

CALIFORNIA ONLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT



2024-2025 Calbright Budget Summary

SUBMITTED BY

Ambur Borth

Controller/Executive Director of Finance
Calbright College

and

Ajita Talwalker Menon

President & CEO
Calbright College

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President and CEO's Message



Calbright's unique competency-based model of education offers online, flexible, skills-based, and workforce-focused programs that meet students where they are and leads the way in solving for the complex equation of how best to support this community of learners. In the last year, we have continued to build on this mission, with strong progress in growing our student body while also boosting student progress and completion.

Calbright sits in service of the California Community Colleges system's Vision 2030 Roadmap goal: upskilling adult learners in an equitable manner. It's critical we build systems and institutions, like Calbright, that recognize their unique experiences and are designed around their needs and goals. As a driver of this goal, Calbright's actions are guided by the learners we serve, nearly 70 percent of whom are Black, indigenous, and other people of color. One third of Calbright students are parents or caregivers, and 42% are unemployed. Despite the barriers facing adult learners, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, Calbright's student body grew to more than 4,500 learners. During this period, the College also awarded 411 certificates to graduates – the highest annual number in our short history. And, per our 2024 Student Experience Survey, more than half of Calbright graduates reported experiencing a positive labor market outcome within one year of completing their program. Calbright has also continued to achieve every legislative requirement outlined in our founding legislation, including receiving accreditation a year and a half ahead of schedule.

To support us in our continued efforts on behalf of working age Californians, the fiscal year 2024-2025 budget advances our notable progress and allocates resources to meet our growing enrollment, expanded program offerings, and keep our student-centered design. The budget was crafted to reflect the need to be nimble and to position Calbright with the ability to strategically scale in a sustainable manner. The budget highlights our plan to launch four new programs while intentionally expanding the Calbright team to support those programs and incoming students. Along with new programs and the anticipation of increased enrollment, our budget also includes sustained investment in research and development critical to carrying out our statutory mission and mandate.

Calbright serves as the leading edge of the learning curve for solving the complex equation of how to best nurture adult learner success. This is a shared challenge here in California and in higher education, with single-digit completion rates for students who are at least 25 years old across the California Community Colleges system. In focusing on adult learners—and the need for them to not just enroll in higher education but to graduate and then carry that success into the labor market—Vision 2030 implicitly validates Calbright's mission and special attention on working age Californians.

Open for enrollment for five years now, we are hitting our growth curve – expanding our student body with communities who reflect our mission and increasing the number of programs offered while also focusing on student success to support learners and employers in every part of California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ajita Menon', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Ajita Talwalker Menon
President & CEO
Calbright College

Executive Summary

Calbright's 2024-2025 budget advances plans for high-quality growth that will propel the College through its seven-year start-up period, which concludes in early 2026. This holistic \$69.2 million budget provides the resources for College to prepare to launch 4 new

programs—for a total of 10 in operation by the end of the fiscal year—expand operational capacity to support increased enrollment and program offerings, and invest in new and existing partnerships to catalyze the College’s activities. This budget plans for roughly \$49.2 million in one-time/start-up expenditures, which draw against roughly \$49.9 million available, full use of the \$15 million in ongoing funding provided to the College by the 2024 - 2025 California state budget, and \$8.9 million in carryover ongoing funds.

Through prudent and intentional forecasting, the College plans to simultaneously expand educational infrastructure and nurture the success of our growing student body and the faculty and staff who serve our students. The new pieces of curriculum—from Data Analysis to Network Technology—are part of the larger constellation for how Calbright meets the goals of working age Californians as well as the needs of the state’s evolving labor market. The 2024 - 2025 budget continues to invest in skills-based programs and the personnel to drive instruction and student support services.

Our 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. We offer online, flexible, affordable, skills-based programs that provide tangible economic value for both working adults and hiring managers.

Strategic Direction

The budget aligns closely with Calbright College’s overarching 2024-2027 Strategic Vision goals:

- To serve students by reimagining the student experience in an asynchronous, online environment, while also creating a strong workforce for California employers.
- To drive institutional excellence through expanding operational capacity while ensuring a culture of equity, inclusion, and continuous improvement.
- To amplify our innovative approach by partnering with mission-aligned organizations to advance adult learner success and amplify the need for student-centered educational design.

