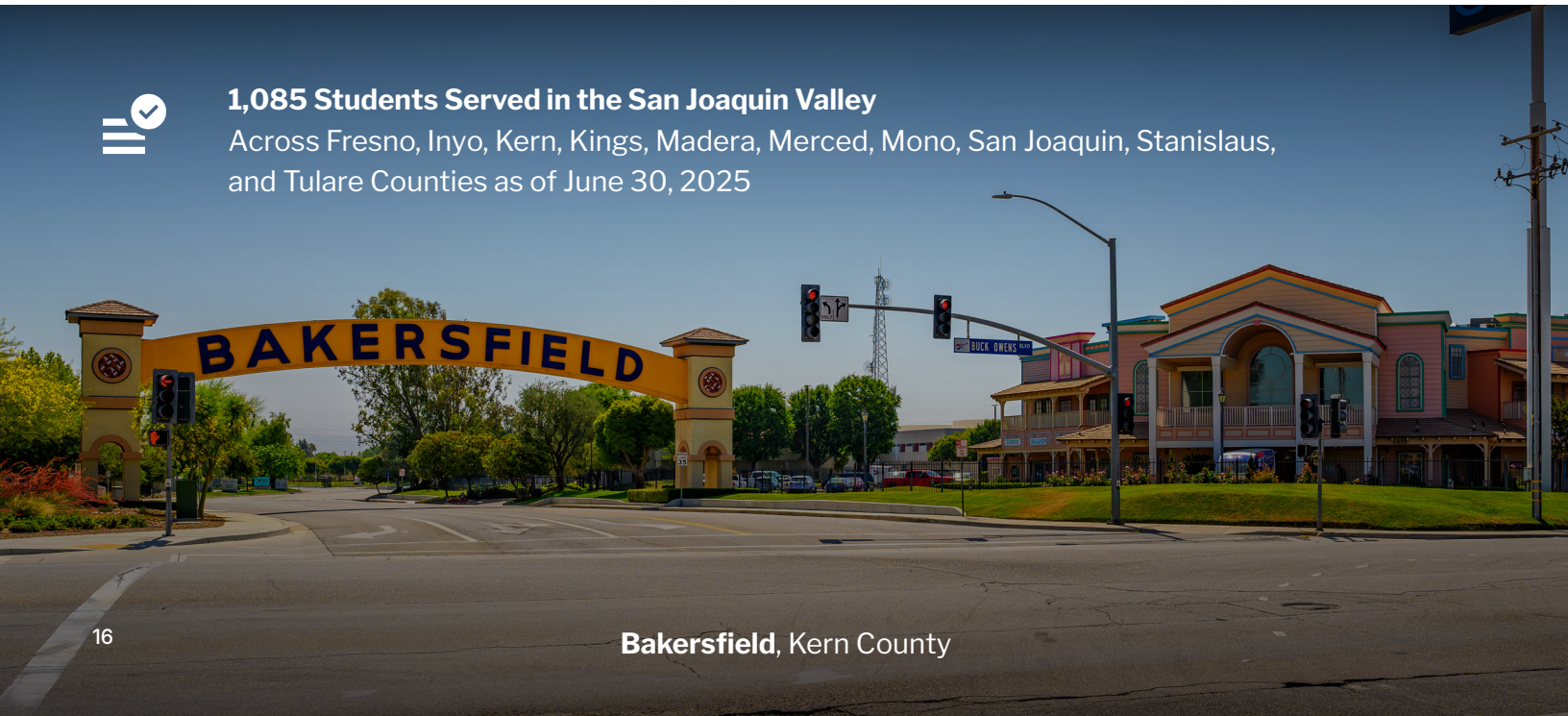
57/58	7,660+	1,550+
California Counties	Enrolled Students	Certificates Issued
Where students reside across California	Enrollment increased 66% in 1 year	Total certificates of competencies issued

Our Students and Demographics

92%	21%	74%
Over the age of 25	Students who are parents or caregivers	Students who identify as members of the Black, Indigenous, Asian, and other people of color communities



1,085 Students Served in the San Joaquin Valley
Across Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, Mono, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare Counties as of June 30, 2025



