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January 15, 2021

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RE: California State University – Graduation Initiative 2025 Progress: Student Success Activities and Opportunities

This report provides an update on the progress of Graduation Initiative 2025 for the 2019-20 academic year. Specifically, it highlights some of the many ways in which the state's investment of \$75 million was allocated, and how resources were stewarded to support student success across the 23 CSU campuses.

As Graduation Initiative 2025 reached its halfway point in 2020, it did so against the backdrop of unprecedented challenges including the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic distress and social unrest. This report will provide insight into how CSU faculty, staff and students rose to meet the moment and continued to persevere towards the initiative's guiding goals of increasing graduation rates and closing achievement gaps. It will also highlight some of the many best practices found

CSU Campuses

Bakersfield
Channel Islands
Chico
Dominguez Hills
East Bay

Fresno
Fullerton
Humboldt
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Maritime Academy

Monterey Bay
Northridge
Pomona
Sacramento
San Bernardino
San Diego

San Francisco
San José
San Luis Obispo
San Marcos
Sonoma
Stanislaus

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throughout the system, many which have been adopted at the campus level – though with different program names or customized to fit specific needs of a region. As illustrated in the report’s curated examples, CSU campuses invested in six areas identified as key to student success: academic preparation; enrollment management; financial support; data-informed decision-making; student engagement and well-being and reduction of administrative barriers.

Despite the pandemic, the CSU awarded nearly 110,000 bachelor’s degrees in 2019-20 – representing the highest number in its history and an increase of more than 23,000 graduates compared to 2015. And as student enrollment trended downward nationally this past fall, the CSU welcomed the largest student body in its 60-year history and achieved a record retention rate, with 85.5 percent of first-year students returning for a second year. Graduation rates for first-time and transfer students also remained strong, with rates increasing across all but one metric (for which it remained unchanged from the previous year). This report showcases a substantial return on the financial investment in Graduation Initiative 2025, and demonstrates why continued investment by the Legislature and the CSU is essential to building the future workforce needed to drive innovation and economic recovery in California and nationwide.

This report is designed to fulfill provision 1.3 of Item 6610-001-0001 of the Budget Act of 2019, which requires the CSU to report to the Legislature no later than January 15, 2021, regarding:

1. The amount each CSU campus spent on the Graduation Initiative 2025 in 2019-20;
2. How specifically these funds were spent in 2019-20;
3. How these spending activities are linked to research on best practices for student success;
4. Campus data indicating whether these activities are achieving their desired effect;
5. How each campus is working to close the achievement gap for low-income students, historically underrepresented students and first-generation students; and
6. Growth in management, faculty and support staff positions in 2019-20 when compared to 2018-19 and how this employee growth advances student success.

Should you have any questions about this report, please contact Assistant Vice Chancellor for Advocacy and State Relations Nichole Muñoz-Murillo at (916) 445-5983.

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Sincerely,



Steven Relyea (Jan 15, 2021 10:23 PST)

Steve Relyea
Executive Vice Chancellor and
Chief Financial Officer

SR:dr

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Graduation Initiative 2025 Progress

Student Success Activities and Opportunities

Executive Summary

Although 2020 was a year of unprecedented challenges, the California State University (CSU) remained undeterred in its commitment to Graduation Initiative 2025 and the success of its students, faculty and staff. This signature initiative, launched in 2016, seeks to increase graduation rates for all students systemwide as well as eliminate equity gaps in degree completion for underserved student populations in order to meet California's emerging workforce needs and produce graduates prepared to contribute to their communities.

This Graduation Initiative 2025 report provides an overview of continued progress towards these goals against the backdrop of a global pandemic, economic distress and racial injustice unrest. Despite these challenges, the CSU achieved significant milestones and demonstrated progress towards student success, including reaching all-time highs in fall 2020 enrollment, in retention rate of new first-year students who enrolled in fall 2019 and in overall graduation rates. These accomplishments are due largely to the dedication of CSU students, faculty and staff complemented by consistent and ongoing investment of resources in student success. Examples from CSU campuses are provided throughout, with many representing innovative solutions created to meet students' immediate needs in this time of crisis. As required by the Budget Act of 2019, this report addresses the following items:

The amount each CSU campus spent on Graduation Initiative 2025 in 2019-20

In 2019-20, the state provided \$75 million in new funding in support of Graduation Initiative 2025. These allocations are listed by campus on page 5.

How specifically these funds were spent in 2019-20

Allocations aligned with the six operational priorities for Graduation Initiative 2025: academic preparation, enrollment management, financial support, data-informed decision making, student engagement and well-being and reduction of administrative barriers.

How these spending activities are linked to research on best practices for student success

Investments in Graduation Initiative 2025 aligned with national research regarding best and promising practices across all operational priorities. This report includes several research-based examples of CSU programs and policies derived from these practices.

Campus data indicating whether these activities are achieving their desired effect

Despite numerous challenges facing CSU students, faculty and staff during 2020, the CSU saw improvement in five of six degree completion metrics attributed to Graduation Initiative 2025. Those metrics include graduation rates for first-year and transfer students as well as equity gaps among student populations. Moreover, despite the pandemic, the CSU awarded nearly 110,000 bachelor's degrees in 2019-20 – representing the highest number in its history and an increase of more than 23,000 graduates compared to 2015.

How each campus is working to close the achievement gap for low-income students, historically underrepresented students and first-generation students

Eliminating equity gaps remains a key priority for all 23 CSU campuses. In 2020, the system achieved an overall narrowing of the gap between Pell-eligible students and their peers to 9.2 percentage points.

When comparing underrepresented minority groups with their peers, the gap decreased to 10.5 percentage points. Examples of specific campus actions are detailed throughout this report, and are specifically highlighted beginning on page 23.

Growth in management, faculty and support staff positions in 2019-20 and how this employee growth advances student success

CSU campuses continue to use a portion of Graduation Initiative 2025 funding for hiring that directly impacts student success goals. Due to extenuating circumstances related to the pandemic, employee growth was limited in 2020. Additional information is provided on page 30.

