

# MAPPING THE MOVEMENT: California's Higher Education Coalition Landscape

By Ria Sengupta Bhatt, Mandala Strategies



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# FOREWORD

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Dear Colleague,

When I stepped into my role as program director for the College Success Program at the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund in 2023, I already knew that coalition work is key to making California's higher education system more accessible, more affordable, and more equitable. When it comes to advancing educational opportunity for first-generation students, students of color, students from low-income families, undocumented students, and other underrepresented populations, coalitions of research, advocacy, and community groups have played a starring role in driving change.

At the same time, however, I realized fairly quickly that I lacked a clear picture of exactly what coalitions were out there, how they were organized, and where there were opportunities for deeper investment and deeper impact. Based on my conversations with other funders, I realized I was not alone.

That's why the Haas, Jr. Fund asked Ria Bhatt at Mandala Strategies to develop this report. **The bottom line is we needed a better map—not just of the coalitions doing the work, but of how they're connected (or not), what issues are well covered, where the advocacy gaps lie, and how funders can support this vitally important ecosystem more effectively.** The report Ria created is a detailed scan of 23 coalitions and alliances working in and around higher education equity in California, drawing from interviews with leaders across the state.

Several key insights stood out to me as I read it.

First, **coalitions provide funders with numerous pathways to engage** on crucial issues in higher education. While the scan identifies specific gaps in coalition work and coordinated advocacy (such as on issues like basic needs, admissions access, and transfer pathways), there's no need to reinvent the wheel on a lot of these issues. The key is supporting existing coalitions to strengthen and amplify their work.

Second, many if not all of these **coalitions are underfunded relative to their mission.** These alliances are being asked to take on ambitious, often systemic change with only piecemeal support. Funding coalition work is not just about writing a check—it's about resourcing leadership, infrastructure, and staying power. We funders need to do better.

Third, **we can learn a lot from the most effective coalitions.** They have a clear focus, strong co-leadership models, and intentional design that allows for both agility and accountability. They know what they're trying to achieve, and they've built the trust and scaffolding to get there. And for those coalitions still finding their footing, philanthropy has a role to play in supporting capacity building, convening, and learning.

Last but not least, the report underscores that **coalition work doesn't exist in a vacuum.** The most resilient coalitions see themselves as part of an interconnected ecosystem. They engage student voices meaningfully, build alignment with adjacent movements, and share infrastructure and strategy across regions.

Ria's report offers not only a snapshot of what's happening now but also a set of actionable strategies for how we as funders can help coalitions thrive: support—but don't micromanage; invest in leadership; fund coordination; back sustained efforts beyond a single policy win; and help build the connective tissue that turns individual coalitions into a more cohesive movement.

I hope this report helps you—as it helped me—see the coalition landscape in California more clearly. More than that, I hope it helps all of us see new ways to strengthen our role in supporting the coalition infrastructure that is essential to achieving equity and success for all of California's students.

Many, many thanks to Ria for producing this eye-opening report.

In Partnership,



Monica Martinez  
Program Director, College Success  
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund



# INTRODUCTION

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**In a state as expansive and complex as California, advancing systemic improvements in higher education is not the work of one organization, one institution, nor even one sector.**

It requires the collective effort of coalitions—alliances of advocates, policy experts, researchers, educators, and community leaders—working in coordination to tackle persistent challenges in college access, affordability, transfer, and student success. Coalitions have played a pivotal role in driving many of California’s most significant higher education reforms, including expanding financial aid, reforming developmental education policies, securing protections for student loan borrowers, and advancing support for undocumented students.

Coalitions are powerful vehicles for change, but they are not easy to get right. Fundamentally, they are alliances between distinct organizations working toward a shared goal that would be hard or impossible to achieve alone. Success requires a strategic, multifaceted approach that aligns structure, leadership, focus, and engagement. Philanthropy also plays a critical role by actively providing resources and offering strategic support that properly balances funder engagement and coalition autonomy.



This report draws on 25 recent interviews with coalition leaders to illuminate **California's vibrant landscape of higher education advocacy coalitions**. It maps more than 20 entities, ranging from those focused on one specific higher education issue to broader alliances that link higher education to wider equity agendas. These coalitions play a pivotal role in shaping policy, aligning narratives, and ensuring that reforms are implemented in ways that genuinely serve those students who have historically been underserved by the system.

In addition to offering **detailed profiles of each coalition** for those interested in deeper engagement, this report shares **best practices** to make coalitions effective, identifies **issue area gaps** in the current advocacy coalition landscape, and provides strategic **recommendations for funders** and other stakeholders committed to accelerating positive outcomes for underserved student populations.

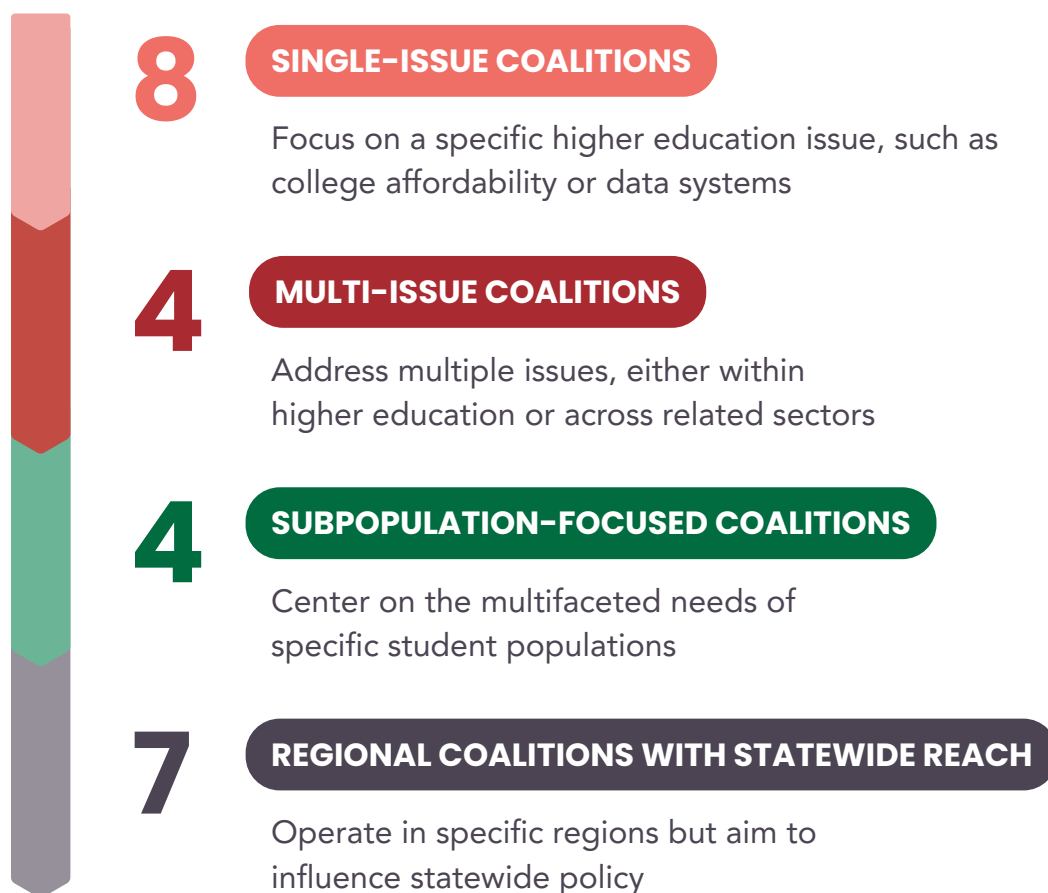
Many of the practices outlined here are applicable nationwide for postsecondary-focused advocates, funders, and leaders. However, they are especially relevant in our geographically large and diverse state, with its complex, multi-part higher education system—a context that necessitates coalition-based advocacy to advance systemic change.