Student Demographics
by Race**

White	37.7%
Latinx	33.5%
Black	21.2%
Asian	21.4%
Native American	3.2%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1.4%
None Stated	4%

Student Demographics
by Gender

Female	48.8%
Male	46.1%
None Stated	4%
Non-Binary	1.1%

Student Demographics
by Age***

<20	0.5%
20-24	7.3%
25-29	14.6%
30-39	36.9%
40-49	23.7%
49-59	12.5%
60+	4.6%

Enrollment by Program

IT Support	39.9%
Data Analysis	25.4%
Project Management	15.3%
CRM Platform Administration	6.5%
Cybersecurity	4.9%
Network Technology	3.8%
HR Learning and Development (Launched Spring 2025)	3.5%
Medical Coding (Limited Pilot)	0.7%

* Enrollment data as of June 30, 2025. This fact sheet is updated on a quarterly basis.

** Applicants may choose multiple racial identities in the California Community Colleges application, and are counted in both categories here.

*** Figures do not sum to 100 due to rounding.



“Now that both my kids have started schooling, I thought: Okay, it’s been over 10 years. I’ve got time. Let’s get into the workforce again.”

— Kalpana, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Platform Administration and Data Analysis Student, Student Survey Co-Designer



How We Serve Adult Learners

Calbright College is building something different for adult learners. In addition to offering a fully online, flexibly paced, competency-based education model, we consider the many types of support and unique ways it takes for working-age Californians to feel successful and empowered in their education and job skills training journeys today. Whether students have limited proficiency in online settings or years of experience navigating online workplaces, need to talk to a career counselor daily or once a month, or are seeking mental health and other basic needs services, Calbright students are never alone in their journeys.

Each working-age adult who has chosen Calbright as their education and job skills training since we opened our virtual doors in 2018 has taught us how to create tailored support necessary for adult learners' success. And we continue to listen to them and improve upon how we develop programs, deliver support services, and reach more adult learners across California.

In our seven years, we've not only learned how to best serve adult learners, we've become a state and national leader. That's because we continue to test, evolve, and improve how we serve adult learners — and keep adult learners centered in all we do.



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“I tried going back to a traditional college and realized maybe it is just not right for me. As soon as I started at Calbright I realized, ‘oh yeah, this is a pretty cool virtual campus. It’s definitely geared toward people studying online, they’ve done a really good job.’ I was actively posting things on Slack and it caught other people’s attention, so I was able to make connections. I found a community.”

— Leonard, Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
Platform Administration and Data Analysis Student

South Los Angeles



Launching Student Journey 2.0

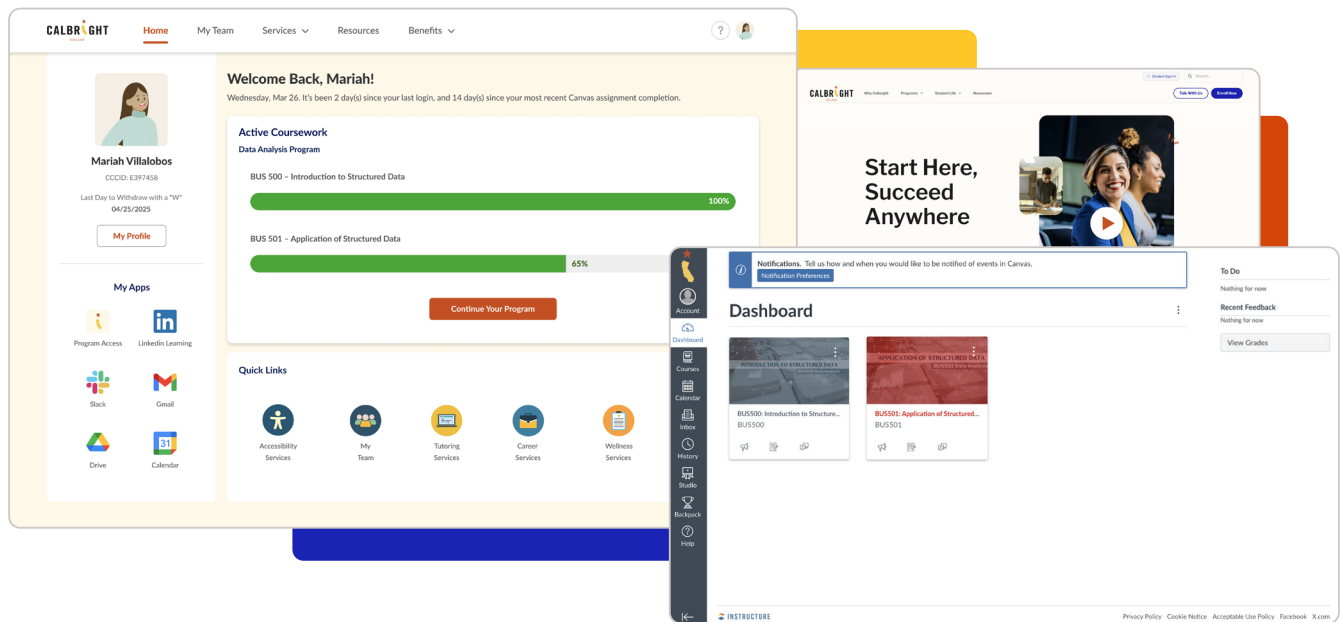
While Calbright's core pillars of education and job skills training support remain unchanged, the College faculty and staff have reimaged what it means to empower students in their journeys, including the touchpoints and interventions needed to ensure adult learners always know where and who to turn to. We call it Student Journey 2.0, covering everything from how we do the initial intake with students to creating a personalized roadmap of their program journey to setting up nudges and reminders to keep them on the education pace they establish.