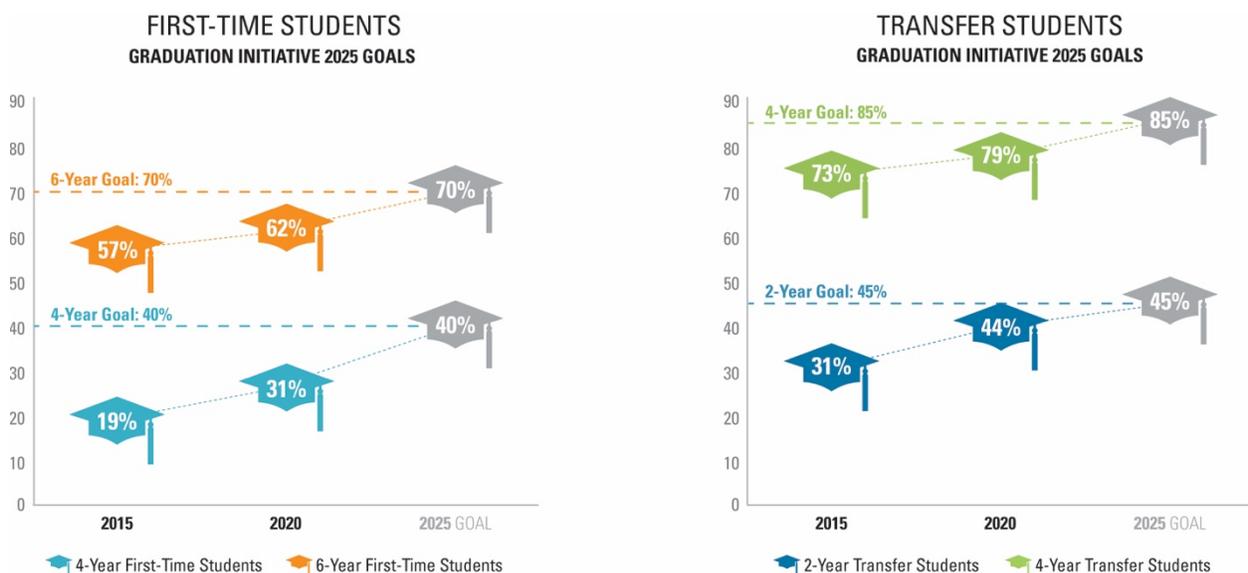
1 Introduction

“Our moral imperative is to create a vibrant and welcoming space where any student – regardless of income, background, gender, race, ethnicity or status – has the equal opportunity to earn the proven, lifelong benefits of a CSU degree.” – Chancellor Timothy P. White, Fall 2020

As the nation’s largest and most diverse four-year public university, the California State University (CSU) opens doors to educational opportunities for nearly half a million students each year. Six years ago, the CSU launched Graduation Initiative 2025 as a bold and ambitious signature program created to elevate a generation of students and place a CSU degree within their reach. Through the collective and unwavering efforts of the CSU’s 23 campuses, and notable investment by California, this initiative has achieved significant progress as it reaches its midway point in 2021.

The CSU is pleased to report that graduation rates continued to rise systemwide, and the number of graduates who will meet the state’s projected deficit of 1.1 million bachelor’s degree holders by 2030 (pre-pandemic) continues to grow. In 2019-20, despite the challenges brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 110,000 CSU students earned a bachelor’s degree and joined the ranks of nearly four million CSU alumni worldwide. This record number of degrees represents 23,000 more graduates compared to 2015, the year before the initiative was launched. And as student enrollment trended downward nationally this past fall, due in part to the disruption of the pandemic, the CSU welcomed the largest student body in its 60-year history and achieved a record retention rate, with 85.5 percent of first-year students returning for a second year. As recognized by U.S. News Best Colleges, many CSU campuses rank among the top universities for social mobility.

As evidenced in the graphics below, the CSU continues its consistent progress towards increasing graduation rates for first-time and transfer students. With the sufficient and recurring annual investment of new general funds to grow enrollment and support student success, Graduation Initiative 2025 will contribute significantly to the CSU’s ability to meet its share of the projected workforce needed to help drive innovation and economic recovery in California and nationwide.



One of Graduation Initiative 2025's most ambitious and important goals is eliminating equity gaps between students whom the CSU has designated as underrepresented minorities and their peers. Systemwide, the gap between Pell-recipient students and their peers narrowed one percentage point from 10.2 to 9.2. The CSU also achieved a narrowing of the equity gap for students who identify as African-American, Native American or Latinx from 11.1 percentage points to 10.5 percentage points. It is important to note that a number of campuses continue to make substantial progress regionally as well. By way of example, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) saw the equity gap for underrepresented minority students narrow from 12.6 percentage points to 8.5 percentage points and Pell-recipient students from 10.9 percentage points to 8.5 percentage points in fall 2020 as compared to fall 2019.

The CSU's student success and equity efforts have been significantly bolstered through the regular and systemic sharing of best practices among its 23 campuses. In particular, Graduation Initiative 2025 has helped to infuse a collaborative culture of improvement in which campuses are afforded ample opportunities to share proven strategies for increasing student success and closing equity gaps. This collaboration happens both formally and informally. Forums such as Graduation Initiative 2025 Symposium provides CSU faculty, staff, administrators and students an opportunity to connect with each other as well as thought leaders to engage in meaningful conversations regarding degree completion and student success. Due to the pandemic, the symposium was convened online last fall. Evaluation is also an essential factor in developing best practices, and the CSU Certificate Program in Student Success Analytics is another example of how CSU staff and administrators can exchange ideas and spark innovation beyond their individual campuses. Informally, the Chancellor's Office regularly convenes meetings for a variety of CSU campus leaders (e.g. provosts, vice presidents for student affairs, librarians, CIOs, etc.) to review progress toward Graduation Initiative 2025 goals and discuss both challenges and opportunities in meeting them.

This report is designed to fulfill provision 1.3 of Item 6610-001-0001 of the Budget Act of 2019, which requires the CSU to report to the Legislature no later than January 15, 2021, regarding:

1. The amount each CSU campus spent on the Graduation Initiative 2025 in 2019-20;
2. How specifically these funds were spent in 2019-20;
3. How these spending activities are linked to research on best practices for student success;
4. Campus data indicating whether these activities are achieving their desired effect;
5. How each campus is working to close the achievement gap for low-income students, historically underrepresented students and first-generation students; and
6. Growth in management, faculty and support staff positions in 2019-20 when compared to 2018-19 and how this employee growth advances student success.

2 Investments in Student Success

In 2019-20, despite the breadth and depth of challenges presented by the pandemic, CSU campuses remained focused on advancing the goals of Graduation Initiative 2025. As the system’s signature initiative, Graduation Initiative 2025 articulates six priorities deemed essential to student success: academic preparation, enrollment management, financial support, data-informed decision making, student engagement and well-being and eliminating administrative barriers.

These six operational priorities guide Graduation Initiative 2025 efforts across the system. They have been identified – through research about best and promising practices – as having a significant impact on improving student retention, expediting degree completion and addressing equity gaps. This report describes the strategies and activities designed to contribute to student success across each priority.

In 2019-20, the state provided \$75 million in new funding for Graduation Initiative 2025. The amount each CSU campus allocated for Graduation Initiative 2025 is detailed below:

Campus	2019-20 Allocations
California State University, Bakersfield	\$2,143,000
California State University Channel Islands	\$1,568,000
California State University, Chico	\$2,866,000
California State University, Dominguez Hills	\$2,810,000
California State University, East Bay	\$2,378,000
California State University, Fresno	\$3,890,000
California State University, Fullerton	\$5,402,000
Humboldt State University	\$1,745,000
California State University, Long Beach	\$5,410,000
California State University, Los Angeles	\$4,888,000
California State University Maritime Academy	\$1,162,000
California State University, Monterey Bay	\$1,547,000
California State University, Northridge	\$5,933,000
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona	\$3,538,000
California State University, Sacramento	\$4,619,000
San Bernardino	\$3,655,000
California State University, San Diego	\$4,070,000
San Francisco State University	\$4,072,000
San José State University	\$4,203,000
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo	\$2,440,000
California State University San Marcos	\$2,292,000
Sonoma State University	\$1,716,000
California State University, Stanislaus	\$2,028,000
Systemwide Strategies	\$625,000
Total	\$75,000,000

2.1 Academic Preparation

College readiness at entry plays an important role in students' ability to earn a degree. The CSU has a long history of meeting students where they are, and offering support when needed to help them reach degree completion. This is true in many areas but particularly in the area of academic preparation. Since implementation of the CSU's Executive Order 1110 which focused on academic preparation goals such as improving mathematics and quantitative reasoning skills for high school students, restructuring developmental education and strengthening Early Start programs, campuses have begun to experience a positive impact on timely completion of course requirements. In 2019-20, campuses continued to focus on supporting students who arrive at the CSU in need of additional academic support.