**Ultimately, this resource is designed to empower advocates, organizations, philanthropy, and other changemakers** with a clearer picture of who is working toward equitable outcomes in California—and how we can work together more effectively to accelerate our progress on behalf of historically underserved students.



# CALIFORNIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION COALITION LANDSCAPE <sup>1</sup>

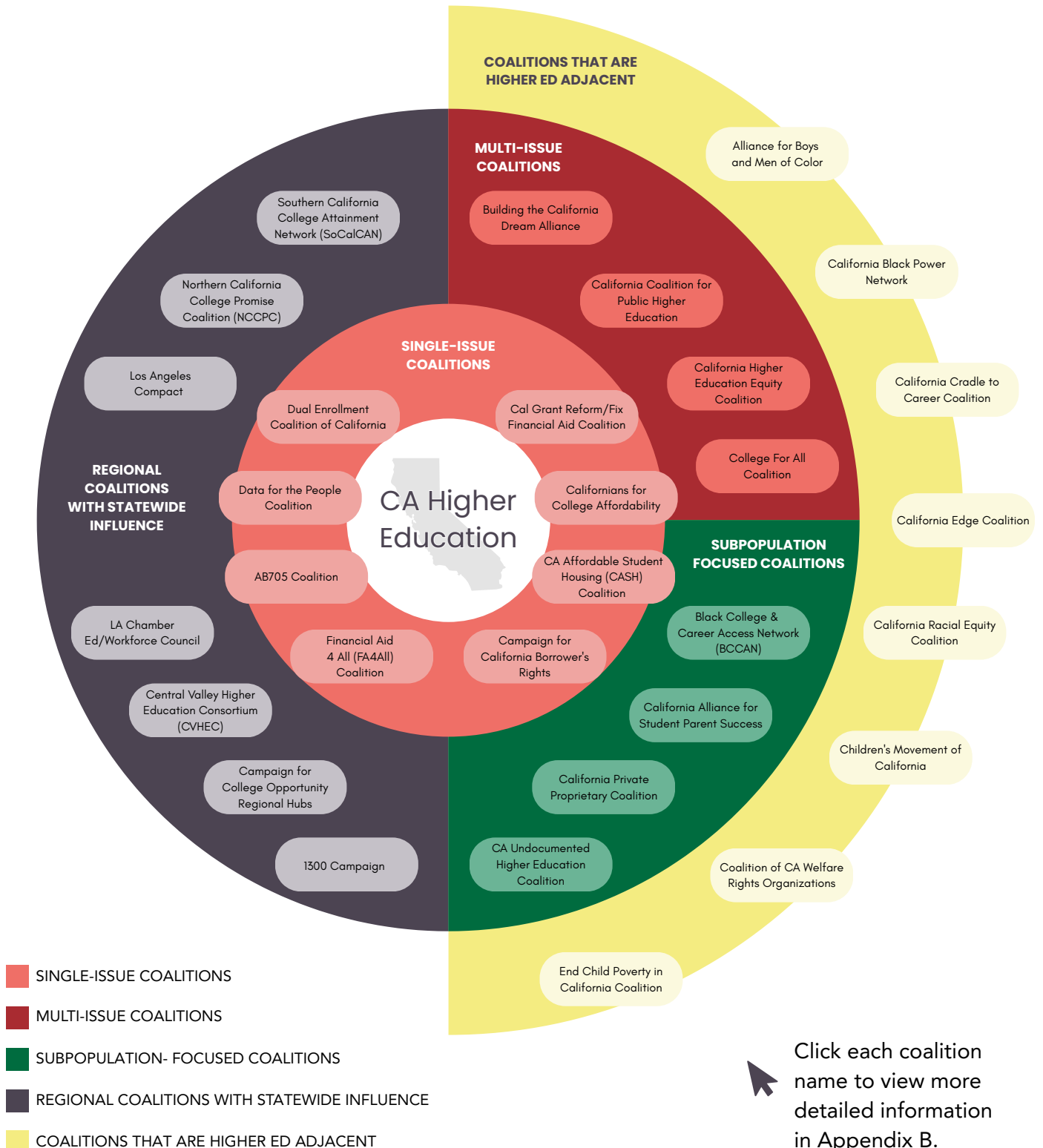
This report presents a landscape of **23 coalitions** that are actively collaborating on a shared higher education campaign or policy issue in California. These coalitions are categorized based on their primary focus:



In addition to these 23 core coalitions, the landscape includes eight higher education-adjacent coalitions. While not exclusively focused on higher education, these groups present opportunities for strategic partnerships, addressing intersecting areas such as racial equity, economic opportunity, and social services.

<sup>1</sup> While every effort was made to capture a comprehensive snapshot of California's higher education coalition landscape, this field is dynamic and evolving. Some emerging or informal coalitions may not be reflected here. For a full description of study parameters, refer to Appendix A.

# CALIFORNIA'S LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADVOCACY COALITIONS





California's higher education coalitions form a robust and varied landscape. The 23 primary coalitions examined range widely in size—from as few as five member organizations to more than 100—with an **average membership of around 30**. Most were established within the past decade, with a notable surge between 2018 and 2021 that reflected a broader wave of momentum and advocacy around higher education equity in the state.