The following gives an overview of what's under development in 2025 and what California adult learners will soon experience at Calbright:

- **Intake Assessment** – Students complete a brief survey to identify their strengths, needs, and goals. The results help connect students with tailored resources to support a strong start at Calbright College. For example, an adult learner that may have digital literacy needs will be prompted to meet with a Digital Literacy Specialist.
- **Welcome and Orientation** – Students receive an onboarding experience that delivers relevant information, resources, and support based on their individual goals and needs, allowing them to explore their program of choice or pivot to a different program that may better fit their needs.
- **Dynamic Journey Map** – Each student receives a personalized roadmap outlining their timeline and recommended support, which evolves as they progress. Students receive timely nudges for academic support and interventions to meet their academic and career goals, such as connecting with Career Services staff to prepare or refresh their resume or connect with Tutoring Services staff if they are struggling with content.

By leveraging technology and human support in Student Journey 2.0, Calbright students are provided embedded touchpoints and interventions to help them reach their academic and career goals, and achieve success in their education and career journeys.

“myCalbright” — A Portal Made for Adult Learners



Calbright students value our college's efficiency, flexibility, and quick access to support, as they manage work, family, and other life responsibilities. However, student feedback about our early portal showed many adult learners wanted information centralized and delivered in a user-friendly way.

The Calbright student portal was completely rebuilt in 2024 to be a student-centric platform, directly addressing pain points and needs identified through extensive student interviews and focus groups. Today's portal — "myCalbright" — is designed to provide a seamless, student-centered digital experience that empowers learners, simplifies access to critical resources, and supports their success at every step of their journey.

With a visually appealing interface and intuitive navigation, the portal makes it easy for students to find the information and tools they need, whether they're accessing academic content, support services, or tracking progress. By integrating seamlessly with key third-party learning and support tools, the portal serves as a centralized hub for the entire student experience.

Beyond ease of use, the portal enables Calbright to monitor how students engage with key features and to track their journey in real time. These insights allow us to proactively identify potential friction points and make targeted updates before small challenges become larger barriers. This data-informed approach ensures the portal continues to evolve alongside our students' needs, creating a more personalized, engaging, and effective experience over time.

Responsive Student Support

Calbright's student support stands out due to its rapid response, integration, and comprehensive approach, designed to meet the distinct needs of working-age adults. While many higher education institutions offer individual support services, Calbright combines readily accessible academic tutoring, robust wellness services via TimelyCare, providing 24/7 mental health and medical support, and connection to crucial immigration legal services, including DACA fee assistance provided through the broader California Community College system. Furthermore, Calbright's commitment to providing accommodations for all disabilities underscores its dedication to equitable access.

These comprehensive support services are delivered by experienced Calbright faculty and staff who are representative of California's 58 counties. These dedicated professionals understand the holistic educational, career, and personal needs of Calbright students.

