

Financial Aid Facts at California Community Colleges

March 2010

the institute for
college
access & success

While California community college (CCC) system fees are much lower than tuition at community colleges in other states or other colleges in California, the total cost of attending a CCC — which includes books, housing, transportation, and food — is much higher than most people realize. The illusion of low cost may lead CCC students to forgo valuable grants and loans that could help them work less, study more, and complete a degree, certificate, or transfer.

CCC students are much less likely to apply for federal financial aid than community college students in the rest of the nation. These untapped resources — worth *hundreds of millions of dollars* per year — could go a long way towards helping students succeed while supporting California's economy. However even when CCC students applied for federal aid in 2007-08, they still had more "unmet need" than students at the state's four-year colleges.¹

CCC Students Less Likely to Apply for Federal Aid than Peers in Other States

Only one third (33%) of CCC students apply for federal financial aid, compared to nearly half (46%) of community college students in other states. Even full-time students and Pell-eligible students in the CCCs are less likely than those in other states to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Hundreds of Millions of Dollars in Grants Left on the Table²

In 2007-08, an estimated 500,000 CCC students were likely eligible for federal or institutional grant aid but did not apply for it, and about half of them may have been able to receive both. If *all* of the likely Pell-eligible CCC students had applied for federal aid, up to *one-half billion more dollars* could have flowed into California during 2009-10.

Even if Pell-eligible CCC students only applied for federal financial aid *at the same rate* as their counterparts in the rest of the nation, the increase in Pell Grants could still have been over *\$100 million* during 2009-10. Pell Grants for CCC students, whose fees are covered by institutional grants, stimulate the state's economy as students use the grants to pay for textbooks, rent, gas, food, and other necessities.

Within California, CCCs receive less funding for financial aid administration than other public colleges.

CCCs have just \$40 per student to conduct outreach, provide information and assistance, and help students complete the federal aid application, compared to \$77 per student at CSUs and \$165 at UCs.³

¹ All of the student information and statistics in this fact sheet are from the most recent federal data available: the 2007-08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, a division of the U.S. Department of Education. NPSAS is based on a sample of students and is representative of students nationally and in six states. Figures cited are estimates rounded to the nearest dollar or percent.

² Projections are based on application rates of Pell-eligible students in 2007-08.

³ California Community College Chancellor's Office. May 2009. *Report to the Legislature on Increases in Capacity and Participation for Student Financial Aid in California Community Colleges for 2006-07 and 2007-08.*

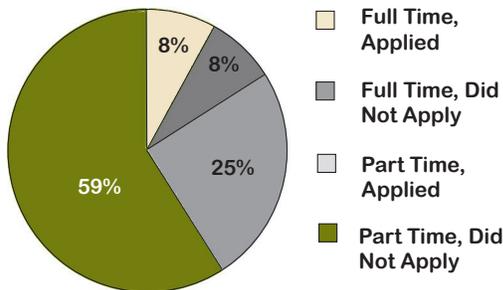
Even for Full-Time Students Who Apply, Aid is Insufficient⁴

Despite low fees, the total cost of attending a CCC is substantial. The total cost of attending college includes not just tuition and fees but also textbooks, transportation, room and board, and other education-related expenses.

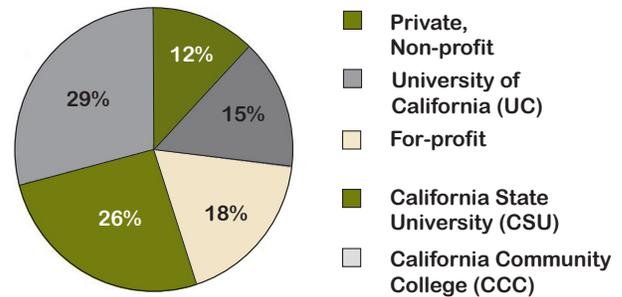
Average total college costs in California, by type of school (2007-08):

Community colleges:	\$10,372
Public four-year colleges:	\$18,346
Private nonprofit four-year colleges:	\$40,168

Aid Application and Attendance Status of CCC Students



California Full-Time Aid Applicants, by School Type



Relatively few CCC students attend full-time and apply for federal aid, but a lot of full-time aid applicants attend CCCs. CCC students who both attend school full time and apply for federal financial aid represent a relatively small share of all CCC students (8%). However, because so many students in California attend community colleges, they amount to about 29 percent of all full-time aid applicants in the state.⁵

Full-time CCC students are just as likely to need financial aid as full-time four-year college students. Eighty-six percent of full-time CCC students have documented need for financial aid, compared to 87% of their counterparts at public four-year colleges and 89% at private four-year colleges in the state.

Almost half (47%) of full-time aid applicants at CCCs have no resources to pay for college, compared to 25% of full-time public four-year college students and 17% of full-time private four-year college students in the state.

Despite high levels of financial need, CCC students receive much smaller state and institutional grants than students at four-year colleges. While a large share of full-time CCC students receives institutional grants, the amounts are much smaller than at other types of colleges. A far smaller share of CCC students gets state grants, and those who do also get much smaller amounts than those in other sectors.

State and Institutional Grants for Full-Time Federal Aid Applicants with Financial Need				
	Share Receiving Institutional Grants	Average Institutional Grant	Share Receiving State Grants	Average State Grant
Public 2-year	88%	\$612	20%	\$1,520
Public 4-year	56%	\$3,612	46%	\$4,686
Private 4-year	70%	\$10,700	36%	\$7,786

Full-time CCC students who apply for federal aid and have financial need are at least as likely to receive a federal Pell Grant as full-time four-year college students, and recipients receive comparable Pell Grant amounts across sectors.

Full-time community college students are most likely to have “unmet need” even after receiving all available aid.

- Of full-time students with documented need, 90% at CCCs still have financial need after all aid is awarded, compared to 64% at public four-year schools and 56% at private four-year schools in the state.
- Students with documented need at CCCs have an average gap of \$5,892 after all aid, while those at public four-year schools have an average gap of \$5,146 and those at private four-year schools have an average gap of \$12,900.

⁴All of the statistics in the remainder of this fact sheet are for full-time students who apply for federal financial aid, and compare these CCC students to students at other types of colleges in California.

⁵ Due to NPSAS survey design, the CCC populations represented in the two pie charts are slightly different.