



2026 Annual Report

How Calbright is Unlocking Economic Mobility
for California's Working-Age Adults



California Community Colleges

California Education Code § 75011

Submitted by:
Ajita Talwalker Menon,
President & CEO,
Calbright College

Hildegarde Aguinaldo,
President of the Board of Trustees,
Calbright College

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Table of Contents

4 President's Message

How Calbright's built a scalable, flexible education model driving economic mobility for working-age Californians.

6 Mission Statement

Our commitment and charge to close California's skills gap through accessible, flexible online learning.

8 By the Numbers

A look at enrollment growth, student demographics, and program completion for 2025–26.

9 Major Milestones

Calbright's journey from founding initiative to delivering results for students.

10 Our Students

Who our learners are and why accessible, competency-based education fits their lives.

12 Our Programs and Model

What it takes to bring programs to life and why competency-based education works for adults.

14 Partnerships and Collaborations

The alliances making statewide workforce development a reality.

16 Our Faculty, Staff and Board

Leadership, labor partners and governance guide our mission.

17 Accreditation and Credit Transferability

Ensuring institutional integrity and opening up pathways for students.

18 Conclusion



President's Message

California has long been a leader in education innovation, and today, our state is once again pioneering the future of higher education and workforce development. Since receiving the initial charge to design a flexible, statewide education and workforce training model tailored specifically for working-age adults, Calbright College stands as a proud, proven reality. We have successfully transitioned from an ambitious initiative into a leading institution actively serving learners across diverse labor markets and regions. As we look ahead, we are uniquely positioned to meet the rapidly evolving demands of our workforce, confident that the model we have built will continue to redefine economic mobility for millions of Californians.

Our start-up period has been defined by rigorous innovation, operational scaling, and measurable economic impact for students. Today, the College serves more than 8,000 learners and we've granted more than 2,500 certificates of completion in high-demand sectors such as information technology and project management.

True to our legislative mandate as the R&D hub for California Community Colleges, we have designed, tested, and scaled an educational infrastructure that pairs self-paced flexibility with structured technology. These systemic refinements have yielded returns: a 6% year-over-year increase in completion rates between 2024-2025, and a \$10,400 median annualized increase in earnings for our completers with reportable wage data. Calbright is providing a tangible return on investment for California individuals and families.



The Next Chapter

As Calbright enters its next chapter, the College is shifting from building its foundational model to deeply embedding it within California's broader workforce and education ecosystems. Through strategic partnerships with leaders, such as Riipen and Western Governors University, and our sister community colleges, we are establishing seamless degree-plus pathways and enhancing our integrated project-based work directly into our curriculum to meet regional labor demands.

This progress would not be possible without the visionary leadership of our state leaders. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Legislature and Governor Newsom for their steadfast support and the ongoing commitment to our mission. Together, we can continue to scale infrastructure, drive socioeconomic mobility, and build a more resilient, competitive, and equitable economy for all Californians.

Ajita Talwalker Menon
President and CEO

Mission Statement

Calbright College is committed to increasing economic mobility and closing equity gaps for working-age 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.

Grounded in this mission, the College was established in 2018 by Governor Jerry Brown as California's 115th California community college, answering a direct mandate from the California Legislature to close the state's skills gap. Calbright exists to provide accessible, relevant education and job skills training to the estimated 6.8 million Californians aged 25–54 who hold a high school diploma but lack a postsecondary credential, as well as millions more working-age adults aiming to upskill and pivot careers. By aligning our programs with state economic needs, we turn our foundational promise into tangible upward mobility for individuals and families across California.



“Calbright is a new, innovative, statewide, online college to support our low-income working Californians. When you look at the enrollment growth, it’s significant. It’s off the chart. This is an innovation that we have invested in over the years, and we are at a point in time where that commitment and solidifying that investment is going to place us as a model nationally for our commitment to working Californians, low-income Californians, and advancing our equity agenda.”

— Chancellor Dr. Sonya Christian, California Community Colleges

By the Numbers (as of June 30, 2026)

Calbright’s momentum through the 2025–26 fiscal year highlights the growing demand for flexible, accessible education and workforce training built for working-age adults. The College continues to advance economic mobility across California, reaching students in all corners of the state and delivering results for communities and the state.