2.1.1 Investing in Academic Support Services

In a year where students may have faced multiple crises, the ability for campuses to provide essential academic support was even more critical. Academic support can come in many forms, including tutoring, writing centers, learning labs, supplemental instruction, student success coaches, interventions and much more. In 2019-20, campuses implemented a variety of support services to ensure students remained on track to degree completion, resulting in a record-high number of bachelor's degrees awarded.

Several campuses have developed, and continue to build upon, programs addressing the unique needs of first-year students' transition to college. At California State University, Stanislaus (Stanislaus State), a new Freshman Success Program is open to all freshmen with a focus on advisor- and peer-led activities. It complements an existing program designed to support underrepresented first- and second- year residential students' academic and personal development. First-year students at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSU Dominguez Hills) participated in a newly redesigned First Year Experience program that represents a cross-divisional collaboration with activities and programming mapped to eight learning outcomes.

Supplemental instruction (SI) also played an important role in many academic preparation efforts on campuses. SI focuses on collaboration and group study outside of class and is often led by students who have previously completed the course. At San Diego State University (San Diego State), the campus leveraged supplemental instruction to avoid student setbacks in courses identified by data to be linked to delayed graduation. In 2019-20, Graduation Initiative 2025 funding supported more than 1,600 SI sessions across 12 high-challenge courses such as general chemistry, calculus I/II and linear algebra. Sonoma State University (Sonoma State) piloted a for-credit academic probation support course as an effective intervention. Students who completed the course saw an average increase of more than one full letter grade from fall 2019 to spring 2020, resulting in two-thirds of students leaving probation. The campus also retained 91 percent of the students who completed the course.

Sonoma State University (Sonoma State) piloted a for-credit academic probation support course as an effective intervention. Students who completed the course saw an average increase of more than one full letter grade from fall 2019 to spring 2020, resulting in two-thirds of students leaving probation.

San Francisco State University (San Francisco State) tapped into the experience of other CSU campuses to further enhance their academic preparation resources. After a systematic operational review of campus-wide tutoring efforts, the campus created a new centralized tutoring center informed by

experts from other CSUs with exemplary learning assistance programs. When the transition to virtual learning occurred in spring 2020, San Francisco State built an online learning module based on an effective model at California State University Channel Islands (CSU Channel Islands).

2.1.2 Promoting Increased Unit Load to Support Timely Graduation

The number of units taken by a student each academic year continues to be a key factor as to whether a student will earn a degree in a timely manner. A full course load requires a minimum of 12-credit hours in order to qualify for federal student aid. However, a consistent schedule of 15 credits or units has shown to contribute to timely graduation, and many campuses have created outreach programs and campaigns to raise awareness of the advantages of achieving this benchmark each term. Many campuses, including California State University, Bakersfield (CSU Bakersfield), California State University, Fresno (Fresno State), CSUN, San José State University (San José State) and California State University San Marcos (CSU San Marcos) have focused on communications and pre-enrollment strategies to encourage students to consistently complete a full 15-unit course load each term. In the case of CSU Bakersfield, all incoming freshmen students in the fall 2020 cohort were pre-enrolled in 15 units. These practices allowed campuses to ensure students were getting a full schedule comprised of general education and credit-bearing courses based on their majors. CSUN's Matador Rising program, which included campaigns such as "15 to Finish," resulted in average unit loads increased across all demographic groups, with an overall average of 14.72 units in fall 2019.

2.1.3 Reassessing and Redesigning Curricula

The transition to virtual learning in spring 2020 required extensive changes in instruction and course delivery, which are captured in Section 2.1.4. Prior to the pandemic, faculty and administrators continued to reassess and, in some cases, redesign curricula to build on high-impact practices and support greater student learning.

In some cases, this resulted in implementing new criteria for evaluating courses. At California State University, Fullerton (Cal State Fullerton) new criteria were developed for evaluating courses with culturally responsive high-impact practices, including addressing low stakes course assessments, attendance practices, use of growth mindset principles and the incorporation of varied cultural perspectives. At California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State), a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) program supported faculty in creating more effective learning environments. Universal design offers a set of principles for curriculum development that provides a blueprint for instructional materials and methods that are inclusive. This ensures flexibility in the ways students access and engage with content.

To address completion rates in lower-division courses, California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) created new dashboard tools that enabled colleges and departments to identify courses where equity gaps occurred during students' critical first years. Using these tools, colleges identified courses for participation in a Critical Course Redesign project. Departments consulted with the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning on syllabus design and committed to using a common syllabus with shared assignments. In a sampling of critical courses such as accounting and biology, pass rates increased from five to up to 19 percentage points for non-underrepresented minorities and from five to 15 percentage points for underrepresented minorities.

2.1.4 Supporting Faculty and Student Proficiency in Virtual Learning

In 2020, campuses as well as the Chancellor’s Office placed a high priority on ensuring faculty and students had the tools to succeed in a virtual learning environment. In summer 2020, more than 17,000 faculty members – about 60 percent of CSU’s total teaching force – engaged in nearly a quarter million hours of professional development programming that included best practices in virtual teaching and learning as well as assessing learning outcomes in more equitable ways. The following includes just a few curated examples of the hard work and dedication by all 23 campuses to prepare its faculty and students for success.

In summer 2020, more than 17,000 faculty members – about 60 percent of CSU’s total teaching force – engaged in nearly a quarter million hours of professional development programming that included best practices in virtual teaching and learning as well as assessing learning outcomes in more equitable ways.

During the student and faculty transition to virtual instruction in March 2020, CSU Channel Islands quickly developed the “Keep Learning/Keep Teaching” website to point faculty and students towards emergency resources for teaching and learning online. Another vital academic preparation resource for students was “Learning Online 101” – a course launched in spring 2020 to help students learn how to thrive as online learners. Through this course, 2,315 students were introduced to the technologies and study skills needed to be successful online learners. San Francisco State launched a similar program modeled after CSU Channel Islands.

California State University, Chico (Chico State) redirected funds from multiple sources to provide two “Go Virtual” Summer Institute sessions that served more than 300 faculty, providing evidence-based tools and strategies for rapid adoption of high quality, equity-minded virtual pedagogies. Assessment of this program demonstrated major gains in faculty confidence delivering quality online instruction, engaging students virtually and promoting inclusion and equity. Similarly, San José State created a Teach Online Summer Certificate program to support improved online teaching and learning. Approximately 1,000 faculty participated in seven modules that included such topics as: mastering online teaching essentials; supporting universal design for learning; analyzing assessment strategies; and equity and inclusion frameworks for online instruction. The Center for Teaching and Educational Technology at Sonoma State offered an Online and Blended Teaching Excellence Program, assisting more than 800 faculty in adapting to online teaching in response to COVID-19.

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2.2 Enrollment Management

The CSU defines enrollment management as the strategic allocation, reallocation and investment of instructional, financial aid, student services and other resources to meet the curricular, developmental and support needs of the students. The purposeful intent of enrollment management is to facilitate timely progress to degree that is responsive to student identities, backgrounds and experiences. Campuses continued to develop, refine and invest in enrollment management practices and strategies in

2019-20 to ensure they met the changing needs of their unique student populations. In particular, student need for expanded advising, mentoring, timely and responsive interventions and the reduction of barriers to accessing required courses was profoundly important for those managing changes impacting both their academic learning environment and well-being.