The first and only fully online California Community College focused on job training for those who have historically lacked access to traditional educational institutions, Calbright has ambitious goals for the 2024 - 2025 fiscal year and beyond. These build on the momentum and success of the previous fiscal year and anticipated long-term growth. Calbright’s budget assumptions for the 2024 - 2025 consist of the following goals:

- Additional programs prepared to launch in FY 2024-2025
- Expansion of external partnership
- Enrollment of 5,000 students, representing Calbright’s statewide mandate
- Continued acceleration of program completion

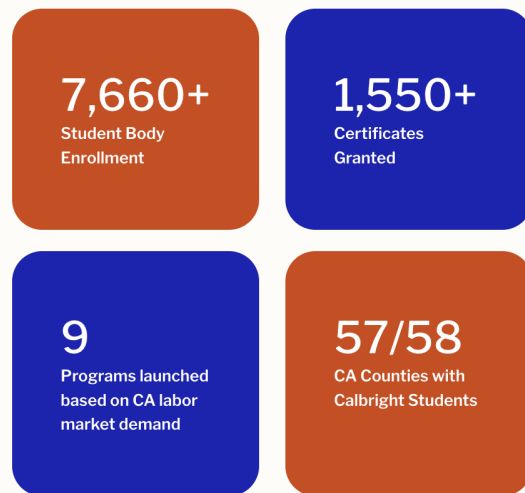
Who Calbright Serves

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.

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.

More than 90% of Calbright learners are at least 25 years old and have responsibilities that make online, flexibly paced programs their only or most viable option. 21% of Calbright's students are parents/caregivers, and the majority of students (74%) identify as members of the Black, Indigenous, Asian, and other people of color communities. Calbright exists to serve working age Californians like Chris, who wanted to level up his career through IT skills:



“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

Supporting the Student Experience

At every stage of enrollment, Calbright's team works directly with students, often times before they formally enroll, answering questions and sharing information about services in order to create a welcoming environment. In order to support those who lack the computer and reliable internet necessary to complete their program, the College also operates a technology lending library for students, at no charge, and currently provides 3,683 Chromebooks and 3,857 wifi devices to users across the state.

Building on continuous learner feedback, Calbright's 2024 - 2025 budget makes substantial investment in the student experience and includes:

- \$1.4 million during the 2024 - 2025 fiscal year for Calbright's joint research partnership with UC Irvine's (UCI) School of Education and behavioral design nonprofit ideas42. This multi-year partnership applies innovative behavioral and data science strategies to improve educational and labor market outcomes for Calbright students. Our approach prioritizes cross-functional engagement across the college through co-design, rapid prototyping, and testing, to continue to think differently and adapt to meet the needs of our students. This work is continuing to yield positive results for adult learners:
 - Building on early signals of impact, Calbright's collaboration over the past year with UCI and ideas42 focused on expanding and strengthening interventions that improve student persistence, completion, and workforce outcomes. Personalized program timelines, initially piloted in a single program, were scaled across the college, offering all students structured but flexible pacing support. Integrated with automated outreach and data-driven nudges, the full rollout of the timeline model marked a major step in Calbright's ongoing efforts to scaffold learner success without compromising flexibility. Final results from the original pilot showed that offering timelines to students nearly doubled their one-year program completion rate – compelling evidence that helped solidify this approach as a core element of the Calbright experience.
 - We also piloted several new behaviorally-informed interventions in collaboration with students, faculty, and staff. A series of short-form videos, delivered via SMS / email and designed to support students at key points in their journey, led to measurable gains in persistence, counselor engagement, and use of career services. The Peer-Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) pilot demonstrated the value of structured, peer-led workshops in supporting skill mastery and building community in online learning. Students who participated were more likely to complete difficult assignments and reported greater confidence and connection. Calbright has been lifted up as a leader in the space, not only for its impact here at the college, but also relevance for adult learners more broadly. We have been sought out by peers and thought leaders across the country, invited to present at state and national conferences, been lifted up through earned media, participated in convenings with leaders throughout the sector, and more. Together, these efforts strengthened Calbright's role as a research and development engine – and helped deepen

its capacity to design, test, and scale new approaches tailored to adult learners.