8,083

Total Enrollment

26.1%

Students who are parents or caregivers

73.2%

Students who identify as members of the Black, Indigenous, Asian, and other people of color communities

2,563

Total Certificates Granted

92.3%

Students over the age of 25

\$10,400

Median annualized increase in earnings for completers with reportable wage data

Student Demographics by Race*

White	38.7%
Latinx	36.2%
Asian	20.4%
Black	18.5%
American Indian or Alaskan Native:	3.5%
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1.1%
None Stated	4.9%

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

Student Demographics by Gender

Female	53.0%
Male	41.2%
None Stated	4.6%
Non-Binary	1.2%

Student Demographics by Age

<20	0.5%
20-24	7.2%
25-29	15.2%
30-39	36.5%
40-49	23.9%
50-59	12.6%
60+	4.1%

Enrollment by Program

IT Support	31.5%
Data Analysis	22.7%
Project Management	19.7%
HR Learning and Development	6.3%
Community Health Worker	5.1%
Defensive Cybersecurity	4.0%
Network Technology	3.8%
HR Talent Acquisition	3.2%
CRM Platform Administration	2.9%
Medical Coding	0.8%

Major Milestones



Our Students

Calbright adult learners come to Calbright from a wide spectrum of ages, races, ethnicities, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, and geographic locations. Together, they highlight what working-age Californians are seeking in flexible education and job skills training today that will lead to quality jobs in their regions.

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.

Reskilling for Better Opportunities

Cintia from Los Angeles spent more than a decade working in restaurants and wanted to find a better career with a stable schedule. She completed Calbright's Data Analysis course and is now a Customer Relationship Management Coordinator for a hospitality company that focuses on digital marketing to reach its clients.



"After getting my certificate at Calbright, it's been completely different. People treat me like I know so much more, which I do. You get opportunities and into spaces you wouldn't have gotten into if you didn't have the program."

On-Again/Off-Again Students No More

Chris from Sacramento had decided college "wasn't for me" after trying several times, and made ends meet working a series of retail jobs. After getting laid off, he came to Calbright to reskill in IT because it provided a blend of flexibility, structure, and peer support he needed. For the first time, Chris felt connected to higher education. Now he has a job he finds meaningful in his new field.



"I applied, and got the interview, and they noted all the things that I've done at Calbright, and they offered me the role – my first IT role – and now I'm officially a career changer."

Parents and Caregivers Seeking Flexibility

Luana from Sunnyvale went back to college because she wanted to show her daughters that you can make a difference in your life if you try. She chose Calbright because it had the only program she found accessible and accommodating with her life responsibilities.



"If it wasn't for the program being free, and if it wasn't for the flexibility to raise my children, I couldn't do this. I really enjoy the opportunities to huddle and study with friends I've never met in person. Calbright has a very strong community."

Experienced Workers Who Need Modern Proof

Richard from Redding had decades of work experience, but found that potential employers didn't believe someone his age knew how to work with new technology. At Calbright, he secured a paid internship to create a mapping system between a small business' database and FedEx shipment tracking systems to improve customer service and streamline business processes. Now, no one doubts his technical skills.

"Certificates from Calbright serve as a contemporary shorthand, immediately signaling to employers that I possess up-to-date skills in modern technology and data management. It bridged the gap between my extensive learning and experience and the current demands of the workforce, demonstrating not just my willingness, but my proven ability to master new digital tools and systems."



Supporting Student Through Workplace Shifts

After working at a bank for 16 years, **Ahmed's** employers told him that the only way he could keep his job was to uproot his family and move out of state. He chose to stay in San Diego and go to Calbright instead, launching a new IT career.



"The self-paced model and online platform make it possible for someone like me to actually move forward in my education. I don't have to worry about commuting or strict class times, which makes it much more manageable."

Our Programs and Model

Rapid Design for Adult Learners

Calbright College utilizes an equity-centered, data-driven approach to rapidly transition new programs from ideation to launch. By leveraging real-time labor market insights from sources like Lightcast and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, alongside industry and student feedback, the College ensures curriculum directly targets high-demand fields that foster economic mobility.

This agile design process allows Calbright to move from initial concept to a pilot cohort and full course launch in a fraction of the time of traditional higher education institutions. For Calbright's student body of adult learners, this speed means they can rapidly acquire in-demand technical and durable skills, pivoting into resilient careers without delaying their economic advancement.

Calbright offers programs in these in-demand areas:

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





Skills-Based, Student-First Education — CBE

By specializing in competency-based education — often called CBE — Calbright's flexible approach to teaching and learning supports students in gaining knowledge and skills that are transparent and measurable. Progress is based on demonstrated mastery of what working-age adults 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.

Partnerships and Collaborations

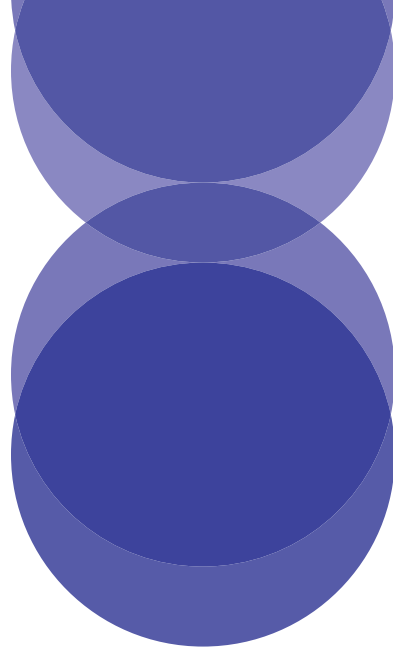


Calbright has cultivated a meaningful ecosystem of partnerships that center the needs of adult learners in research, education, economic, and workforce decision-making.