Many coalitions initially formed to collectively advocate for specific legislation but continued beyond those efforts, sustained by the relationships and infrastructure developed during their campaigns. **Legislative and state budget advocacy remain the most common focus**, though many coalitions also engage in related work such as narrative change, research, and policy implementation. Among the many issues addressed, **college affordability emerges as the most heavily covered area**, with coalitions concentrating on various facets such as grants, loans, application processes, and more.

**Racial equity is a core value** for these coalitions, reflected clearly in their leadership. Approximately 70% are convened by organizations led by people of color, and an even higher percentage are staffed predominantly by individuals from these communities. Notably, coalition work is often driven by mid-level staff rather than executive leadership, making this level of representation still more striking. Even at deeper organizational levels, leadership diversity remains a defining strength in this landscape.

Leadership across the landscape is concentrated among a small group. Four organizations lead or co-lead just over half of the primary coalitions. These organizations bring considerable strengths, including trusted reputations, experienced staff, and longstanding ties to funders and policymakers. Yet this concentration presents a double-edged sword: while their leadership is invaluable, over-reliance on a few organizations risks stretching their capacity and limiting the development of a broader leadership pipeline.

Despite their critical role and sustained efforts, most coalitions operate with minimal financial support. **Dedicated funding streams are rare**, leaving many coalitions under-resourced. They often depend on the general operating budgets of lead organizations and occasional one-time support for convening. A later section of this report offers tangible recommendations for how funders can more strategically and substantially support this vital coalition landscape.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVOCATES

## EFFECTIVE COALITION PRACTICES

Interviews with coalition leaders and a scan of the broader landscape reveal clear patterns behind successful coalitions—those that are strategic, visible, impactful, and sustainable. The following ten effective practices demonstrate that success is not accidental, but rather the result of deliberate choices in design, structure, and strategy. Organizations can use these practices as a checklist when building or reassessing a coalition. Funders can also use them to guide investment decisions and understand coalition health and readiness. By aligning planning and funding with these practices, both implementers and supporters can increase the chances of coalition success.

1

**Define a Clear and Strategic Scope:** Effective coalitions tend to have a well-defined and relatively narrow focus—whether by issue (e.g., dual enrollment), geography (e.g., Southern California), or student population (e.g., student parents). In contrast, coalitions with overly broad missions often struggle with member commitment, clarity of purpose, and mission overlap with other groups. In issue areas that are already crowded (e.g., affordability), coalitions can enhance their impact by considering strategic mergers with like-minded groups to reduce duplication and strengthen collective efforts.

2

**Build Complementary, Shared Leadership:** A co-convenor model (i.e., two organizations sharing leadership duties) is both efficient and resilient, especially when co-leads bring complementary strengths, such as legislative relationships matched with grassroots connections. Successful coalitions often also maintain a small, active steering committee—typically 3–5 organizations in coalitions with 20 or more members, which each offer distinct contributions such as communications, policy analysis, or direct engagement with students. For long-term success, steering organizations must embed the coalition's priorities into their own strategic agendas, ensuring executive-level buy-in and resource alignment.

3

**Establish Clear Governance Structures:** A collectively-designed charter or memorandum of understanding is a cornerstone of coalition effectiveness. It does not need to be overly formal, but it should clearly define the coalition's identity, membership requirements and tiers, staffing model, and decision-making processes (e.g., consensus vs. majority rule). This document should be revisited periodically for effectiveness and adjustments. While funders can help shape governance frameworks, coalitions must maintain independence over their mission and priorities to maintain member buy-in and ownership.

4

**Design Tiered Membership for Flexibility:** Larger coalitions differentiate between official members, who hold decision-making power and can sign on to public actions, and information-only participants, who stay informed without influencing direction. This structure allows for nimble decision-making while maintaining wide engagement.

5

**Foster Meaningful and Continuous Member Engagement:** Coalitions thrive on consistent, substantive engagement with members. This includes regular touchpoints such as strategy sessions, updates on shared wins, and energizing in-person events. Engagement through capacity building is equally essential. Providing professional development opportunities to members, such as lunch-and-learns or policy briefings, empowers grassroots and community-based organizations to engage more deeply in advocacy efforts.

6

**Center Student Voices:** Higher education advocacy coalitions aim to improve outcomes for underserved students. To truly reflect the needs of those they serve, coalitions must prioritize meaningful student involvement to ensure strategies address the real challenges and aspirations of those most affected. While the form of engagement may vary depending on a coalition's structure and focus, one principle remains constant: student participation must go beyond symbolic inclusion. Authentic integration of student voices is foundational to effective, equity-driven advocacy.

7

**Stay Adaptive While Anchored in Mission:** A coalition's ability to evolve while maintaining mission clarity is a key success factor. Initially, smaller memberships help establish a strong culture and operational norms before scaling. Coalitions can build from this strong foundation, remaining grounded in their core values and long-term goals as they grow.

8

**Invest in Visibility and Positioning:** Highly effective coalitions establish branding, a visible social media presence, and in-person convenings to raise awareness, build momentum, and cultivate identity. Some coalitions have also successfully established themselves as trusted information hubs, using data and analysis to influence policy conversations and serving as go-to resources in their respective focus areas.

9

**Align Language and Create Accountability:** An important element to establish early on is terminology alignment—agreeing on definitions of key terms such as *equity* and *student-centered* to build clarity and shared understanding, which strengthens collective messaging. Accountability mechanisms and clear expectations can help mitigate the risk of organizational misalignment—when members agree to collective definitions and decisions but individually act in ways that undermine shared goals.

10

**Plan for Sustainability and Purposeful Exit:** Sustainable coalitions plan for longevity or closure. Some find stability in operating as staffed organizations with formal memberships and voluntary dues, while others may not need that level of institutionalization. Coalitions should define exit strategies so they can wind down when goals are met and make space for new efforts to emerge, or pivot significantly to embrace new challenges.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

## EFFECTIVE FUNDING PRACTICES

If funders are serious about driving systemic change in California higher education, they must play a more active role in resourcing and supporting coalitions. Below are key recommendations for how philanthropy can strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of higher education coalitions.

### 1 Engage Early, Then Step Back Strategically

Striking the right balance between funder engagement and coalition autonomy is crucial for long-term success. Whether launching a new coalition or revitalizing a stalled one, early and intentional funder engagement is essential. Funders should take an active role from the outset—identifying stakeholders, confirming organizational capacity, and creating space for the most relevant individuals to have a seat at the table. Because coalitions often rely heavily on specific individuals, leadership dynamics can shift significantly if key personnel leave. Funders must proactively monitor these changes and be ready to support leadership transitions to sustain effort and impact.