- An additional \$1.8 million investment in hiring of faculty and staff, including expanding the Learning and Instruction department with 14 positions to support program growth and development (as noted in figures below). As an institution that delivers Competency-Based Education (CBE), rigorous and continuous assessment is critical to measure student mastery and ensure curriculum is on the leading edge of available information and best practices.
 - In addition to instructional and instructional design faculty, Calbright plans to hire 15 members of the Student Services and Success department, including 6-roles focused directly on frontline student support.
 - Complementing these faculty roles and continued student body growth, the College will also focus on investing in necessary curriculum software and hiring technology experts and leaders who build and maintain the learning platforms and systems students utilize on a daily basis.
- To continue to advance employer engagement and industry alignment, the 2024 - 2025 fiscal year budget invests in the expansion of the College's Workforce Development team, with two new roles. The College also plans to launch a District Development department along with a Higher Education and Policy department. This is a critical advancement as Calbright's founding legislation calls for the College to serve as a research and development engine to expand options for adult learners across the CCC system and help solve the complex equation of how to best nurture adult learner success.

These workforce and data strategy roles will focus on creating and expanding partnerships with employers and industry, in addition to researching potential opportunities to launch new high-quality programs—as well as measuring student outcomes—that are responsive to adult learners and the labor market in key regions of the state.

Amplifying Calbright's investment in the student experience, the College's budget advances the infrastructure and programmatic endeavors required to fulfill its mission-driven and statutory requirements and goals as outlined in the 2024-2027 Strategic Vision.

Partnerships

Calbright remains engaged in beneficial partnerships with sister community colleges, regional and state entities focused on economic development, employer and industry associations, labor organizations, and individual employers, including new and ongoing collaborations during the past year as new program development continues to expand.

A key goal in the College's Strategic Vision is to continue expanding external partnerships. Calbright actively shares the knowledge, strategies, and tools that emerge from our innovation and research, adding value to the CCC system and to external partners. Such

shared gains include, but are not limited to, CBE program design, faculty and staff development, technology to improve the learner experience, and models for collaboration.

Partnering with Economic Development Efforts, Industry, and Labor

Statewide and regional partnerships inform Calbright's programs, create enrollment and employment pathways for students, and/or enhance labor market outcomes. By engaging with employment-related partners, we identify gaps in skills, jobs that are unfilled, and needed training that is either not currently offered or not available statewide. These partnerships help educate Calbright about important developments in a rapidly changing labor market and provide insights into the hiring process, which helps the College better support its students. Such collaborations are already advising new programs to ensure they build the essential skill base for key jobs and sectors.

Analyzing Statewide Labor Market Data

Calbright uses Lightcast, a labor market analysis company, to conduct statewide research on job trends and industry growth rates to inform our program development and career services. This data includes where jobs are physically located, the rate at which a sector is expanding, what certificates the industry values, and the current number of Californians able to fill those roles. As the College strives to expand opportunities for students to gain work experience in the public sector, Calbright's partnership with Lightcast continues to explore and identify misaligned skills and degree requirements in the public sector that produce unintended barriers to economic mobility for Calbright learners. Over a six month period, Lightcast developed a comprehensive analysis of labor market insights of California's Public Sector Labor Market, including both qualitative and quantitative research highlighting the impact of skills based hiring for this sector. The report, titled [The Road to Optimizing California's Public Sector Labor Market](#), was released in May 2024 at a roundtable discussion convened by Calbright College and NextGen Policy, including Calbright President and CEO Ajita Talwalker Menon, NextGen Policy's Executive Director Arnie Sowell, Abby Snay, Deputy Secretary for Workforce Strategy at the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and Adele Burnes, Deputy Chief of the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards to discuss to labor shortages and the struggle many public agencies have been experiencing post pandemic to return to pre-pandemic employment levels.

Partnering for Statewide Economic Development

Calbright engages in statewide and regional efforts led by entities such as economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, county and local governments, workforce development boards, and CCC Districts' regional networks to serve students across the state. As of August 2024, Calbright is a member of the following chambers of commerce across California:

- Fresno
- Greater Riverside
- Lodi
- Los Angeles Area
- Oakland
- Sacramento Asian-Pacific Islander

- Sacramento Black
- Sacramento Hispanic
- Sacramento Rainbow
- San Diego
- Sonoma
- Yuba-Sutter

