



Did You Know?

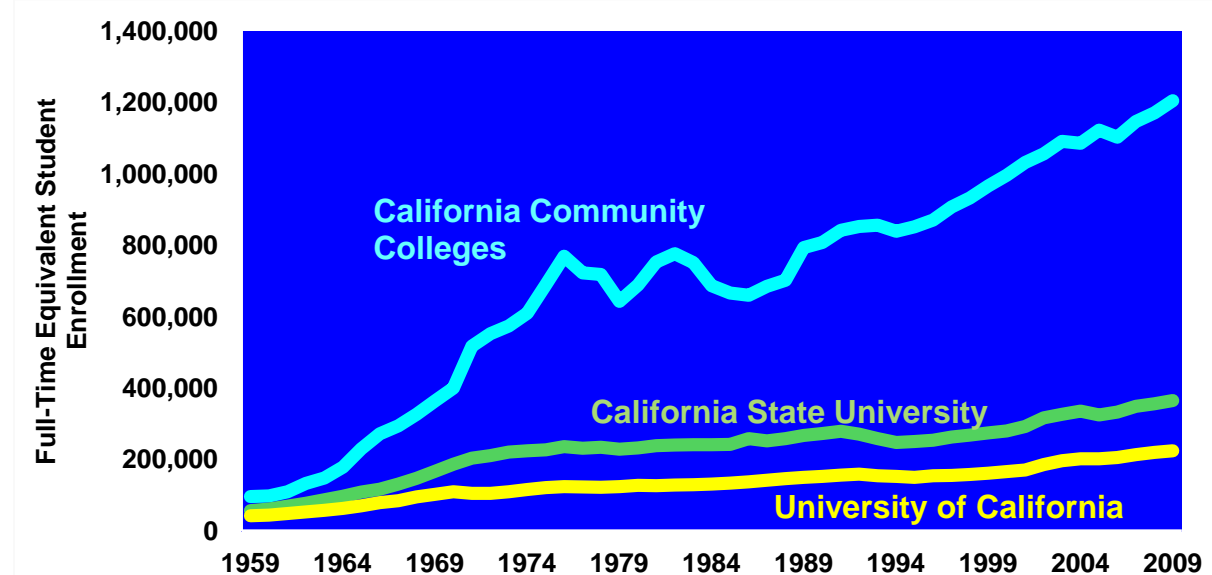
This issue's topic: Number of Undergraduate Degrees Awarded in California and California's Master Plan for Higher Education

Overview: The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC, Johnson, 2009) estimates that California will face a shortfall of one million Bachelor (BA) Degrees by 2025. Specifically, 41% of the jobs in California in 2025 will require at least a BA Degree but only 35% of California adults will have a college degree. In 2009 California produced 198,620 undergraduate degrees (Douglas, 2010b). In order to meet the workforce demand by 2020 California needs to produce a yearly total of 330,000 degrees, a 40% increase. The purpose of this "Did You Know?" is to highlight the relationship between the number of undergraduate degrees awarded in California and the California Master Plan for Higher Education. Equally important, some of the proposed strategies for increasing the number of degrees awarded in California and how these might impact community colleges are introduced.

California Master Plan for Higher Education: The California Master Plan for Higher Education was developed in only six months in 1960, some of which was signed into statute by Governor Pat Brown. One of the intended functions of the plan was to promote universal access to higher education for California citizens (Geiser & Atkinson, 2010). When the plan was developed in 1960, projections indicated that state revenues would not be able to fund the growth in enrollments that was expected from 1960 to 1975. Accordingly, the developers of the plan limited access to four-year institutions by reducing the pool eligible to enter the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) schools. The percent of high school graduates eligible for UC schools was reduced from the top 15% to the top 12.5%, and from the top 50% to the top 33% for CSU schools.

Figure 1 illustrates how the California Master Plan for Higher Education impacted the higher education enrollments in California. In 1960 the enrollments were fairly equal between 2 and 4-year institutions. Reducing the percent of students eligible for 4-year institutions led to the restriction of access to 4-year institutions and increased the enrollments at 2-year institutions (Geiser & Atkinson, 2010). Accordingly, the enrollments at four-year institutions had a slow to moderate increase, and the enrollments at community colleges dramatically increased.

Figure 1: Full-Time Equivalent Student Enrollments by Year and Segment in California from 1959 to 2009.