While early engagement is crucial, philanthropy must be careful not to become over-involved once a coalition is established. Continued support through resources is important, but coalitions must be empowered to operate independently. Micromanagement can damage trust, diminish a sense of ownership, strain relationships, and ultimately stall progress.





## 2 Exhibit Transparency & Flexibility

Funders may understand the necessity of coalitions, but they must also grasp that coalitions are not linear or clear-cut in the way that programmatic investments often are. With this in mind, funders should have transparent and direct conversations with coalition leaders early on about their foundation's objectives and motivations for funding the effort.

Funders who lack a background in organizing and movement building may want more rigidity than is possible and will benefit from engaging advisors to support them at the start as they learn more about supporting coalitions. Given that coalitions are often emergent and nimble, inflexible annual targets and pre-set performance metrics are not usually appropriate. Instead, a dynamic, 360-degree assessment—gathering input from coalition members as well as those impacted by the work—can offer a clearer, more holistic view of the coalition's effectiveness and impact and contribute to developmental learning for both funders and grantees.



## 3

## Provide Dedicated Funding for Key Coalition Elements

Most if not all coalitions in this landscape lack dedicated funding and are generally underfunded relative to the ambitious goals they are tasked with. To ensure they are effective and sustainable, funders should consider direct funding for coalitions, prioritizing some or all of the following areas:

- **Leadership & Participation:** Coalitions can only succeed if leaders have the resources necessary to develop and sustain momentum. Without sufficient funding, progress stalls and engagement declines. While subgrants for individual coalition members can also be helpful, they should be used strategically rather than universally. For example, microgrants can be a powerful tool to help small organizations with limited budgets stay active and engaged.
- **Dedicated Support Roles:** In addition to direct funding, active coalitions need dedicated professional support to maintain efficiency.
  - Skilled facilitators can guide discussions and prevent scope creep, ensuring productive meetings and active participation across membership groups.
  - Administrative and logistical support can help coordinate operations and allow participants to focus their time strategically.
  - Communications professionals can shape and manage the branding, media, messaging, and narrative-building that will accelerate change and amplify impact.

Whether to support external consultants or internal staff for these roles, this funding is critical to creating impact and ensuring the coalition's visibility.

- **Capacity Building & Technical Assistance:** Many coalition leaders lack formal training in essential skills such as project management and conflict resolution, which can hinder decision-making and collaboration. When funders invest in capacity building, coalition members gain the skills needed to overcome challenges and contribute effectively to advocacy efforts.
- **In-Person Convenings & Travel Support:** Face-to-face interactions are crucial for building trust and strengthening relationships. Funders can allocate resources for in-person meetings, such as legislative sessions or strategy convenings.

## 4 Foster Inter-Coalition Collaboration

Inter-coalition collaboration in California's higher education landscape remains limited, largely due to insufficient funding, limited capacity, and the lack of established networks for coalitions to build relationships beyond internal partners. Philanthropy can play a pivotal role in forming strategic alliances by facilitating connections and supporting the infrastructure needed for the landscape of individual coalitions to evolve into an ecosystem focused on systemic change. Funders could encourage and support higher education coalitions to collaborate with:

- **Regional advocacy and community-based groups** that offer real-world stories from constituents, which can resonate with policymakers and bring local context to policy discussions.
- **Research organizations** that can help coalitions strengthen their narratives with data and evidence. Some coalitions in this landscape have successfully partnered with research groups to integrate findings into their advocacy work.
- **Coalitions working on adjacent issues** that bring new networks that can amplify higher education advocacy by aligning it with broader social movements. This landscape includes several influential coalitions focused on issues adjacent to higher education that present valuable opportunities for collaboration and alignment.

## 5 Invest in Sustained Efforts

Philanthropy should look beyond short-term wins in a single legislative cycle and invest in the longer-term strength and stability of coalitions. While responding to urgent policy challenges is important, sustainable financial support enables coalitions to remain focused on their long-term goals—work that often takes far longer than anticipated. Multiyear funding also helps coalitions weather the disruptions of staff turnover within their organizations, in the Capitol, and across key partner institutions.

Equally important is supporting coalitions in the crucial phase after a policy is passed. Policy victories are only part of the battle; coalitions need resources to monitor implementation, ensure accountability, and maintain momentum on efforts like FAFSA completion or equitable course placement reforms. Without continued support, these hard-won gains risk being rolled back or left unfulfilled. Funders can maximize their impact by supporting sustainability planning and the ongoing work of policy defense and implementation.

# ISSUE AREA GAPS IN THE LANDSCAPE

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While California's higher education landscape is rich with coalitions—some might say saturated—several critical issues still lack coalition-led advocacy. New coalitions are not always the answer, however; a more strategic approach is to embed focused workgroups within existing, functional coalitions. This strengthens and leverages existing infrastructure, avoids duplication, and promotes more efficient resource use.

With this in mind, the following issue areas remain underrepresented in coordinated advocacy, despite ongoing programmatic work in some of these domains

- **Basic Needs Advocacy Coordination:** Efforts to address food, housing, and transportation needs of college students remain fragmented, lacking a unified policy and advocacy strategy.
- **College Access & Admissions Policy:** Advocacy around access to University of California and California State University remains reactive, with periodic efforts on issues like A-G requirements, testing, and recruitment equity.
- **Career Guidance & Advising Infrastructure:** Advising and career services are underfunded despite their essential role in student success, and this issue is not yet covered in the coalition landscape.
- **Latinx Student Success in California:** California is home to a large Latinx student population, yet there is no centralized, high-impact advocacy agenda focused specifically on higher education success for this population in our state.
- **Campus Climate & Faculty Preparedness:** Faculty often lack training to support diverse students, and current advocacy for inclusive campus climates is scattered and underdeveloped.
- **Transfer Pathways & Credit Mobility:** Inefficient credit transfer systems continue to delay completion and increase debt for community college students, but currently lack substantial coalition involvement.
- **Higher Education Finance:** Inequities and intentional opacity in finance across California's higher education segments persist, yet complexity makes sustained, data-driven advocacy difficult.



# CONCLUSION

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**This report offers a look into California's higher education advocacy coalition landscape, illuminating its complexities and also its great potential.**

The necessity of coalitions is clear, but their success requires that many elements coalesce through intentional, strategic focus. Funders must provide essential support for these coalitions, balancing their engagement with a need to preserve coalition autonomy.