By proactively addressing students' diverse needs, Calbright significantly reduces common obstacles that can lead many adult learners to put their education on hold. Calbright's commitment to supporting individual student success also contributes to California's workforce development and economic mobility by ensuring that more working-age adults can access and complete high-quality education and job skills training.

Calbright's support for students includes:

- Academic Tutoring
- Accessibility Services
- Career Services
- Counseling Services
- Enrollment Services
- Student Life and Alumni Relations
- Veterans Services
- Wellness Services



“Helping students on their journey is an honor, and as success counselors we know we can be the catalyst and bridge to get them from point A to point B. Our students are at the forefront of every decision we make, and we’re not just looking at what we can learn from data to best support our students but at what we hear directly from each student, and what they need to achieve their goals.”

— Antoinette Magee, Calbright Success Counselor





“I thought it would be a regular college experience with strict deadlines and schedules, but it was totally different. You do the work when you can, and counselors reach out if you start to fall behind. And the labs were totally different, built on what I had already studied. I had a good time. Any time I reached out, someone was there to support me.”

— Ahmed, IT Support, Cybersecurity,
and Network Technology Student

San Diego



A Better Understanding of Basic Needs

Calbright knows that supporting adult learners means addressing the full range of challenges that can impact their education and job skills training plans, including access to basic needs such as food, housing, and health care. The Public Policy Institute of California noted in a May 2025 report that 1.8 million California households struggle to afford enough food, and while four in five eligible Californians were enrolled in CalFresh in 2022, the state’s participation remained lower than the national average.

Calbright College is working with the behavioral science research and design lab ideas42 to develop innovative, student-centered strategies to address basic needs insecurity among adult learners. Recognizing that a significant number of eligible students do not access state benefits like CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal, Calbright's initiative focuses on identifying the behavioral barriers that get in the way — and designing solutions that help overcome them. This effort is rooted in a key insight: Students frequently under-report their basic needs, making it harder to connect them to resources, even when support is available.

Early pilots have shown that small changes in how Calbright asks about students’ needs — such as using more concrete and relatable language — can lead to measurable results. This subtle but meaningful shift has led to over twice as many students identifying and expressing insecurities they are facing. This is an early indicator that reframing how basic needs are introduced to students can help them take the first step toward accessing support. Calbright and ideas42 are continuously refining strategies based on real-time feedback, continuing the College’s commitment to ongoing innovation in student support.

This research-driven approach to increasing access to food, housing, and health care among adult learners positions Calbright as a leader in designing practical, evidence-based solutions to challenges that can disrupt adult learners’ progress.

Programs to Meet In-Demand Jobs

Calbright adult learners possess exceptional experiences and talents, but they often come from communities that have historically been counted out from education and career opportunities. To drive economic mobility and create the relevant programs to do so, Calbright's Research and Development team identifies growing opportunities in the California labor market and the technical and soft skills needed to perform those roles.

Through high-quality, competency-based programs, hands-on learning opportunities, and supportive instructors and counselors, Calbright students are better prepared for in-demand jobs — no matter their zip code, caregiving needs, or previous education experiences. In 2024, 78% of student survey respondents reported that Calbright has supported them in making progress toward their educational and career goals.

Today, Calbright offers programs in these in-demand areas:

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Platform Administration
- Cybersecurity
- Data Analysis
- Human Resources Learning and Development
- Human Resources Talent Acquisition
- Information Technology (IT) Support
- Project Management
- Medical Coding
- Network Technology

Part of Calbright's founding legislation from the California Legislature calls on the College to serve as a research and development laboratory for the California Community Colleges system to not only develop programs based on student feedback and the latest technology and data, but also find opportunities to scale programs and offerings based on labor market demand. Calbright staff routinely share our findings with our sister colleges, as well as national partners looking to develop programs that meet the needs of both adult learners and today's workforce.



“The establishment of Calbright was a visionary endeavor and it was a signal by the state of California saying that we’ve got to start building a structure where every Californian has an opportunity to get to higher education.”