2.2.1 Hiring Faculty and Expanding Course Sections to Reduce Barriers

By hiring additional faculty and increasing course sections the CSU intends to reduce barriers that may prevent students from completing a four-year degree pathway in a timely manner. Despite reductions in budgets and challenges to hiring due to the disruption of COVID-19, faculty recruitment remained a top priority across the CSU system. California State Polytechnic University, Pomona's (Cal Poly Pomona) Strategic and Academic Master Plans called for an increase in full-time tenure-track faculty (which includes tenured faculty and probationary faculty who are on a path to tenure) to the pre-recession level of 67.7 percent. Accordingly, the campus developed a comprehensive multi-year model for hiring tenure-track faculty. It conducted 53 tenure-track faculty searches which resulted in hiring 39 faculty. CSUN also was successful in recruiting tenure-track faculty in fall 2020 with 26 new hires compared to 16 in the previous year. Since 2017, CSUN has hired 60 new tenure-track faculty using Graduation Initiative 2025 funding. At Cal State LA, 55 new tenure-track faculty were hired in fall 2020 with positive impacts in the area of diversity (24 percent were Hispanic, five percent African American and 33 percent Asian American).

At Cal State LA, 55 new tenure-track faculty were hired in fall 2020 with positive impacts in the area of diversity (24 percent were Hispanic, five percent African American and 33 percent Asian American).

Additional faculty empower campuses to increase the number of course sections and reduce frustrating enrollment bottlenecks for students. In 2019-20, Fresno State successfully added 22 sections, yielding an additional 706 seats made available to students. By providing these additional sections and seats, students were able to gain access to needed courses which reduced their time to graduation. At California State University, East Bay (Cal State East Bay), the addition of new course sections effectively met student demand and the campus largely eliminated waitlists while improving students' average unit load.

2.2.2 Coordinated and Expanded Academic Advising

Effective academic advising has proven to decrease time to degree completion and reduce equity gaps. As defined by NACADA (formerly the National Academic Advising Association) academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities and lives to extend beyond campus boundaries and timeframes. This description was never more relevant than in the academic year of 2019-20, when CSU campuses transformed their academic advising teams to serve as essential touchpoints in a new remote learning landscape. The Chancellor's Office also led proactive change with the appointment of an Interim Systemwide Director of Student Advising Initiatives. This inaugural director was asked to:

- assess and examine the wide range of approaches, philosophies and structures for advising across all 23 campuses and identify opportunities for enhancement on a systemic level;
- coordinate and sponsor professional development activities for advising personnel (both staff and faculty);
- support the incorporation of a student success platform to enhance advising practices using student data to inform decisions, including early warning, timely outreach, and case management;

- disseminate best and promising practices and offer guidance on how to scale up effective initiatives; and
- recommend areas for improving advising-related policies, processes, practices and protocols.

The following are some selected advisement accomplishments from the year. Five years ago, only one of Chico State’s seven colleges had a success center with professional staff. As of 2019-20, due to Graduation Initiative 2025 funding, all colleges have embedded college advising and retention specialists. This staff has formed a coordinated network using best practices for advising and retention including real-time tracking, early intervention and proactive outreach. California State University, San Bernardino (Cal State San Bernardino) also redesigned its advising structure, assigning first- and second-year student advising to Undergraduate Studies while upper-division student advising resides in the colleges. This reorganization allowed the campus to focus on two important goals: building good academic habits and closely tracking students nearing graduation.

Cal State LA invested in a coordinated advising infrastructure by hiring directors of Student Success and Advising in each college and increasing the number of advisors across campus. Every first- and second-year student was assigned a dedicated advisor beginning in fall 2020. Advisors were trained on strategic caseload management practices so that the students who would benefit most from more frequent advising interactions would receive it. This approach addressed the campus’s continued challenge in improving the retention and graduation rates of first-year students, especially men of color. Cal State East Bay formed a specialized advising team for first-year students – a "Frosh Advising Success Team" – and enrolled first-year students in classes on their individual major roadmap. The average unit load for fall increased by 0.8 units and retention increased from 75 percent to 79.8 percent for first-year students.

Cal State East Bay formed a specialized advising team for first-year students – a "Frosh Advising Success Team" – and enrolled first-year students in classes on their individual major roadmap. The average unit load for fall increased by 0.8 units and retention increased from 75 percent to 79.8 percent for first-year students.

2.2.3 Interventions and Early Alerts for High Risk Courses

Campuses have developed and continue to implement strategies to identify courses in which students are more likely to receive a grade of D, F or withdrawal (DFW) and have developed strategies for responding with timely interventions. For example, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly San Luis Obispo) piloted interventions in high-risk courses across its six colleges in 2019-20 that included additional tutoring and study sessions, redesigned course materials and the transition of a separate lecture/lab into a combined studio format. All classes in the pilot experienced a decrease in DFW rates compared to previous years with no interventions. Several of the classes had DFW rates ranging from 11 to 28 percent in prior years. After the interventions, the DFW rates ranged from three and 12 percent.

California State University, Long Beach (Cal State Long Beach) leveraged real-time data to inform advisors on a student’s current graduation status. Degree audit reports identified whether a student was on track for graduation. This same report alerted campus-wide advisors and enrollment services staff to specific student cases. This resulted in responsive outreach and reminders, such as an alert to students

who have made course selections that were no longer offered or a notice to apply for graduation when sufficient units were accumulated.

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSU Monterey Bay) created an Early Alert Steering Committee to identify and coordinate outreach to at-risk students, while San José State hired an Early Alert coordinator who launched an Early Alert Advisory Board (EAAB). Comprised of campus leadership, this group was tasked with increasing Early Alert awareness and campus engagement for student success. During spring 2020, the campus responded to 1,653 total Early Alert cases for 1,202 students. Roughly 95 percent of cases were academically-related.

Sonoma State piloted progress reports with faculty for a high-risk DFW course in each of its schools. In spring 2020, academic advisors resolved 62 percent of cases initiated by faculty using these progress reports. Faculty were also encouraged to play a role in student academic interventions at CSU San Marcos. In fall 2019, the campus piloted a "Check the Pulse" campaign to encourage faculty teaching courses with a high proportion of first-year students to review their rosters at weeks three, six, nine and 12, referring students with academic and personal concerns to the Cougar Care Network.

2.2.4 Peer Advisement and Mentorship

Establishing connections with peers and mentors has proven to be an effective way to support student success, particularly for first-year and first-generation students. Humboldt State University's (Humboldt State) first-year peer mentoring program – FY-RAMP (First-Year Retention through Academic Mentoring Program) – has made good progress in this area. In 2019-20, RAMP employed 37 undergraduate students, each of whom served a caseload of approximately 20 first-year, first-generation students. Of the 576 students who were assigned a RAMP mentor, 97 percent returned for the spring semester. Graduation Initiative 2025 funds also supported peer mentoring in 14 academic departments in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Twenty-one peer mentors served 1,465 sophomores, juniors and new transfers. A subsequent survey of the participants indicated significantly more engagement by students of color and/or first-generation students.

In 2019-20, RAMP employed 37 undergraduate students, each of whom served a caseload of approximately 20 first-year, first-generation students. Of the 576 students who were assigned a RAMP mentor, 97 percent returned for the spring semester.

When CSUN transitioned to virtual learning, the campus initiated a scaled peer mentoring program to ensure that all incoming students had peer engagement outside of online classes. It partnered with Mentor Collective to leverage best practices and connect new students with peer mentors that could help them navigate challenges and recognize opportunities. CSUN has matched 2,312 mentees with 595 mentors, and flags resulting from interactions have generated more than 200 advisor responses for academic interventions.

