

Directions:

1. Show evidence of a close reading.
2. Answer the questions at the end of the text.
3. Write a one-page reflection in your WN.

California Faces Shortage of College Graduates for Workforce, Study Finds

A report says that in 2025, 35% of the state's working-age adults will hold a four-year degree, while a college education will be required for at least 41% of job-holders.

With college enrollment rates among the lowest in the nation, California will face a shortage of 1 million college graduates needed for the state's workforce in 2025, a report released Thursday warned.

Unless policy changes are made, only 35% of the state's working-age adults will hold a four-year degree that year, even as a college education will be required for at least 41% of job-holders, the study by the Public Policy Institute of California found.

The state's three public college systems -- the California Community Colleges, California State University and the University of California -- educate 2.3 million students annually, and an additional 360,000 students attend private colleges and universities. But the numbers mask a huge gap between the state's youth population and its college-going and graduation rates, the report found.

Only 56% of California's high school graduates, as opposed to 62% nationwide, proceed directly to college. The state also ranked comparatively low in other measures, including its share of 25- to 34-year-olds with at least a bachelor's degree and the number of college students who graduated within five years.

Many of the state's college students begin at two-year community colleges, but most do not make the transition to four-year institutions, the study found. Although some are seeking certificates, remedial learning or other skills, just 20% to 30% of those with a demonstrated drive to get a bachelor's degree actually transfer to four-year colleges, it said.

And although graduation rates at UC are high, only about half of Cal State's students earn a bachelor's degree within six years, the report said. The state's tuition rates and fees remain among the lowest in the nation, but living expenses and other costs force many Cal State students to work while in school, delaying graduation.

Cal State spokeswoman Claudia Keith said the system has launched several initiatives to improve transfer and graduation rates. Over the last 15 years, California community college transfers to Cal State campuses have risen 34% to 54,971 annually, and transfer applications for fall 2009 are up 13.7% from the same time a year ago, she said.

The report called on educators and politicians to address the enrollment, transfer and graduation issues to try to close the expected gap.

Source: Gale Holland/Los Angeles Times, 4/16/09

Possible topics for your WN:

- Pick a "hot spot" from this article and reflect.
- Why are the college graduation rates so low in California? What are the contributing factors?
- What does this article say to you regarding your level of college preparation?