— Chancellor Dr. Sonya Christian,
California Community Colleges



Our Partners in Workforce Development

Expanding work-based learning opportunities for California adult learners is critical to Calbright College's mission. Students are clear that they want hands-on experience to bridge the program instruction and skills they learn as they prepare to meet the demands of the modern workforce. In short, students are seeking internships, apprenticeships, and other opportunities that give paid, real-time experience in the workplace. By integrating real-world experiences into a students' journey and program, Calbright ensures that students graduate with not only knowledge but also practical, job-ready skills.

This approach is vital for California's economy and employers too, building a highly skilled workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of various industries. And by establishing business-education partnerships, Calbright and its employer partners are able to show the value of work-based learning opportunities and build a pipeline of talent together that meets industry demands, ultimately contributing to a more prosperous and competitive California.

Here's a look at some key partnerships that highlight Calbright's commitment to work-based learning for adult learners:



Riipen and Calbright Career Bridge

The Calbright Career Bridge is an initiative forged through a partnership with Riipen, a developer of a popular marketplace platform that enables college students to connect with real-world projects from companies. This collaboration integrates paid work-based learning experiences directly into Calbright's career support offerings for program completers. Initially, this pilot started with providing 75 Calbright students in Data Analysis, Cybersecurity, and HR Learning and Development programs with flexible, paid, project-based micro-internships across California in spring 2025. The long-term vision is to expand these opportunities to encompass all Calbright programs, ensuring that many more adult learners can benefit from valuable, real-world experience as they seek new opportunities in the workforce.



TechSF

As a pre-apprenticeship provider approved by the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards, Calbright College has partnered with the City and County of San Francisco to offer paid tech apprenticeships specifically for Calbright alumni. This collaboration provides a direct pipeline for Calbright graduates to transition into structured apprenticeship programs within the tech industry. By offering paid opportunities, TechSF and Calbright are removing financial barriers and enabling alumni to gain further hands-on experience and professional development in high-demand technology roles within the Bay Area.



California Workforce Accelerator

In partnership with the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GoBiz), NexusEdge, and Hubspot, the California Workforce Accelerator pilot program provides Calbright students with paid "micro-internships" where they receive training in digital marketing and AI tools. The micro-internship, which launched in the spring of 2025, placed 100 Calbright students and 89 students from sister community colleges with HubSpot customers to do hands-on projects. By bringing together government, education, and industry leaders, this partnership ensures that educational content is directly informed by current business needs, providing adult learners with relevant skills and practical experience that can be used in a rapidly evolving labor market.



“By integrating employer-guided learning into our classrooms, our students not only learn in-demand skills but also earn credentials that lead to real job opportunities. This California Workforce Accelerator initiative aligns perfectly with our mission to provide accessible, flexible, and future-focused education that prepares Californians for the workforce of tomorrow.”

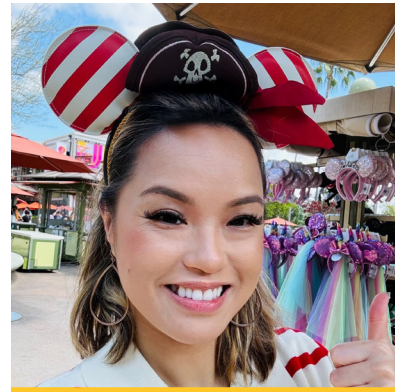
— Michael L. Younger, Calbright Vice President of Workforce, Strategy, and Innovation

The Value of Work-Based Learning

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"Getting laid off hit hard. One minute I had a career plan, the next I had a panic playlist and no clue what came next. Calbright didn't just hand me a list of courses — it handed me a second chance. I dove into project management and HR programs that actually connected to real jobs, scored paid internships without playing the corporate Hunger Games, and found a community that showed up for me: counselors who listened, faculty who actually cared, and students who reminded me I wasn't alone. Calbright helped me rebuild my confidence, rethink my career, and realize I'm capable of way more than I thought."

— Emma, IT Support, Project Management,
HR Learning and Development Student



Hayward



"We're working to break down barriers between higher education and industry so that more students — especially those historically underserved — can access the kind of project-based, real-world experience that changes career trajectories. This is about more than just learning by doing. It's about enabling institutions to embed applied learning into the fabric of their curriculum, giving employers a new way to engage with emerging talent, and helping students build the skills, confidence, and connections that lead to long-term success."

