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California's college system in decline, study finds

The state no longer is a leader in such areas as affordability, preparation of high school graduates and college-going rates, according to researchers at Cal State Sacramento.

July 21, 2011 | By Carla Rivera, Los Angeles Times

California's higher education system is in decline, with fewer students able to afford college, falling college participation rates and dwindling state support, according to a study released Wednesday.

The report suggests that the state, once celebrated nationally for its three-tiered system of public colleges, has lost status as a leader in such areas as affordability, preparation of high school graduates, college-going rates and investment in higher education. The analysis was by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy at Cal State Sacramento.

"This report demonstrates the consequences of resting on reputations and policies of yesteryear," the study concludes. "California is nowhere near the leader on the measures of higher education performance that the nation's governors and educational leaders have been tracking for over a decade. We are average, at best, and trending downward."

Among the findings:

- California ranks last among states in funding per college student from state appropriations and tuition and fees.
- Tuition and fee increases exceed the national average rate of increase.
- The college-going rate of high school graduates rose from 53% to 58% between 2003 and 2007 but dropped back to 53% in 2009.
- California ranks 41st in the number of bachelor's degrees awarded for every 100 high school graduates six years after graduation.

Called "Consequences of Neglect," the study concludes that the state has failed to develop policies or a vision that will allow it to compete nationally and internationally in producing an educated population.

Most alarming, it finds a trend of each working-age generation becoming less educated than the preceding, with potentially devastating consequences.

"We need to recognize that there are public benefits to higher education," said coauthor Colleen Moore, a research specialist at the Institute. "If we don't, the effects will be fewer high-tech companies wanting to come to California, lower incomes and lower tax revenues. Those things dramatically affect society as a whole."

Document: [Read the full report](#)

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