At San Francisco State, the campus launched a new First Year Experience seminar with embedded peer mentors. The campus found the mentors essential in maintaining student engagement when it moved to virtual learning in spring 2020. Likewise, Sonoma State developed and implemented a Peer Success Coaches program during its transition to virtual learning. The program's goals were to provide students with a clear point of contact to help develop a sense of community and belonging, and assist with

student retention. Across three outreach campaigns, coaches assisted 231 students with overcoming administrative barriers to re-enrolling for fall 2020.

2.2.5 Leveraging Advances in Technology to Amplify Student Support

Both national and peer institution research indicate that artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots can efficiently answer students' basic questions, allowing more time for campus staff to respond to more complex questions. While technology is not a replacement for the important relationships students develop with faculty, advisors and peers, it can be used as a tool to amplify and expand student services. A number of campuses have leveraged AI in the form of chatbots to help answer common questions and concerns. For example, Cal State East Bay's chatbot, Pioneer Chat, helped students stay on track by providing 24/7 access for students. The AI knowledge base and conversations have increased significantly throughout 2019-20. The campus also ramped up student texting capabilities, generating 6,809 texts during the pandemic compared to 3,379 texts in fall 2019. CSU San Marcos also launched an AI tool, CougarBot, for first-time freshmen. The campus expanded CougarBot to nearly 17,000 current students and to more than 15,000 prospective students fielding more than 26,000 questions.

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CSU Channel Islands leveraged technology to identify and reach missing students who had not registered in the online learning environment after the campus had transitioned to virtual learning. Data was used to connect students to peer mentors for extra support using a chatbot. Then, peer mentors reached out to students who were at high risk for stopping out due to difficulties with virtual instruction and hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these students, more than half persisted to fall 2020. Student feedback included gratitude for someone checking on them, and for the campus ensuring they had what they needed to succeed.

2.3 Student Engagement and Well-being

When CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White announced that CSU campuses would remain primarily in a virtual learning modality for 2020, it was with the commitment to “two North Stars” – the safety of students, faculty and staff and the ongoing support of Graduation Initiative 2025. The pandemic created numerous challenges in both these areas, particularly the threat to food and housing security, as well as equitable access to technology and the internet, also known as the “digital divide”.

It is too soon to evaluate the full impact of the pandemic on student well-being, but based on national and international research, initial results are mixed. Approximately 25 percent of sampled college students reported experiencing anxiety symptoms, correlated with increased concerns about academic delays, economic effects of the pandemic and impacts on daily life (Cao et al, 2020). It has been reported that 83 percent of respondents (ranging in ages from 13-25) agreed that the pandemic worsened pre-existing mental health conditions, mainly due to school closures, loss of routine and restricted social connections (YoungMinds, 2020). Relative to fall 2019, the prevalence of depression in students increased in spring 2020. In March through May 2020, a higher proportion of students reported that their mental health negatively impacted their academic performance; however, while

students reported lower levels of psychological wellbeing compared to fall 2019, they also reported higher levels of resiliency (ACHA/HealthyMinds, 2020).

The CSU response in this area was comprehensive and timely. The availability of on-campus housing was ensured – following physical distancing guidelines – to the most vulnerable of students including former foster youth, students who would otherwise be housing insecure, students for whom their primary home was not safe and students with disabilities. The majority of medical services and mental health services pivoted to telehealth modalities, and virtual/remote technologies were made HIPAA-compliant accordingly. Campus basic needs centers rallied, offering a range of creative ideas for reaching out and supporting students facing food insecurity including “drive by” food pantries. Nearly all 23 campuses were able to commit to reciprocal service provision, where students enrolled at one CSU campus could access basic needs services at a sister CSU campus. CSU basic needs efforts were expanded to bridge the digital divide that disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color. To date, CSU campuses have distributed more than 21,000 laptops and more than 10,000 mobile WiFi hotspots to students – an investment of more than \$22.5 million for new and existing equipment.

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2.3.1 Meeting Basic Needs in the Time of COVID-19

At the campus level, students demonstrating immediate need for food and housing were provided direct relief in the form of emergency grants detailed further in Section 2.4 of this report. Prior to the pandemic, all campuses operated either a food pantry or food distribution program. As a result of the significant increase in student demand following the disruption of COVID-19, campuses expanded and adapted their basic needs support. At Cal State LA, for example, the campus awarded approximately \$286,000 through its emergency grant program. It expanded support for the provision of emergency, short-term housing, both on- and off- campus, for housing insecure students. The campus also changed its food pantry to a drive-up process to comply with social distancing guidelines, and created a food pantry just for on-campus housing residents.

When CSUN transitioned to virtual learning last spring, the campus also ensured its food pantry remained open. For the first time ever, it continued to provide food resources and services to students throughout the summer session, including providing pre-packaged food and hygiene items, food gift cards, Cal Fresh Outreach (benefits application assistance) and Cal Fresh Healthy Living educational programs. The campus also provided housing-insecure students with support resources through its Temporary Emergency Housing program which included short-term stays within student housing at no cost to the student as well as guidance in accessing community-based resources for longer-term housing and shelter options. In 2019-20, Stanislaus State saw 23 percent of its students utilizing at least one of its basic needs programs. Its food pantry was visited 8,837 times, a 161 percent increase from the previous year. The campus distributed 1,481 boxes of food to nearly 1,000 students, an 83 percent increase from 2018-19, and assistance with CalFresh applications increased by 263 percent from the prior year.

According to the California Homeless Youth Project, short-term emergency housing meets students' immediate needs, allows them to continue their academics and supports their long-term housing stability. At Fresno State, 26 students were placed in emergency housing in the Fresno State residence halls and local hotels. Senate Bill 85 funding paid \$43,000 toward the cost of extended stays. Good Samaritan Grants paid \$147,441 to Fresno State students who faced unforeseen emergencies in 2019-20, allowing 226 students to remain enrolled. The grants assist students who encounter an unforeseen financial emergency or catastrophic event which would otherwise prevent them from continuing their education. At CSUN, the campus has an emergency fund targeted to support foster youth. The Resilient Scholars Program Emergency Fund assists with housing, food and other essentials.

For some, the events of spring 2020 required an expedited departure from campuses. Humboldt State was one of a number of campuses that placed students first by waiving early departure penalties for campus housing. Additionally, housing staff helped students who had left their belongings behind during spring break by packing up rooms and shipping belongings home to students at no charge, providing much needed relief to students worried about how to retrieve their items while being quarantined at home with their families.

2.3.2. Investing in Mental Health

In spring 2020, campuses transitioned a wide range of student support services to virtual modes, including counseling. Many campus counseling and psychological services units developed more after-hours care options, contracting with third party vendors to offer telehealth solutions. This platform focused on holistic well-being and success of students across three domains: academic success and career preparedness; purpose, community and sense of social belonging; and physical and mental well-being. This resource was implemented at more than half of all campuses by fall 2020. Cal State San Bernardino was one such example: the YOU@CSUSB Wellbeing platform provided a confidential online space for students to take charge of their own well-being through engagement in activities, connections to resources to promote their mental and physical health, and opportunities to build healthy relationships.

Well-being encompassed more than counseling opportunities for students. Humboldt State's Children's Center provided family events in fall 2020 to foster relationships between families, and then offered bi-weekly online Zoom "circle times" for families during the region's shelter-in-place order. The center also provided weekly curriculum to further assist both parents and their children. This not only provided families with developmentally appropriate activities to do with children at home, but it also allowed families to share insights and encouragement with each other as well. At Sacramento State, faculty were also provided with additional tools to address student well-being in the time of COVID-19 and other economic and social unrest. The campus developed an online boot camp for nearly 800 faculty members during the summer of 2020 to reinforce faculty skills in empathy and compassion for students' experiences during the pandemic

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while applying skills they have learned in virtual instruction. Faculty accumulated a combined 15,000 hours enhancing their abilities.

