

PRIMARY CHALLENGES TO RECOVERY

Inadequate Job Training

Skills2Compete is a non-partisan campaign to ensure the U.S. workforce has the skills needed to meet on-going business demands. Their report predicts 2.7 million “middle skill” job openings for Californians in the next decade. Middle skill jobs require post-high school education but less than a bachelor’s degree.

Skills2Compete-California Campaign. 2009. California’s Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Meeting the demands of a 21st century economy. http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete_forgottenjobs_ca_2009-10.pdf

Inadequate Workforce Readiness Skills

According to research by The Conference Board, employers have identified deficits among the workforce, primarily in writing, oral communication, critical thinking and problem solving skills. Writing, in particular, is a major problem even among college graduates. The Conference Board is a not-for-profit organization that conducts research and disseminates information to help businesses strengthen their performance.

The Conference Board, Inc. (2006). Are they really ready to work?: Employers’ perspectives on the basic knowledge and applied skills of new entrants to the 21st century U.S. workforce. <http://www.conference-board.org/publications/publicationdetail.cfm?publicationid=1218>

Inadequate College Degrees

California ranks 18th in sending high school graduates directly to 2-year or 4-year colleges as reported by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). New York ranks the highest and Washington is in last place. PPIC is a private operating foundation with a mission “to inform and improve public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research on major social, economic, and political issues.”

Johnson, H. (2009). Educating California: Choices for the Future. http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_609HJR.pdf

“Tonight, I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma. And dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It’s not just quitting on yourself, it’s quitting on your country; and this country needs and values the talents of every American.”

-- President Barack Obama, February 2009

The Solution to the Barriers to California’s Economic Recovery:

The California Community Colleges

What Do Key Reports Indicate?

KEY REPORT FINDINGS

- As of 2007, 49 percent of all California jobs are middle-skill jobs but only 39 percent of the state’s workers fill them. This gap will widen dramatically in the years to come.
- Middle skill positions with the largest number of job openings include computer technicians, installation and repair workers, health care professionals, and emergency first responders.
- Positions predicted to increase by 20 percent or more are dental hygienists, respiratory therapists, emergency medical technicians and industrial machinery mechanics.
- A trained workforce in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is key to global competitiveness.
- Among California’s STEM occupations, 44 percent of the jobs are middle-skill occupations.
- By 2016 more than 75 percent of California’s workforce will require some education or training beyond high school.
- 400 employers across the U.S. completed a Workforce Readiness Report Card for each of the educational levels (High school, 2-year and 4-year) on new workforce participants’ basic and applied entry-level skills as they pertain to professionalism/work ethic, oral and written communications, teamwork or collaboration and critical thinking/problem solving. The table below shows where employers reported deficiencies in key areas as related to education level.
- By 2025, 41 percent of jobs will require at least a bachelor’s degree, but only 35 percent of California adults will have college degrees .
- 1 in 4 California high school students never graduate. Latino students have an even higher dropout rate – 1 in 3.
- By 2025, adults with a high school diploma or less will outnumber jobs available for that level of education.
- Demand for higher-skilled workers, coupled with an under-educated workforce, means increased need for social services.
- Corporations searching for higher trained skilled workers will be less likely to establish firms in this state.
- 35 percent of Californians aged 55-59 are college graduates compared to only 26 percent of those aged 25-29.

Percent of Employees Deemed Deficient in Key Areas (by Educational Level)

Education Level	Written Communication	Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving	Oral Communication
High School	80.9	69.6	52.7
2-year	47.3	22.8	21.3
4-year	27.8	No deficit	No deficit

THE SOLUTION: COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- » Occupational demands of the future will require skills obtained through well-funded post-secondary education and training.
- » Occupations that require only an associate’s degree or a post-secondary vocational award are actually projected to grow slightly faster than occupations requiring a bachelor’s degree or more.
- » The California Community Colleges are the largest workforce-training provider in the state.
- » The California Community Colleges provide basic skills and career technical education through credit and noncredit programs.
- » Students who received a degree or certificate from a California community college in 2000-01 saw a 61 percent increase in their wages three years after receiving a certificate or degree.
- » California’s community colleges play a significant role in workforce training efforts, producing 70 percent of all nurses and 80 percent of all California’s first responders.
- » Noncredit courses and programs in the community colleges provide a significant entry point for occupational education and training.