— Dana Stephenson, Founder and CEO of Riipen

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Monterey, Monterey County

Calbright served more than 130 students
across Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz
Counties as of June 30, 2025



How We're Scaling Innovative Education

Calbright College's primary mission is to increase economic mobility and improve education and workforce outcomes for working-age adults who have not been served by traditional forms of higher education. As part of that goal, the state of California also charged Calbright with exploring new approaches to adult online higher education, developing innovative best practices, and sharing research with our sister community colleges across California.

Calbright recognizes that there is great urgency to scale innovative education for California's adult learners. As widely noted, there are 6.8 million Californians ages 25–54 with a high school education but no associate's or bachelor's degree and whose employment prospects are increasingly limited. At the same time, it's estimated that the state needs an additional 2.4 million residents with college degrees this year to meet the anticipated demand for skilled workers with critical credentials, according to California Competes, a nonpartisan higher education research and policy organization.

As California Competes notes: "If we reorient higher education practices and policies to help even a fraction of these individuals earn their degrees or credentials, we forge stronger pathways to educational and career success — and, ultimately, a stronger economy and thriving communities."

Calbright is rapidly establishing itself as the premier research lab for innovative online adult education statewide and nationally, dedicated to transforming higher education for working-age Californians. Our commitment to innovation is evident in our comprehensive research and development efforts, in the consistent involvement of our students in the design and application of curriculum and surveys, in our improved student persistence and support strategies, and in the streamlined access to education and job training we provide, tailored for adult learners.



Calbright served nearly 600 students in San Diego County as of June 30, 2025

Chula Vista, San Diego County

Co-Designing Student Surveys

Recognizing that student voices — and specifically adult learners — are often absent from key development processes in higher education, Calbright's Research and Development team recruited students to participate directly in revamping the College's annual student survey. The Annual Student Experience Survey is a significant way for faculty and staff to learn how they are meeting the needs of students, and identify areas for improvement.

Including adult learners in the co-design yielded significant, measurable improvements for Calbright student engagement and data quality. By involving students in redesigning the survey experience, from question accessibility to personalized outreach and even data analysis, Calbright saw its response rate triple, while the attrition rate — students starting but not completing the survey — fell from 25% to just 3% in the last year.

Additionally, Calbright's Research and Development team, along with a student survey co-designer, had the opportunity to present their findings before a cohort of statewide research professionals working at California's community colleges. The Calbright team was able to share how to effectively integrate adult learner participation into decision-making and design efforts.



“Presenting to our California Community College colleagues has been a meaningful opportunity for Calbright’s Research and Development team to share how we’re reimagining student success through equitable co-design — centering student voices not just in the data we collect, but in how we shape our tools and take action.”

— Binh Do, Calbright Vice President of Research and Development

Tools Made for Adult Learners

The collaboration of creative, data-driven people who are energized about improving technology and learning outcomes for students is why Calbright is at the forefront of innovative education for adult learners. Since 2023, Calbright has sponsored adult learner-focused tracks within The Learning Engineering Tools Competition, an edtech innovation funding opportunity that leverages digital technology, big data, and learning science to meet the urgent needs of learners worldwide.