Influencing Policy and Mobilizing Economic Leaders

In February 2026, Calbright partnered with the College Futures Foundation to bring together regional and statewide education and workforce leaders and consider how California can scale flexible education for adult learners. Alongside California Competes, the Inland Empire Economic Partnership, Shasta College, SEIU-UHW, Riipen and more, partners shared a commitment to advancing public policy that directly fuels economic mobility, closes the skills gap and builds a more resilient, equitable workforce for the entire state.





Driven by Data and Research Integrity

Through a new partnership with CredLens, a national data trust, Calbright is in the early stages of tracking comprehensive student employment and wage outcomes after program completion. This collaboration provides independent evidence to ensure programs deliver measurable success while allowing the college to continuously refine its career pathways.

Scaling Academic and Regional Pathways

Calbright entered into a three-year pilot program with North Orange Continuing Education in March 2026. By providing specialized instructional design and technology at no cost to North Orange, Calbright is co-designing scalable pathways that transition adult learners from noncredit to credit-bearing programs, directly advancing the state's Vision 2030 goals through Credit for Prior Learning.

Additionally, the College actively collaborates with the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), with staff serving on its Rural Advancement Institute Advisory Council to ensure that flexible, online workforce programs are directly mapped to the unique economic realities of California's rural communities.

Our Faculty, Staff and Board



Faculty, staff, and students all have a voice in shaping how Calbright fulfills its mission. 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.

Calbright is governed by a 17-member Board of Trustees. This Board is also the Board of Governors for the California Community Colleges system.

The College's labor partners include the California School Employees Association (CSEA) Chapter 53, and the Calbright Faculty Association (CFA), which is the institution's local chapter (1485) of the California Teachers Association.

Accreditation and Credit Transferability



Calbright College is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). The DEAC is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized accrediting agency, and is also recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Calbright received its initial accreditation from DEAC in July 2023. As part of the College's first renewal of accreditation, DEAC conducted an on-site evaluation in February 2026. The Commission subsequently granted Calbright a full five-year renewal of accreditation through June 2031.

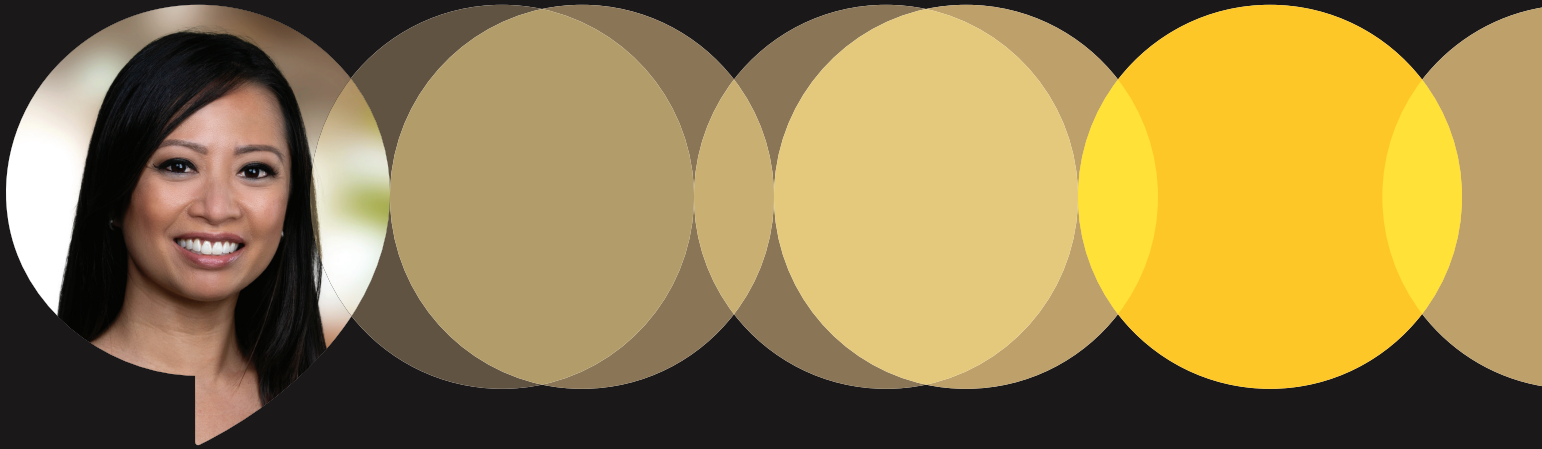
The five-year renewal reflects Calbright's continued commitment to educational quality, institutional accountability, ethical practices, and continuous improvement in support of its students and mission.