2.3.3. Fostering a Sense of Belonging

As touched on in the section addressing equity gaps in this report, several campuses continued to allocate resources to identity- and affinity-based centers to contribute towards a sense of community and foster a sense of belonging among students. In 2019-20, for example, CSU Bakersfield launched its Dreamers Resource Center dedicated to providing programs and services in support of the recruitment, enrichment, inclusion, retention and student experiences of undocumented and immigrant students. At Fresno State, the opening of a Veterans Resource Center (VRC) in November 2019 marked a milestone for the CSU system representing centers for veterans on all 23 campuses. The VRC serves veterans, active duty, guard/reservists and military dependents. Using Zoom and similar platforms, VRC staff on many CSU campuses open a virtual room several hours every day. Students log in to visit the room to interact with other student-veterans, or to connect with VRC staff members.

In response to the spring 2020 protests, Cal State East Bay's Office of Diversity held multiple community care spaces as well for students, staff and faculty to discuss racism and its impact on students. Participation was high and student feedback was positive. Other campuses, such as California State University Maritime Academy (Cal Maritime) have begun or will begin to partner with faculty to incorporate inclusive pedagogies in instruction. Cal Poly San Luis Obispo sets a tone of welcoming and belonging right at the start of a student's journey during orientation. Creating Opportunities for Representative Engagement (CORE) is an extended orientation program that provides intentional experiences to build a more supportive campus community for students, create a sense of belonging, assist with creating a network with faculty and staff and provide additional resources. CORE, in its second year, nearly tripled its student participation in 2019-20.

2.3.4. Bridging the Digital Divide

The existing digital divide in the state was exacerbated further in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, particularly impacting low-income students who disproportionately lacked access to stable internet and home computers. From the CSU's smallest campus – Cal Maritime – to its largest campuses, concerted efforts were made to ensure students' technology needs were met in a timely and responsive manner to avoid any setbacks to their degree progress. At Cal Maritime, laptops were loaned to students previously lacking access, and the campus acquired numerous WiFi hot spots to provide internet access for students with need. Cal Poly Pomona developed two laptop initiatives: a lease-to-own laptop program (with donor support) and a laptop/WiFi hotspot loaner program. Sacramento State distributed nearly 3,000 laptops, hot spots, webcams and headsets to students. It also turned a campus parking structure into an internet enabled zone with WiFi access, and partnered with a local internet service provider to provide free high-speed Internet access to students. In total, the CSU provided more than 21,000 laptops and tablets and 10,000 mobile WiFi hot spots during the spring and fall 2020 terms for student use, representing an \$18 million investment in new equipment.

2.4 Financial Support

The CSU offers one of the most affordable undergraduate educational programs in the nation, with an in-state tuition rate of \$5,742 a year. Eighty percent of all CSU undergraduate students receive non-loan financial aid. What's more, the system is consistently recognized for impact on social mobility. In CollegeNET's 2020 "Social Mobility Index", which ranks nearly 1,500 colleges and universities nationwide, all 22 CSU campuses ranked on this measure were in the top 16 percent of the index for their contribution to increasing economic mobility for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. More than half of CSU students are from traditionally underrepresented groups and approximately 45 percent are eligible for Pell grants, demonstrating an exceptional financial need. This past academic year represented additional challenges to students with financial need. The following outlines just some of the many ways the CSU worked to support students' financial stability and ensure they continued on their path to graduation.

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2.4.1 Promoting Financial Literacy

The ability to understand and manage personal finances can start as early as the first year in college. At the CSU, campuses worked to increase students' financial literacy so they may make more informed decisions about their future. The College Support Programs (Educational Opportunity Program, migrant, foster youth) at CSU Monterey Bay provided financial literacy education to students as part of the campus's summer bridge and summer orientation programming. Once enrolled, students were required to participate in at least one financial literacy activity per semester. A week-long FAFSA/California Dream Act "open lab" also assisted students with completing financial aid applications and provided information on local, state and federal loan requirements.

In spring 2020, San José State continued to host financial literacy workshops on such topics as basic financial literacy, budgeting, identity theft and federal loan repayment. The campus also developed a financial literacy website with resources and a free online self-paced course. A total of 1,681 videos were viewed from November 2019 to June 2020. A required session on college finances was included as part of 2020 Frosh and Parent Orientation and added to Transfer Orientation in 2020. Overall, students and parents rated the college finances session as helpful or very helpful.

2.4.2 Providing Non-traditional Forms of Financial Aid

Many CSU campuses offer non-traditional forms of financial aid, such as micro-grants or micro-loans, to support students facing an emergency or those who are nearing graduation, but are at risk of stopping out due to financial hardships. During spring 2020, the CSU distributed 90 percent of \$263 million in emergency grants through the CSU Cares initiative directly to 311,000 students with COVID-19-induced financial need. Campus funds were used to support students who were not eligible for federal aid. Additional examples of this kind of support, just a few of many from the 23 campuses, are included in this section.

The Cal Poly Cares committee at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo awarded \$67,000 in Graduation Initiative 2025 funding to 49 graduating seniors in 2019-20. The grants included funding for housing, medical expenses,

academic supplies, tuition and other needs. CSU Dominguez Hills coordinated a cross-divisional effort called “Pay It Forward” to address and eliminate roadblocks to timely graduation. It was provided to graduating students who committed to successfully completing specific requirements and courses offered during their final spring or summer term. Recognizing the challenges many students encounter during their academic journey, including financial challenges, the program funded up to six units of tuition. In 2020, 90 percent of the 338 students who were supported by this program completed their degrees. Now in its third year, Cal Poly Pomona’s Summer Completion Initiative provided tuition and books to students who were one to eight units from degree completion, and who were eligible to graduate if they enrolled in a summer session. A total of \$739,517 in completion grants were awarded to 319 students in summer 2019. Of these, 68 percent were Pell-recipient students, 49 percent were underrepresented minorities and 63 percent were first-generation and first-degree students. During summer 2020, CSU Fullerton also awarded completion grants, of which 91 percent of the recipients completed their degrees during the summer term.

2.4.3 Reducing Costs for Course Materials

As part of a collective effort to increase student access to low- and no-cost learning resources, campuses are continuing to invest in affordable learning solutions and online resources. The number of courses using no-cost course materials through CSU Channel Islands’ openCI/AL\$program continues to grow. Two new programs, nursing and business, joined three existing programs in developing low-cost majors that rely on affordable or no-cost materials. As a result, the campus saw improved student outcomes and increased unit load completion. New faculty adopters became “openCI Ambassadors,” committing to course redesign using open education resources and other no- or low-cost materials. These efforts amounted to an average saving per student of \$136.32, impacting 745 courses.

Through funding from the Chancellor’s Office, CSU Bakersfield faculty began development of a “Z-Degree,” an entire degree (general education and program courses) with zero-cost course materials. At Cal State Fullerton, continued efforts in producing low- to no-cost materials have produced significant savings. The number of students benefiting increased from 2,251 in 2017 to 5,785 in 2019-20, a 157 percent increase. The resulting cost savings for students increased from \$3.12 million to \$8.08 million over the same period. This represents a 159 percent increase in out-of-pocket cost savings for students.