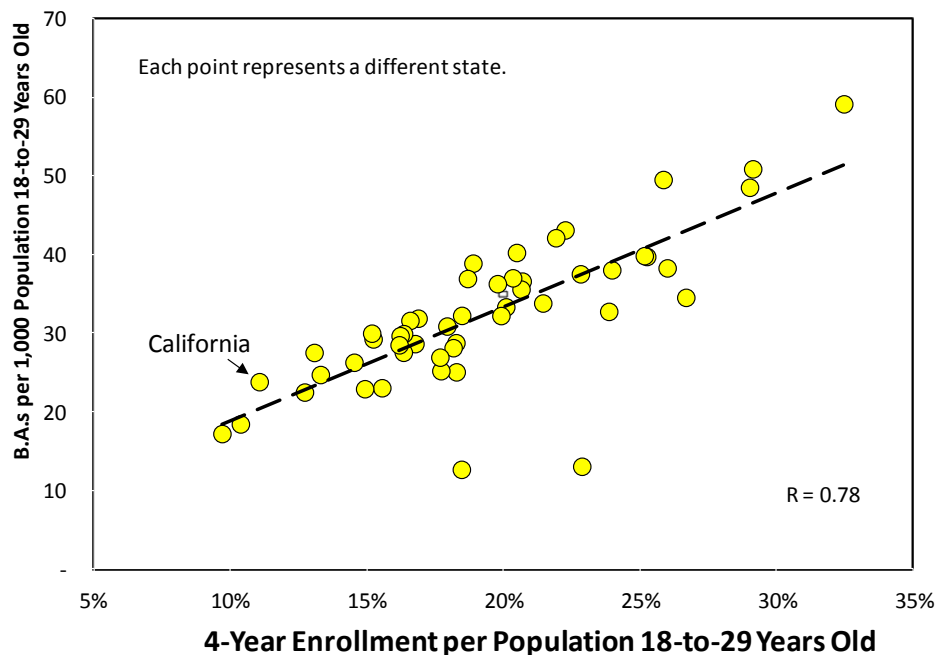


Source: Geiser & Atkinson, 2010; California Higher Education Policy Center, 1997; CPEC, 2009.

Correlation between 4-Year Enrollment and BA Degree Attainment: The scatter plot in Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the 4-year enrollment in each state and the number of BA degrees awarded in each state (Geiser & Atkinson, 2010). The results strongly indicate that states with a higher proportion of 4-year enrollment are more likely to award more BA degrees. Moreover, California has one of the lowest proportions of

4-year enrollment and one of the lowest numbers of students earning BA degrees. In addition, California ranks 42nd in the total number of degrees awarded among 18 – 29 year olds.

Figure 2: Four-Year Enrollment per Population 18 to 29 years old by the number of BAs per 1,000 population 18 to 29 Years old for each State.



Source: Geiser and Atkinson, 2010.

Strategies to Increase Capacity: California needs to dramatically increase the number of students who receive BA degrees each year in order to meet the job market demand for an educated population (Geiser & Atkinson, 2010). Three strategies to increase the number of BA degrees received each year are briefly explored in this brief. For a more in-depth illustration of the challenges and strategies to increase capacity please refer to the references.

First, in order to build or expand 4-year campuses to award more BA degrees the share of high school graduates needs to increase from 12.5% to 15% for UC schools and from 33.3% to 40% for CSU schools (Geiser & Atkinson, 2010). The cost of building or expanding 4-year campuses is conservatively estimated at a \$1.6 billion increase in General Fund expenditures. The second option would be to allow community colleges to offer 4-year degrees. Some states have already begun to do this. For instance, community colleges in Florida currently offer BA degrees in over 100 majors. A similar model is the University Center Model, which is where 2-year and 4-year institutions collaborate to offer upper-division coursework at community colleges. Finally, the third option would involve converting 10 – 15 community colleges into 4-year university branch campuses. This option is estimated to be the least expensive and would allow community colleges to determine how much local control to maintain over developmental and occupational program offerings.

References:

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- Geiser, S., & Atkinson, R. C. (2010). Beyond the master plan: The case for restructuring baccalaureate education in California. *Center for Studies in Higher Education (CSHE)*. Retrieved October 20, 2011 from <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/publications.php?id=369>
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