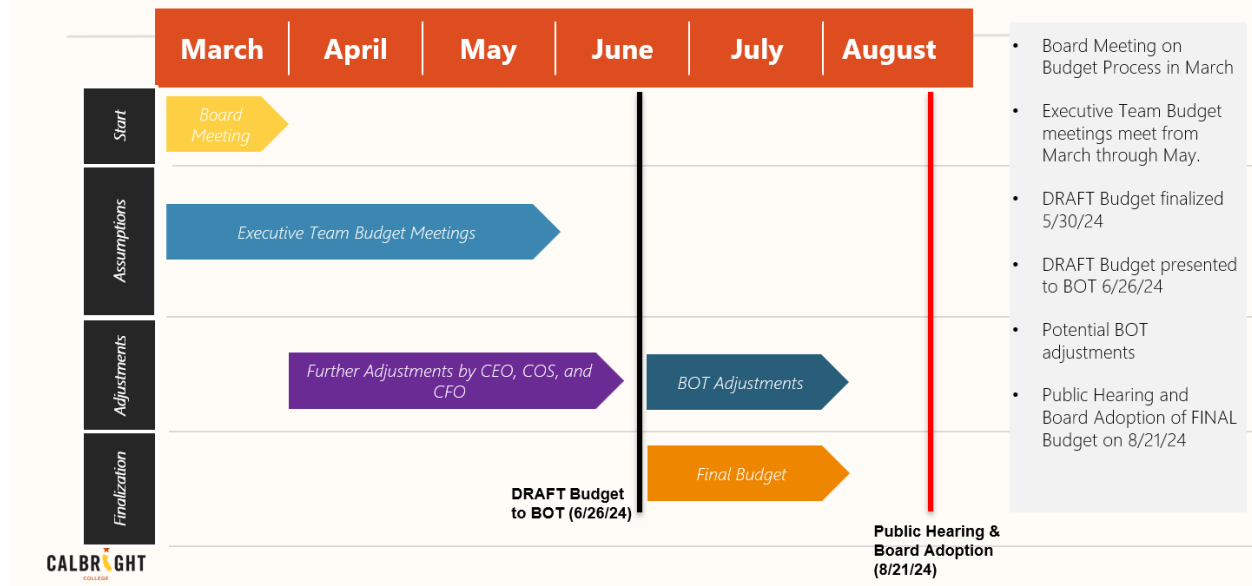
In addition to chambers of commerce, Calbright continues to expand its network of economic development partners and is currently collaborating with:

- The Bay Area Council
- California Competes
- Cooperative Economic Empowerment Movement
- Inland Empire Economic Partnership
- NextGen Policy
- Office of Economic and Workforce Development – San Francisco
- Los Angeles Department of Economic Opportunity
- Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation
- South Bay Workforce Investment Board
- The Worker Education and Resources Center

2024 - 2025 Budget Process

Calbright's budget was created in accordance with all pertinent State of California, California Community Colleges system, and Calbright College policies, including Title 5 and the California Community Colleges Budget and Accounting Manual. The budget presented in this document and in accompanying materials is the conclusion of a collaborative process between Calbright College and its Board of Trustees.

Budget Timeline (February – August 2024)



Calbright College has an established budget approval calendar and timeline (Board Policy 6300) and actively engages its Board in budget development. In compliance with Board Policy 6200, the Calbright College 2024-2025 budget:

- Supports the College's strategic priorities;
- Presents, for Board review, the assumptions upon which the budget is based;
- Provides a schedule to the Board by March of each year that includes dates for presentation of the tentative budget, required public hearing, Board study sessions, and approval of the final budget:
 - During the public hearing, interested persons are able to address the Board regarding the proposed budget and/or any item in the proposed budget.
- Unrestricted general reserves are 5% of Calbright's general fund;
- Any and all changes in the assumptions upon which this budget was based were reported to the Board in a timely manner; and
- Budget projections address long-term goals and commitments.

2024-2025 Budget

Calbright's final 2024-2025 budget projects comprehensive expenditures of approximately \$69.2 million. This includes \$20.0 million in expenditures drawn from the College's ongoing funding—provided by the 2024 - 2025 California state budget—and \$49.2 million in start-up costs, drawn against the one-time funding Calbright received in its founding legislation to be used during the College's seven-year start-up period. A prudent 5.9% reserve fund is accounted for in the 2024 - 2025 fiscal year.