Building and sustaining effective coalitions is no small task, but the payoff in terms of systemic change and improved student outcomes is tremendous. By understanding the core ingredients of successful coalitions, identifying critical gaps, and leveraging strategic funding, the field can better navigate future challenges. In an era of constrained state budgets and shifting federal policies, sustained impact will depend on strong leadership, thoughtful funding models, skill-building support, and long-term investment. **With these in place, California's coalitions can not only endure but lead transformative change.**





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evelyn & walter  
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## About the Author

This report was authored by Ria Sengupta Bhatt, Founder and Principal Consultant of Mandala Strategies. Mandala Strategies partners with nonprofits, philanthropy, educational institutions, coalitions, researchers, public agencies, and other groups dedicated to inclusive social change. Mandala Strategies offers a comprehensive range of organizational strategy services, and also specializes in policy research and landscape analysis in the fields of education, economic and racial justice, civic engagement, and gender equity. For more information, visit [mandala-strategies.com](https://mandala-strategies.com).

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Project Parameters & Definitions

The following parameters and definitions were used to determine which coalitions to include in the landscape for this report.

	WITHIN SCOPE	OUT OF SCOPE
<b>TYPE OF COLLABORATION</b>	<p>Advocacy coalitions actively collaborating on a shared campaign or policy issue, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single-issue coalitions that focus solely on higher education</li><li>• Multi-issue coalitions that have higher education as one area of focus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loose networks</li><li>• Communities of practice and/or practitioner groups (e.g., K16 collaboratives)</li></ul>
<b>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• California-based and -focused</li><li>• Large regional focus in CA (e.g., Southern California)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National- or multi-state focused</li><li>• Local efforts</li></ul>
<b>ISSUE AREAS ADDRESSED</b>	<p>Postsecondary/higher ed as a top priority, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• K12 to higher ed/college access</li><li>• CC transfer</li><li>• Persistence/retention</li><li>• College affordability</li><li>• College completion</li><li>• AA or BA focused</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apprenticeships/ employer certifications</li><li>• K12 focus only</li><li>• HE to workforce transitions</li><li>• Professional degrees beyond BA</li></ul>
<b>POPULATION FOCUS</b>	<p>Equity-focused, supporting underserved populations including low-income students, undocumented students, first gen college students, students of color, or returning/older students.</p>	<p>General college-going population</p>

# APPENDIX B:

## Details on California Higher Education Coalitions

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## Cal Grant Reform Coalition (formerly Fix Financial Aid Coalition)



### MISSION:

To advocate for reform of the Cal Grant formula so that college students in California are served by financial aid more equitably



### LEADERSHIP

- **2025:** Coordinated by NextGen California
- **2022-24:** Co-convened by NextGen California and TICAS
- **2018-22:** Co-convened by California State Student Association, Student Senate of the California Community Colleges, and University of California Student Association



### MEMBERSHIP

#### 80+ members, representing:

- Statewide student government associations
- Higher education advocacy orgs
- Civil rights and social justice groups
- Research groups
- Community organizers
- Public colleges
- State governmental agencies



### POPULATION FOCUS

Low-income college students (current and aspiring)



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Policymaker education/champion building



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2018 as the first cross-segmental student-led coalition focused on California college affordability, under the name Fix Financial Aid Coalition
- Leadership has evolved over the years, and was renamed the Cal Grant Reform Coalition in 2022
- Will likely evolve to a new structure and name in 2025



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [fixfinancialaid.org](https://fixfinancialaid.org)



**EMAIL:** [samantha.seng@nextgenpolicy.org](mailto:samantha.seng@nextgenpolicy.org)

## Californians for College Affordability Coalition

**MISSION:**

To strengthen California's need-based financial aid programs so that all students can afford to attend and complete college, allowing the state's workforce to remain competitive

**LEADERSHIP**

The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)

**MEMBERSHIP****40+ members, representing:**

- Higher education advocacy orgs
- Statewide student government associations
- Civil rights and social justice groups
- Business and workforce development groups
- Community-based organizations

**POPULATION FOCUS**

Students from California's lowest income families

**GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

California (statewide)

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Policymaker education on state financial aid policies
- Narrative building on college affordability
- State budget advocacy

**GOOD TO KNOW**

- Founded in 2012
- Works under two core principles regarding state financial aid programs: help most the students who can afford the least, and encourage colleges to serve students well
- Played a central role in moving CA's policy discussion on college affordability from focusing solely on tuition to addressing total cost of attendance

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WEBSITE:** [ticas.org/californians-for-college-affordability](https://ticas.org/californians-for-college-affordability)



**EMAIL:** [california@ticas.org](mailto:california@ticas.org)



## California Affordable Student Housing (CASH) Coalition

**MISSION:**

To advocate for solutions to end post-secondary student housing insecurity and homelessness

**LEADERSHIP**

Public Advocates

**MEMBERSHIP**

15+ members, representing:

- Higher education advocacy orgs
- Civil rights and social justice groups
- Student-led groups

**POPULATION FOCUS**

Low-income, Black, and Latinx students in California

**GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

California (statewide)

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Research dissemination

**GOOD TO KNOW**

- Founded in 2023
- Unique in its work at the intersection of housing justice and education equity
- Has workgroups focused on Research and Learning; Legislation and Policy; and Student Power Building

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WEBSITE:** [publicadvocates.org/campaigns/cash-coalition](https://publicadvocates.org/campaigns/cash-coalition)



**EMAIL:** [swalton@publicadvocates.org](mailto:swalton@publicadvocates.org)

## Campaign for California Borrower's Rights



**MISSION:** To address the student debt crisis so that California borrowers can see a future free of student debt



### LEADERSHIP

- NextGen California
- Student Borrower Protection Center
- Student Debt Crisis Center
- Young Invincibles



### MEMBERSHIP

**80+ members, representing:**

- Legal aid and consumer protection orgs
- Housing advocacy groups
- Higher ed advocacy orgs
- Student-led groups
- Professional associations
- Organized labor groups



### POPULATION FOCUS

Student borrowers at every level (current students, recent graduates, adults, retirees)



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Coordination with national student debt coalitions
- Informational workshops for borrowers
- Annual summit



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Was founded in 2019 to support and pass Assembly Bill 376, which created a CA student borrower bill of rights
- Has also worked under the name California Student Debt Coalition



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [californiaborrowers.org](http://californiaborrowers.org)