2.4.4 Streamlined Financial Aid Application Process

Informed by research that clearly shows that financial aid supports persistence and retention rates, many CSU campuses leveraged the transition to virtual teaching and learning as an opportunity to improve the financial aid process. Many streamlined existing financial processes and, in some cases, moved the majority of forms and applications to electronic submissions. At CSU Monterey Bay, 70 percent of financial aid forms moved online in 2020. CSU Dominguez Hill developed a new online process for financial aid supporting documents, resulting in a more streamlined, efficient, student-centered process.

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Cal State LA issued “Estimated Financial Aid” packages early in the aid cycle, which allowed students to register for classes without having to prepay tuition and fees upfront. The Estimated Aid alleviated financial burdens on families, and allowed sufficient time for students to submit the required documents to the aid office during the peak processing months of March through August. CSU San Marcos

developed workshops to increase submission and completion of financial aid applications while creating a seamless and paperless financial aid application submission process. As a result, the campus received more than 28,000 financial aid applications for 2020-21, an increase of 3,000 from 25,000 in 2018-19 and 2019-20. San Francisco State also streamlined its financial aid process in spring 2020, which resulted in award letters sent to students much earlier than in previous terms. Summer financial aid was awarded to students enrolled in summer 2020 classes, and the retention rate of students who received this aid was 99.5 percent.

2.4.5 Supporting Student Employment Opportunities

In 2020, on-campus student jobs were impacted by the move to virtual learning. Yet campuses continued to find ways to support students. Student-employment opportunities on Humboldt State's campus significantly expanded in key areas supporting student well-being and basic needs, including peer mentoring programs and major-based peer mentoring. In addition to providing students with financial resources and employment opportunities, these positions helped students gain skills related to their major. At Sacramento State, its Career Tracks Intern program, which provided career development and advising services by graduate counseling interns, served 4,717 students during the 2019-20 academic year. The Career Center launched and implemented a new virtual career management platform in 2019 to improve experiences for students and employers. It has cultivated more than 10,000 jobs, 2,952 internships and more than 5,000 employer connections to help students gain industry insights, skills and career pathways.

2.5 Data-Informed Decision Making

In 2019, the Association for Institutional Research, Educause and the National Association of College and University Business Officers published a joint statement on the importance of the use of analytics in higher education. Specifically, it stated a collective belief that using data to understand students results in better student outcomes and greater institutional efficiency. The statement included six principles to supporting successful analytics including establishing a team approach and enlisting institutional commitment. The CSU continues its progress in making decisions and policies informed, in part, by student data. The following initiatives and strategies are highlighted examples of this work.

2.5.1 Participation in the Student Success Analytics Certificate Program

The Chancellor's Office Certificate Program in Student Success Analytics is an innovative and interactive professional development experience at the intersection of equity and evidence. The program recognizes that it requires cross-divisional, collaborative action with a laser focus on student success to eliminate equity gaps between historically underserved students and their peers. With its data-based, equity-focused, and action-oriented curriculum, the program provides cross-divisional teams of higher education faculty, staff and administrators the opportunity to improve student success on their campus.

The curriculum provided more than eight highly-engaging virtual sessions that supported participants in developing advanced data literacy skills to glean insights on their respective campuses and engage in hands-on research projects to help bring these insights into practice. This effort empowered campuses with data to design measurably-effective student success interventions that produced equitable learning and graduation outcomes for all students.

During the 2019-20 academic year, a record 19 CSU campuses, three non-CSU campuses and one student organization – an increase from two campuses just two years prior – participated in the program. They included:

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- CSU Bakersfield
- CSU Channel Islands
- CSU Dominguez Hills
- Cal State East Bay
- Fresno State
- Cal State Fullerton
- Humboldt State
- Cal State Long Beach
- Cal State LA
- CSU Monterey Bay
- CSUN
- Cal Poly Pomona
- Sacramento State
- Cal State San Bernardino
- San Diego State
- San José State
- Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
- CSU San Marcos
- Stanislaus State
- Minnesota State/ Minnesota Office of Higher Education
- Southern University
- University of Northern Colorado
- Cal State Student Association

To date, approximately 430 individuals have participated in the program. Data action projects developed in the programs span from focusing on academic probation policy and course redesign to campus climate and co-curricular student success efforts.

2.5.2 Fostering Adoption and Application of Data Tools

As campuses introduced new data tools, the interest for their adoption and application across divisions and departments has grown. Cal Poly Pomona has enhanced its analytical systems and capabilities to support decision-making informed by accurate and actionable data. In 2019-20, the campus added several new data dashboards including first-year progress, continuing students and class schedule metrics. Numerous reports and dashboard were developed, and functional teams were trained to

effectively use these as well as other data tools. The campus also launched its own predictive analytics to assist with forecasting.

An improvement in campus access to usable data, as well as a growing data-minded campus orientation, inspired Chico State to develop multiple data dashboards including a new cost of instruction dashboard that allowed departments to optimize their course offerings to support students' degree progress. A campus team worked throughout 2019-20 to develop a grades equity dashboard for individual faculty to review potential gaps in course outcomes for underrepresented minority and non-underrepresented minority students. This effort culminated in a faculty development website where the dashboard is linked, contextualized and accompanied by resources for closing equity gaps.

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Through its growing portfolios of dashboards, its Data Champions program and outreach across campus, San Diego State continues its investment in data-driven decision making. Currently there are nearly 800 campus dashboard users and more than 50 working groups. Developed along the student pathway from admissions to graduation, the Student Success Exploration and Analytics (SSEA) dashboards provided insight to academic units to track trends, student progress, course success metrics and student outcomes. As a complementary, campus-focused resource paired with the Chancellor's Office Student Success dashboards, the SSEA collection provides snapshot and trend data to monitor students across demographics and academic characteristics.

Both Cal State LA and Cal State Fullerton added an equity lens to their data dashboards. At Cal State LA, a new equity box offered disaggregated data to enable analyses by equity groups such as gender, underrepresented minority student, Pell recipient status and first-generation status. Dashboards highlighting equity gaps have been developed and promoted to encourage reflection on how to close them at Cal State Fullerton. Users were provided resources on ethical use of student data as well.

2.5.3 Leveraging Data to Support Course Scheduling

A clear path to graduation means the availability of courses that meet students' degree requirements. Many campuses have begun to incorporate data into course scheduling to anticipate demand, facilitate students' timely enrollment and reduce wait lists. Cal State East Bay implemented a class scheduling tool, Ad Astra, to help forecast course demand and eliminate wait lists. This is in tandem with the campus's efforts to integrate advising tools across university service areas, including tutoring and supplemental instruction, to keep students on track. San Francisco State already utilized Ad Astra to plan for high-demand sections to be offered in the summer. The result, in spite of the pandemic, was the campus's highest ever summer enrollment in 2020 – with four percent more course sections than the previous summer.

Another campus focused on improving course scheduling is CSU San Marcos. Through its continued use of Degree Planner (an online interactive tool that students use for developing their degree plan) the campus has projected course demand and allowed for just-in-time addition of high-demand courses. More than half of spring 2020 students enrolled in 60 percent or more of the additional courses Degree

Planner projected, an increase from 45 percent in spring 2019. Cal Poly San Luis Obispo implemented new software in 2019-20 that made it easier and more efficient to develop class schedules and avoid scheduling conflicts by eliminating user errors and identifying previously unavailable classroom usage. Departments were able to build better schedules for students without overlapping class offerings.