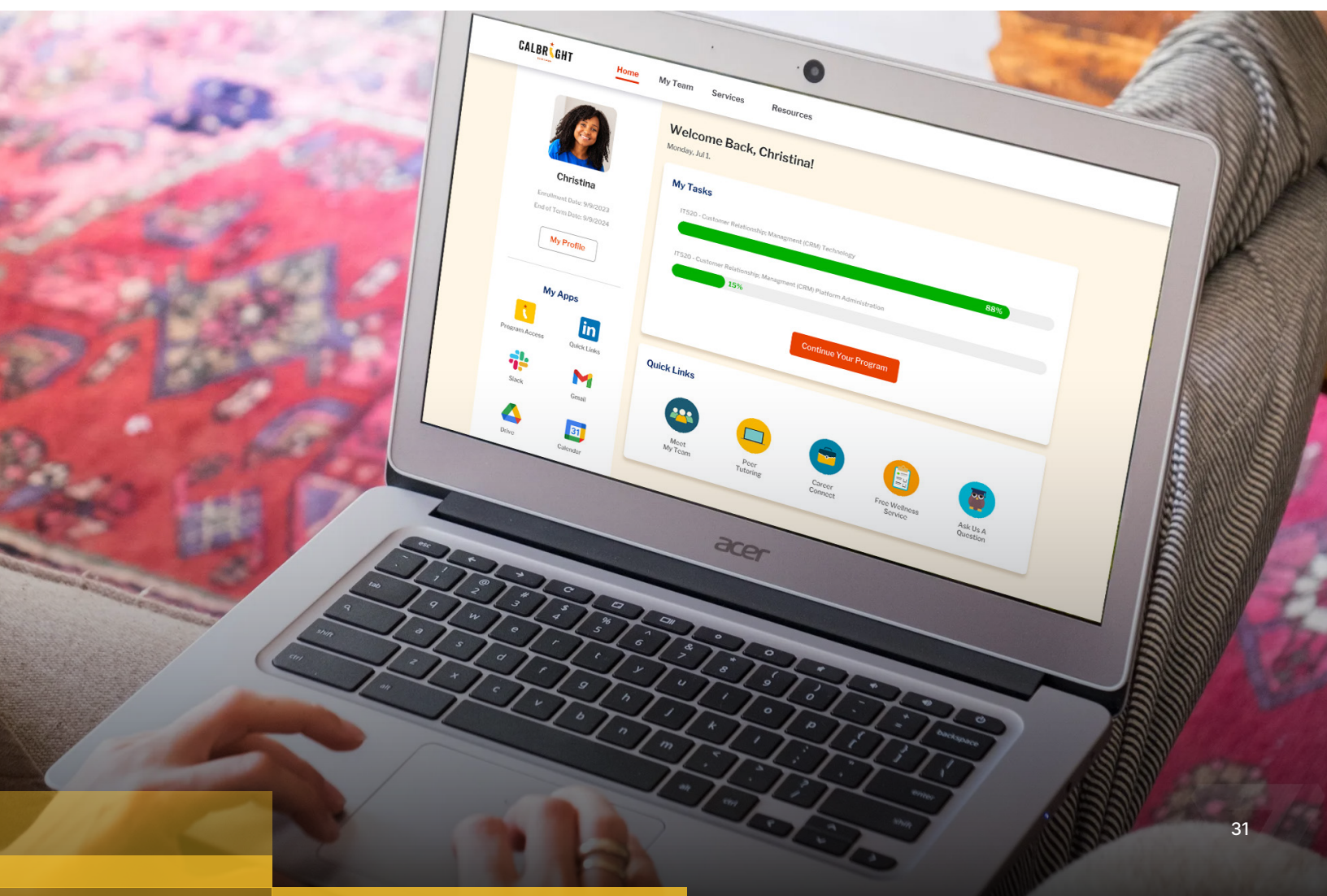
Calbright faculty, staff, and students are benefiting from the development and implementation of advanced tools such as Wingspans, OA Tutor, and JeepyTA, and working directly with these edtech partners. Calbright is also excited about new tools emerging from the Tools Competition, such as CourseWise and MyCoach AI. All of these tools address issues for adult learners, ranging from tracking credit for prior learning and shortening the process of analyzing course catalogs to providing personalized AI college success coaches that aim to improve college persistence rates and escalate to a live coach when students need specialized support. Creative, student-centered tools and collaborative work with edtech partners not only bring great promise for scalability across the California Community Colleges system but also advance the push for higher education environments to be more flexible, supportive, and outcomes-oriented, aligning education with the realities of working-age Californians' lives and career demands.

In addition, Calbright's strategic partnerships with behavioral design firms like ideas42 and research institutions such as the UC Irvine School of Education are critical for further exploration and implementation. These collaborations provide the scientific rigor needed to deeply understand adult learner behaviors, inform behavioral nudges, and enable the thorough testing and refinement of all innovations. Among the adult learner success solutions yielded by the Calbright, ideas42, and UC Irvine research partnership: short-form mobile videos aimed at engagement, learning communities to help students form study groups, get help with homework, and socialize, and reframing the usage of public benefits.