**EMAIL:** [samantha.seng@nextgenpolicy.org](mailto:samantha.seng@nextgenpolicy.org)

## FinancialAid 4 All (FA4All) Coalition



**MISSION:** To coordinate and inform the state on FAFSA/CADAA policy updates and implementation



### LEADERSHIP

- uAspire
- EdTrust-West



### MEMBERSHIP

**30+ members, representing:**

- Education advocacy orgs
- Community-based and direct-service orgs
- State governmental agencies
- Local educational agencies (school districts, county offices of ed)



### POPULATION FOCUS

California students with financial need, specifically high school seniors and college students completing FAFSA/CADAA



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Systems change and policy implementation
- Best practices dissemination



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2021 to support Assembly Bill 469 implementation, which requires CA school districts to assist high school seniors with FAFSA/CADAA completion or opt-out
- Evolved into a statewide coordination group, playing a key role in addressing Better FAFSA implementation challenges in 2023-24



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [uaspire.org/fa4allca](https://uaspire.org/fa4allca)



**EMAIL:** [parshank@uaspire.org](mailto:parshank@uaspire.org)

## AB705 Coalition

**MISSION:**

To improve community college student success through equitable course placement policies

**LEADERSHIP**

- Campaign for College Opportunity
- EdTrust-West

**MEMBERSHIP****25+ members, representing:**

- Higher education advocacy orgs
- Research groups
- Student-led groups
- Faculty organizing groups

**POPULATION FOCUS**

California community college students

**GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

California (statewide)

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Research on best practices and student outcomes

**GOOD TO KNOW**

- Founded in 2021
- Was instrumental in passing Assembly Bill 1705 and securing \$64M in state funding for community colleges to implement equitable course completion policies

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WEBSITE:** None



**EMAIL:** [dcastro@edtrustwest.org](mailto:dcastro@edtrustwest.org) | [marisa@collegecampaign.org](mailto:marisa@collegecampaign.org)

## Data for the People Coalition



### MISSION:

To ensure California builds a cradle-to-career longitudinal data system that is centered on achieving equity and the needs of students, parents, and families



### LEADERSHIP

- EdTrust-West
- Young Invincibles



### MEMBERSHIP

#### 50+ members, representing:

- Education advocacy organizations
- Community-based and direct service orgs
- Research groups
- Local educational agencies (school districts, county offices of ed)
- Business groups



### POPULATION FOCUS

All California students from TK-12 to higher education, with a particular focus on students of color, low-income students, and their families



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Monitor Cradle-to-Career governing boards
- Communications and awareness building



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2017
- In 2025, the coalition is reconfiguring its scope to focus on data transparency and coordination issues including but also beyond the C2C data system



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [west.edtrust.org/data-for-the-people](https://west.edtrust.org/data-for-the-people)



**EMAIL:** [rtongilava@edtrustwest.org](mailto:rtongilava@edtrustwest.org)



## Dual Enrollment Coalition of California



### MISSION:

To advance a shared vision of high-quality dual enrollment for equity, in which educators believe in the capacity of all students to succeed



### LEADERSHIP

- Career Ladders Project
- EdTrust-West



### MEMBERSHIP

#### 5+ members, representing:

- Education advocacy organizations
- Regional conveners
- Membership groups for educators and institutions



### POPULATION FOCUS

Practitioners and policymakers serving California dual enrollment students



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Policymaker education and awareness building
- Member education and awareness building



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2023
- Has a 3-member research advisory group to enable dual enrollment research, policy, and practice leaders to interact and learn from each other
- Established clear, shared definitions and terminology around dual enrollment to reduce confusion in the field



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [careerladdersproject.org/resource/dual-enrollment-coalition-of-california](https://careerladdersproject.org/resource/dual-enrollment-coalition-of-california)



**EMAIL:** [info@careerladdersproject.org](mailto:info@careerladdersproject.org)

## Building the California Dream Alliance



**MISSION:** To build a California where everyone has a shot at the California Dream.



### LEADERSHIP

SEIU California



### MEMBERSHIP

**70+ members, representing:**

- Organized labor groups
- Community organizers
- Faith-based orgs
- Advocacy orgs
- Philanthropy
- Academic leaders



### POPULATION FOCUS

Working and low-income Californians



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2016
- Recent higher ed priorities include elevating student loan borrowers' rights and supporting institutional debt protections
- Full list of priorities include broadly shared prosperity and economic security, educational and job opportunities, a clean environment and a healthy planet, quality and comprehensive healthcare for all, reproductive rights, responsive and democratic government, a strong safety net and justice for all



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [cadreambuilder.org](http://cadreambuilder.org)



**EMAIL:** [ltamariz@seiucal.org](mailto:ltamariz@seiucal.org)

## California Coalition for Public Higher Education

**MISSION:**

To protect and advance the University of California, the California State University, and California's Community Colleges as the primary drivers of our state's economy and quality of life

**LEADERSHIP**

Volunteer board of alumni, supporters, and friends of the three segments of public higher education in California

**MEMBERSHIP**

Individual supporters of California public higher education

**POPULATION FOCUS**

The University of California, California State University, and California Community College systems

**GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

California (statewide)

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Actively advocates for, supports, and gives recognition to California's public higher education system among opinion leaders, policymakers, and the general public

**GOOD TO KNOW**

- Founded in 2011
- Has 3 entities for its various activities: a 501(c)(3), a 501(c)(4), and a political action committee

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WEBSITE:** [yestohighered.org](http://yestohighered.org)



**EMAIL:** [jeff@jseymourgroup.com](mailto:jeff@jseymourgroup.com)

## California Higher Education Equity Coalition



**MISSION:** To strengthen the California higher education equity-focused policy field



### LEADERSHIP

- Campaign for College Opportunity
- EdTrust-West



### MEMBERSHIP

7 members, all higher education policy and advocacy organizations



### POPULATION FOCUS

Students of color experiencing poverty



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Research dissemination
- Elected official candidate education
- Higher ed leadership influence



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Originally founded in 2018 to influence the establishment of the California Cradle-to-Career data system
- Current policy priorities include equity, college affordability, higher education coordination, and Cradle to Career data system



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** Nonte



**EMAIL:** [dcastro@edtrustwest.org](mailto:dcastro@edtrustwest.org) | [valeriejohnson@collegecampaign.org](mailto:valeriejohnson@collegecampaign.org)

## College For All Coalition

**MISSION:**

To promote and advocate for full access, full investment, and full equity in public and higher education to benefit all California students

**LEADERSHIP**

Alliance for a Better Community

**MEMBERSHIP**

**20+ members, representing:**

- Direct service organizations
- Education advocacy organizations

**POPULATION FOCUS**

Under-resourced CA high school and college student populations, including students of color, immigrant students, and families from mixed-status households

**GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

California (statewide)

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy

**GOOD TO KNOW**

- Was originally convened by Asian Americans Advancing Justice - SoCal from its inception in 2015 through 2024; ABC transitioned into the lead convener role in 2025
- 2025 policy priorities include (a) supporting undocumented and mixed-status students; (b) on-campus protections for students; (c) student basic needs; and (d) data protections

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WEBSITE:** None



**EMAIL:** [collegeforallcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:collegeforallcoalition@gmail.com)



## Black College & Career Access Network (BCCAN)



### MISSION:

To convene Black-led organizations to advocate collectively for policy and systems change that support Black student success



### LEADERSHIP

BLU Educational Foundation



### MEMBERSHIP

#### 10+ members, representing:

- College access organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Civil rights and social justice groups
- Colleges and college campus groups
- Business groups



### POPULATION FOCUS

Black students in California



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Narrative building and public education



### GOOD TO KNOW

- New entity that is officially launching in 2025



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** In development



**EMAIL:** [info@BLUedfoundation.org](mailto:info@BLUedfoundation.org)

## California Alliance for Student Parent Success



**MISSION:** To support the postsecondary success and comprehensive well-being of California student parents and their families



### LEADERSHIP

- California Competes
- EdTrust-West



### MEMBERSHIP

**20+ members, representing:**

- Student parent advocates (organizations and individuals)
- Education leaders
- Higher ed advocacy orgs



### POPULATION FOCUS

Student parents in California



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Research and analysis
- Capacity building for institutions of higher education
- Community engagement and events



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2023
- Primary co-sponsor of Assembly Bill 2458 (GAINS Act), now law, which empowers CA public colleges and universities to better serve and support student parents to college completion and beyond



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [castudentparentalliance.org](https://castudentparentalliance.org)



**EMAIL:** [StudentParentSuccess@californiacompetes.org](mailto:StudentParentSuccess@californiacompetes.org)

## California Private Proprietary Coalition



**MISSION:** To protect California students from predatory institutions that provide low-quality education and lead to unmanageable loan debt



### LEADERSHIP

The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)



### MEMBERSHIP

**10+ members, representing:**

- Higher education research and policy orgs
- Legal aid and consumer protection orgs
- Civil rights and social justice groups
- Organized labor groups



### POPULATION FOCUS

California's most vulnerable students attending or considering private proprietary colleges, especially the unemployed, veterans, foster youth, BIPOC, and single mothers



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Policymaker and general public education
- State budget advocacy
- Legislative bill advocacy
- Technical assistance to state agencies



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2019
- Core focus on legislative bill packages that protect students from predatory institutions



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** None



**EMAIL:** [california@ticas.org](mailto:california@ticas.org)

## California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition



**MISSION:** To uphold the value that all students in California deserve the opportunity to obtain an affordable college education in their pursuit of the California dream, whether documented or not



### LEADERSHIP

- The Campaign for College Opportunity
- Southern California College Attainment Network (SoCalCAN)



### MEMBERSHIP

#### 50+ members, representing:

- Civil rights and social justice groups
- Business groups
- Student-led groups
- Advocacy orgs
- Community-based orgs
- College campus groups
- Staff of policymakers



### POPULATION FOCUS

Undocumented students in California



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

California (statewide)



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Support for colleges on best practices
- Communications/narrative development



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2017
- Works closely with immigrants rights orgs and higher education institutions
- Was instrumental in establishing Dream Resource Liaisons at all California community college campuses, securing state funding for UC Undocumented Student Programs, and establishing the CA Dream Act Service Incentive Grants



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [collegecampaign.org/campaign/california-undocumented-higher-education-coalition](https://collegecampaign.org/campaign/california-undocumented-higher-education-coalition)



**EMAIL:** [feliza@collegecampaign.org](mailto:feliza@collegecampaign.org)

## 1300 Campaign



**MISSION:** To develop, advance, and establish the deep-rooted change necessary to send more young men of color to the University of California and California State University



### LEADERSHIP

- Improve Your Tomorrow
- My Brother's Keeper Sacramento Collaborative



### MEMBERSHIP

**30+ members, representing:**

- School district leadership
- Local elected officials
- UC, CSU, and CCC campus leaders
- Community-based orgs



### POPULATION FOCUS

Young men of color in the seven highest-need communities in Sacramento County impacted by race-based disparities in education, health, economic conditions



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide policy advocacy initiatives
- Sacramento County for programmatic and local accountability work



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy for policies that support postsecondary success for young men of color
- Cross-institutional collaboration and investment
- Place-based mentorships
- Data-informed local accountability



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2020 as an initiative of The Center at Sierra Health Foundation and My Brother's Keeper Sacramento
- Seeks to enroll an additional 1300 young men of color at California State University, Sacramento and University of California, Davis by 2025



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [1300campaign.org](https://1300campaign.org)



**EMAIL:** [info@1300campaign.org](mailto:info@1300campaign.org)



## The Campaign for College Opportunity Regional Hubs



**MISSION:** To advance equitable, student-centered higher education policies by fostering regional collaboration, strengthening advocacy networks, and leveraging data-driven strategies to drive systemic change



### LEADERSHIP

The Campaign for College Opportunity



### MEMBERSHIP

**50+ members across all regions, representing:**

- Civil rights organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Business groups
- Organized labor groups
- Student leaders
- Higher education institutions
- Policymakers



### POPULATION FOCUS

Students and student leaders whose needs and voices are central to shaping equitable policies



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide work
- Los Angeles, Inland Empire, and Central Valley for regional work



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Regional convenings
- Policy advocacy and coalition-building
- Dissemination of statewide data for local use
- Partner-led knowledge sharing and strategy alignment



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2018
- Empowers members to address regional challenges, influence institutional reforms, and advocate for policies that promote student success
- Shifted in 2025 to more data-driven, region-specific models, and is considering adding a Silicon Valley hub



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [collegecampaign.org](https://collegecampaign.org)



**EMAIL:** [amanda@collegecampaign.org](mailto:amanda@collegecampaign.org)

## Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC)



**MISSION:** To increase the Central Valley's certificate and degree attainment rates



### LEADERSHIP

Staffed membership organization with a Board of Directors composed of Central Valley college presidents and chancellors



### MEMBERSHIP

**28 members, representing:**

- Non-profit postsecondary institutions in the Central Valley



### POPULATION FOCUS

State, regional, and local leadership in higher education and policy



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide work
- Central Valley for regional work