For decades, colleges and universities have relied on the American Council on Education (ACE) as a highly regarded, independent, nationally recognized organization to evaluate the rigor and quality of their curricula.

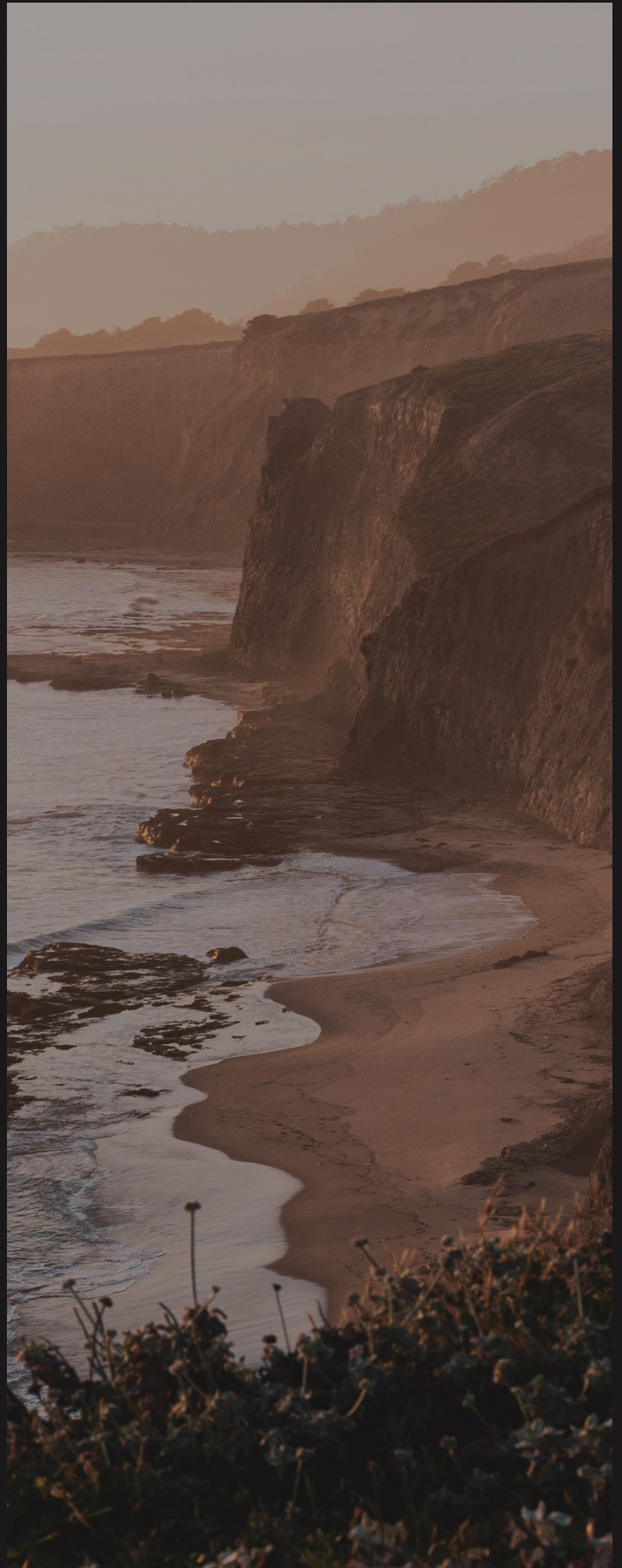
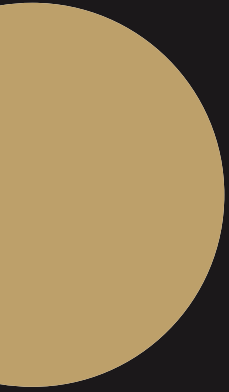
In 2026, ACE conducted an extensive review of documentation, curriculum materials, assessments, instructional design, and learning outcomes for nine courses across three workforce pathways. All nine courses received ACE credit recommendations, indicating that these courses demonstrate learning comparable to college-level coursework. This milestone for the College creates a crucial bridge from non-credit, skills-based training to degree pathways, significantly enhancing the transferability and economic value of Calbright offerings for students.

Conclusion



“In an economy and workforce rapidly evolving, Calbright serves as a vital lifeline for the millions of working-age Californians who need accessible, schedule-friendly pathways to upskill and reskill. By delivering innovation, integrity, and connection directly to adult learners, Calbright is strengthening our state's workforce and expanding what is possible for the future of higher education in California. Together, it is Calbright’s students, faculty, and staff who are showing what is possible when you bring together the necessary infrastructure, talent, and commitment to ensure this scalable competency-based model delivers on its promise for California.”

— Hildegard Aguinaldo, Board of Trustees President





California Online Community College District

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