More than half of the College's projected budget (\$35.9 million) supports employee compensation, benefits, and required contributions to California's public employee pension programs for Calbright's 155 current employees and anticipated growth during the 2024 - 2025 fiscal year. Operating expenses, such as learning platform, software licenses, and technology needs for employees and students represent the second largest category of expenditures, at \$25.3 million. Departments judiciously developed expense assumptions that reflect the College's continued growth and align with the Calbright's Strategic Vision, achieve departmental needs and goals, and advance critical institutional priorities, including:

- \$1.0 million to expand outreach and partnership efforts to effectively reach, engage with, and support communities and mission-aligned partners across key regions of the state, such as the Central Valley and Inland Empire;
- \$4.4 million to apply innovative behavioral and data science strategies to increase student success and to grow capacity for deeper industry and employer engagement to support workforce partnerships and a stronger labor market connections and outcomes for students;
- \$4.5 million to support research, development, and scale activities to design, build, and launch new high-quality program pathways that are responsive to the needs of adult learners and key regions of the state;
- \$6.7 million for additional technology software implementation, expansion of the College's technology lending library to support enrollment growth, and ongoing student licensing and technology platforms; and
- \$7.8 million in capital outlay.

Calbright began the 2024 - 2025 fiscal year with \$15 million in ongoing funds allocated in the 2024 - 2025 state budget and \$49.9 million in initial one-time start-up funds. As the College continues to scale and its growth curve steepens throughout the seven year start-up period, the ongoing \$5 million reduction in annual funds (from \$20 million to \$15 million) received annually beginning in FY 2020-2021 serves as a notable constraint to future growth and mission fulfillment.

As California's only fully online public institution, Calbright's budget also reflects its unique role within the CCC system. The College's salary expenditures fall into two categories: academic and non academic. Academic salaries include faculty, positions that focus on learning and instruction, and some roles within the Student Services team, for example. Non academic salaries include staff who support the College's broader operations, including activities associated with career services, student engagement and success, workforce partnerships and innovation, and finance. These delineations do not reflect the dynamics of an innovative and new kind of community college like Calbright, which has different operating needs than a traditional brick-and-mortar campus. For example, Calbright's technology department, which is classified as non-academic, plays a critical role developing, maintaining, and expanding the College's technology-based infrastructure and learning platforms, which are integral to Calbright's online curriculum and used by students daily, and provides direct technology support to students.

Financial Displays

Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025 Final Budget Summary

As adopted by the Calbright College Board of Trustees in August 2024

	Ongoing (Unrestricted)	One-Time (Restricted)	Total
Net Projected Beginning Balance, July 1	\$8,860,508	\$49,856,741	\$58,717,249
Revenue			
State Revenues	\$15,000,000	-	\$15,000,000
Local Revenues	178,941	1,000,000	1,178,941
Total Revenues	\$15,178,941	\$1,000,000	\$16,178,941
Expenditures			
Academic Salaries	\$4,701,764	\$2,895,922	\$7,597,686
Non Academic Salaries	8,384,008	9,700,142	18,084,150
Employee Benefits	5,360,477	4,902,889	10,263,366
Supplies and Materials	37,500	121,700	159,200
Other Operating Expenses and Services	1,492,516	23,781,854	25,274,370
Capital Outlay	-	7,820,600	7,820,600
Total Expenditures	\$19,976,265	\$49,223,107	\$69,199,372
Ending Projected Fund Balance, June 30	\$4,063,184	\$1,633,634	\$5,696,818

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Projected Actuals

As is standard practice, Calbright closes its fiscal year, reconciles accounts, and then participates in an annual external third party audit. As of the publication of this report, final reconciliation and third party audit have not yet been completed, which is why the columns note that the figures are “projected.” Different fund balance projections from those below and the budget above are due to differences in timing of these activities.

	PROJECTED		
	Ongoing (Unrestricted)	One-Time (Restricted)	Total
Balance Forward	\$9,560,993	\$65,359,376	\$74,920,369
Revenue			
General Apportionment	\$15,000,000	\$0	\$15,000,000
Misc. Revenue	230,882	2,404,502	2,635,385
Total Revenue	\$15,230,882	\$2,404,502	\$17,635,385
Expenses			
Academic Salaries	\$3,472,037	\$1,590,572	\$5,062,609
Non Academic Salaries	7,933,778	4,061,559	11,995,337
Benefits - Academic	783,210	365,832	1,149,041
Benefits - Non Academic	3,263,952	1,723,300	4,987,252
Supplies and Materials	39,182	29,501	68,682
Operating Expenses	390,539	9,096,177	9,486,715
Capital Outlay	-	1,088,865	1,088,865
Total Expenses	\$15,882,696	\$17,955,806	\$33,838,502
Ending Balance	\$8,909,179	\$49,808,072	\$58,717,251
Restricted	\$0	\$49,808,072	\$49,808,072
Unrestricted	\$8,909,179	\$0	\$8,909,179