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Regional convening on equity and student success in postsecondary education
- Policy implementation
- Policymaker education



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2002
- Focuses on intersegmental higher education issues that impact the region, including dual enrollment, transfer, and workforce
- Hosts an annual Higher Education Summit attended by leaders across the region and state



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [cvhec.org](http://cvhec.org)



**EMAIL:** [cvhecinfo@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:cvhecinfo@mail.fresnostate.edu)

## Los Angeles Chamber Education & Workforce Council



**MISSION:** To improve the alignment of curricula and skill development between businesses and educational institutions from early childhood through adulthood and continuing education



### LEADERSHIP

Staffed council with a six-member board



### MEMBERSHIP

**1400+ (total for the LA Chamber) LA-region based leaders representing:**

- Business
- Education
- Nonprofit
- City government



### POPULATION FOCUS

Learners of all ages in the LA Region



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide work
- LA Region (Los Angeles, Ventura, San Bernardino, and Inland Empire area) for regional work



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Member capacity and awareness building on key issues



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Focuses on all stages of cradle to career
- Hosts an annual Education Summit to bring together business and education institution CEOs to learn about each other's sectors' needs



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [lachamber.com/pages/publicpolicyadvocacy](https://lachamber.com/pages/publicpolicyadvocacy)



**EMAIL:** [jfinney-conlon@lachamber.com](mailto:jfinney-conlon@lachamber.com)

## Los Angeles Compact



**MISSION:** To close the education and workforce gaps in the Los Angeles region caused by systemic inequities and racism



### LEADERSHIP

Unite-LA



### MEMBERSHIP

**15+ LA region-based leaders representing:**

- K12 education institutions
- Institutions of higher education
- Economic development groups
- Elected officials



### POPULATION FOCUS

Youth in the Los Angeles region



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide policy advocacy and systems change initiatives
- Los Angeles region for programmatic work and policy implementation



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- Statewide budget advocacy
- Programmatic, policy implementation, and systems change initiatives



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2008
- Focuses on K12, higher education, and workforce
- Uses a collective impact model to build consensus among partners and align sectors



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [lacom pact.org](https://lacom pact.org)



**EMAIL:** [lacom pact@unitela.com](mailto:lacom pact@unitela.com)

## Northern California College Promise Coalition (NCCPC)



**MISSION:** To make systemic change by advocating for and/or directly implementing solutions centering first-generation, low-income, and multiply marginalized and underrepresented students



### LEADERSHIP

Staffed membership organization with a steering committee and advisory council



### MEMBERSHIP

**70+ Northern California and Central Valley-based student-serving programs and orgs representing:**

- Promise programs
- College access orgs
- Financial aid programs
- Career support programs
- Citywide programs
- Ed-tech orgs
- Advocacy groups
- Higher education institutions
- Individual advocates



### POPULATION FOCUS

First-generation, low-income, and multiply marginalized and underrepresented students



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- Policymaker education and awareness
- Member education and activation
- Policy implementation
- Stakeholder convenings
- Program pilots and partnerships



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide work
- Northern California and Central Valley for regional work



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:**  
[norcalpromisecoalition.org](http://norcalpromisecoalition.org)



**EMAIL:**  
[admin@norcalpromisecoalition.org](mailto:admin@norcalpromisecoalition.org)



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2019
- As a cradle to career focused entity, also houses the California Child Savings Account Coalition
- Served as lead sponsor of Assembly Bill 288, the California Ban on Scholarship Displacement Act



## Southern California College Attainment Network (SoCalCAN)



**MISSION:** To increase the rate at which underrepresented students access and complete post-secondary education



### LEADERSHIP

Staffed membership organization with a steering committee



### MEMBERSHIP

**120+ Southern California orgs, representing:**

- College access organizations
- Youth-serving organizations
- College outreach programs
- Charter management organizations
- Research college centers



### POPULATION FOCUS

Low-income and underrepresented students in Southern California



### GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- California for statewide work
- Southern California for regional work



### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Legislative bill advocacy
- State budget advocacy
- Sharing effective practices
- Collaborating on initiatives with members



### GOOD TO KNOW

- Founded in 2005
- Current policy priorities include advancing policies to make college more affordable, fulfill basic needs, defend education as a civil right, and improve the college to career connection
- Hosts student advocacy programs to uplift student voices and stay up to date on student experiences



### CONTACT INFORMATION



**WEBSITE:** [socalcollegeaccess.org](https://socalcollegeaccess.org)



**EMAIL:** [membership@socalcan.org](mailto:membership@socalcan.org)

**Note:** Coalitions working on adjacent issues bring new networks that can amplify higher education advocacy by aligning it with broader social movements. The coalitions listed here are focused on issues adjacent to higher education that present valuable opportunities for collaboration and alignment.

## Alliance for Boys and Men of Color



**MISSION:** To advance race and gender justice by transforming policies that are failing boys and men of color and their families, and building communities full of opportunity



**WEBSITE:** <https://abmoc.org/>

## California Black Power Network



**MISSION:** To Ensure Black Californians have the resources, policies, supports, and living conditions needed to thrive.



**WEBSITE:** <https://blackpowernetwork.org/>

## California Cradle to Career Coalition



**MISSION:** To push for policies that build the cradle to career movement and create long-lasting, anti-poverty place-based initiatives and community solutions that benefit everyone no matter their background, skin color, gender identity, sexuality, class, age, or ability



**WEBSITE:** <https://cac2c.org/>

## California EDGE Coalition



**MISSION:** To advance state policy and investments that create and sustain pathways into the middle class for all Californians, including individuals facing barriers to economic and social mobility



**WEBSITE:** <https://www.caedge.org/>

## California Racial Equity Coalition



**MISSION:** To institutionalize racial equity in all state government processes, practices, and policies



**WEBSITE:** <https://www.nextgenpolicy.org/priorities/racial-equity-commission/>

## Children's Movement of California



**MISSION:** To put kids first in California policymaking



**WEBSITE:** <https://www.childrennow.org/the-childrens-movement/>

## Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations



**MISSION:** To assist Californians living in poverty by providing technical support to legal service providers



**WEBSITE:** <https://www.ccwro.org/>

## End Child Poverty California Coalition



**MISSION:** To advocate for progressive and justice-centered legislation, public investments, and equitable implementation of programs and services that have transformative impacts on families and communities to end child and family poverty in California



**WEBSITE:** <https://www.endchildpovertyca.org/campaigns-coalitions/ecpca-coalition/>



**MANDALA  
STRATEGIES**