Among the most promising innovations from Calbright, ideas42, and UC Irvine — and ripe for adoption statewide and nationally — is the “Pace and Progress Timelines” initiative. Keeping students engaged in an online, flexible, asynchronous learning environment is a shared challenge across higher education. The Timelines create a customized structure for students, with suggested target dates for assignments and weekly outreach nudges, as well as help making adjustments when life responsibilities come up.

The result? **The one-year completion rate for Calbright students nearly doubled.**

It's partnerships like these that allow Calbright to create better ways of learning, support California's adult learners and consider how to replicate and adapt tools, practices, and interventions across diverse institutional settings statewide and nationally.



Investing In and Scaling Innovations

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“I’m incredibly proud of the engine of student-centered innovation we’ve built together. Through deep, cross-functional collaboration, we’re designing, testing, and scaling bold new approaches that are helping Calbright students succeed — and surfacing insights other institutions can leverage to better support working adult learners. From our early work on personalized program timelines to newer efforts addressing basic needs, this partnership is one of the many ways Calbright is generating real, transferable learnings that move the entire field forward.”

— **Tom Tasche, Senior Director of Innovation, ideas42**



"Calbright College is committed to people-centered innovation and ensuring technology helps students achieve their education and career goals. Working with ideas42, UC Irvine and competitors in the Tools Competition really allows us to keep improving upon how to center the diverse needs of users, emphasize scalability to support more students, and develop technology that leads to measurable outcomes for students."

— **Marisa Bold, Calbright Vice President of Sustainable Growth and District Development**

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Our Labor Agreements

Faculty, staff, and students all have a voice in shaping how Calbright fulfills its shared commitment to success. Calbright's operational structure reflects its unique model, builds on the strong tradition of participatory governance in the California Community Colleges system, and honors the leadership, contributions, and perspectives of faculty and staff across the institution.

At present, the College is in contract with all chapters of its labor partners. In the spring of 2023, Calbright officially ratified its first contract with the California School Employees Association (CSEA) Chapter 53, creating an organized labor union agreement for classified employees. This agreement, reached through an extensive and cooperative negotiation process, is the College's inaugural contract with CSEA.

In May 2022, the Calbright College Board of Trustees unanimously approved the College's collective bargaining agreement with the Calbright Faculty Association (CFA), which is the institution's local chapter (1485) of the California Teachers Association. The agreement with CFA marked the first labor agreement in Calbright's history. The CSEA and CFA contracts are yet another example of Calbright's institutional development and commitment to organized labor, nurturing a supportive workplace culture, and fair representation.

In the spring of 2024, the college awarded tenure to the first eligible group of faculty, with additional tenure-track faculty in the pipeline for future tenure status. The College and its labor partners are now in discussions for the successor agreements that will carry the organization into the future.



More than 1,300 students served in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties as of June 30, 2025

Moreno Valley,
Riverside County



Conclusion

Calbright College is demonstrating its unique position and capacity to address crucial educational and workforce needs in California. Building on the strengths and experiences of working-age adults, Calbright is illustrating for education, businesses, and policy leaders what is possible with innovative online, flexibly paced, competency-based education and job skills training programs made for the 21st century.

Our commitment to serving adult learners across all 58 counties, fostering economic mobility, and developing adaptable educational solutions positions Calbright as the go-to partner in building a resilient and skilled California workforce ready for the challenges and opportunities of evolving local, regional, and state economies.

We're proud of the model and community we've built with more than 7,660 students. But we know there are many more working-age adults to reach, and we continue to work to ensure that every adult learner in California seeking high-quality education and job skills training finds a pathway and the kind of support we provide every day at Calbright.

Calbright's faculty, staff, and students embrace our charge to keep driving the path forward for innovative higher education, meaningful workforce development, and serving adult learners on behalf of California.



“Calbright is a beacon for California’s working-age adults, offering them a chance to not only achieve their education and career goals but to build stronger futures for themselves, their families, and their communities. Together, the faculty, staff, and adult learners of Calbright have developed an institution that serves as a job skills lifeline for adult learners in today’s economy, centers its decisions on students, and puts research and innovation at the forefront of everything they do. Calbright is paving the way for the future of higher education and workforce development.”

— Hildegard Aguinaldo, Board of Trustees President and Assistant General Counsel for DaVita Inc.





Vallejo, Solano County

More than 390 students served across Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties as of June 30, 2025