2.5.4 Evaluating Campus Climate

Measuring student sentiment on campus can be an effective way to turn data into meaningful insights. Given the pandemic and social unrest of 2020, campuses can look to climate surveys to better understand the year's impact on student success. Cal State San Bernardino has already conducted surveys to gain a better understanding of what student success means to the campus. It also evaluated what it means to have a degree from Cal State San Bernardino and explored what issues students are experiencing due to the pandemic and transition to virtual learning. At Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, the campus had embarked on a student voice survey that included a focus group of underrepresented minority men, overall men and Pell-eligible students in addition to a support services survey. In winter 2020, focus groups were started but not completed due to the transition to virtual learning. Focus groups will resume when appropriate and may be reframed to reflect the impact of the pandemic and social justice protests locally and nationally. Cal Maritime has also scheduled its own climate survey.

2.6 Reducing Administrative Barriers

Of Graduation Initiative 2025's six priorities, reducing administrative barriers is one by which any department and division can have a profound impact on student success. Whether it is breaking down silos across divisions and disciplines, reducing inefficiencies in paperwork for students, ensuring that key administrative processes are streamlined and completed in a timely manner or reducing fees that create undue burdens on students, the following section outlines some of the many ways CSU campuses have made inroads in this area. In some cases, the transition to virtual learning facilitated campuses adopting the use of electronic forms, accepting credit card payments and allowing online access to schedule appointments for things such as advising appointments which further reduced the burden on students.

2.6.1 Eliminating Silos and Integrating Student Services

Placing students at the center of operations can help reveal where services and activities have become fragmented. For CSUN, placing students' needs first resulted in the reorganization of its Office of Student Success. The department has become a cross-divisional resource serving as a navigator to, and expediter of, student success efforts across campus – moving the campus away from silo-based practices. Stanislaus State created a care manager position to serve as a single point of contact for all of the basic needs programs on campus. The care manager partnered with on- and off- campus groups to maintain and expand the basic needs programs aimed to address students' food and housing insecurity.

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Some campuses have developed, or are in the process of implementing, Administrative Barriers Committees to create a more holistic view of student support. CSU Bakersfield launched its first committee in 2019-20 to identify and address administrative processes and practices that impeded

students' success. One outcome has been a collaboration with financial services to revise payment plans and financial holds for students. As an example of the latter, the campus significantly reduced the financial threshold to initiate a student hold, and all registration holds were temporary eliminated, to allow students to register for the fall 2020 semester. Sacramento State's existing Administrative Barriers Committee, comprised of faculty and staff, examined potential policy and procedural barriers for student progress in three operational areas: financial aid; bursar and collections; and enrollment management, which is exploring technology to shorten the application and registration timeline.

2.6.2 Transitioning to Online and Automated Processes

The transition to a remote working environment in spring 2020 catalyzed the need for a number of campuses to reimagine processes in order to support student progress and university operations. Cal Poly Pomona introduced a new automated grade forgiveness policy/process which significantly reduced the time to post final grades and allowed other dependent processes to occur earlier in the term, such as determination of students' Satisfactory Academic Progress and academic standing. The campus also implemented National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) DegreeVerify which eliminated staff response time for numerous verification requests and transitioned all paper petitions and processes fully online. At Cal State East Bay, the campus moved to automate and expedite student services by converting paper-based processes to electronic forms, including an automated transcript assessment for transfer students. As current research points to the importance of supporting student agency, Cal State East Bay also developed a new student portal to provide more self-help features and relevant information such as their progress to degree. Sonoma State oversaw the implementation of e-transcripts, digitized all of its forms and created a new online graduation application for 2020.

2.6.3 Reworking "Drop-for-Non-payment" Policies and Readmission

When students do not pay the balance due on their accounts in time, campuses may implement an administrative process by which students are disenrolled from their classes for that term. Stringent drop-for-non-payment and readmission policies can often derail a student's progress, as even when they do resume payment, the classes students need may no longer be available. Campuses are reviewing these policies and, where appropriate, making changes. At Stanislaus State the threshold for drops due to non-payment of fees was increased to \$932. This ensured that students were not negatively impacted by thresholds that were unusually low. As a result, approximately 27.6 percent fewer students were disenrolled for nonpayment. At San Francisco State, the campus ended the practice of putting registration holds on students who owed as little as \$10. Increasing that minimum to \$100 resulted in registration holds being lifted for more than 1,000 students.

Cal State Long Beach identified its fee collection process as a barrier. Historically, students register for fall classes with full payment due within 30 days of registration. After that date, students with an outstanding balance are identified and their class registration canceled. Effective fall 2020, students were informed that a deposit of \$500 would retain their schedule for the fall term. Subsequently the campus saw a 75 percent reduction from the previous year's drop rates. Almost 100 percent of students started classes with their original schedule intact to meet their educational goals.

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3 Intentional Focus on Closing Equity Gaps

As the nation's largest and most diverse four-year public university, the CSU has a unique responsibility to ensure a degree is within reach for all students – including low-income students, historically underserved students and students who are first in their families to attend college. To date, 62 percent of all bachelor's degrees granted to California Latino and Latina students and 47 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded to the state's African-American students are conferred by the CSU. One in three CSU graduate is the first in their family to attend college, and more than half of all undergraduates receive Pell Grants.

While student success is at the center of Graduation Initiative 2025, the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 – and the subsequent economic, social and racial turmoil – has renewed a sense of urgency to support students from historically underserved communities and eliminate the equity gaps that separate them from their peers. At a time when many students struggled with such basic needs as housing and food security or bridging the digital divide to continue their studies in a virtual environment, CSU campuses met the moment with expanded services and innovative solutions as described in previous sections of this report.

The following section provides selected highlights of strategies and initiatives implemented by all 23 campuses to close equity gaps and ensure that the CSU continues to be a catalyst for social mobility. This is a curated list and should not be construed as representative of all activities and efforts for the academic year.

CSU Bakersfield

- *Launched an Equity Action Team* – As a result of a review from the Provost's Office, CSU Bakersfield created an Equity Action Team with the goal to accelerate graduation of upper-division underrepresented students. The campus also developed an interrelated tactical plan which included unique programming for underrepresented students.
- *Supported vulnerable student populations* – The campus created a Dreamers Resource Center dedicated to providing programs and services in support of the recruitment, enrichment, inclusion, retention and student experiences of undocumented and immigrant students.

CSU Channel Islands

- *Leveraged data to identify inequities* – CSU Channel Islands continued to maximize its Student Equity Analytics internal dashboard by identifying inequities in early academic behaviors present in the first semester for historically underserved students, first-generation and Pell-recipient students. These six early success indicators were used in examining efforts in the Division of Academic Affairs related to improving graduation rates and closing equity gaps, including the "Channel Your Success Campaign" and a new federal Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) grant initiative, "Project Channel Your Success."

Chico State

- *Continued equity-minded faculty professional development* – Chico State's Equity-Minded Programs Initiative led faculty teams from six academic departments through a close

examination of complex equity data from their programs. Modeled on Harvard's DataWise Project, this semester-long effort culminated in program improvement plans that included the English Department's identification of challenging course combinations that students will be advised not to take at the same time, and the Criminal Justice program's development of peer affinity groups in large classes.

- *Provided free summer orientation* – The campus allocated Graduation Initiative 2025 funds to provide a no-cost, virtual summer orientation for new students. Typically student fees range from \$78-\$95 per participant. By eliminating financial and logistical barriers, the campus made the orientation experience more accessible and reduced the loss of enrollment by Latinx and African American students by eight percent and 15 percent, respectively.

CSU Dominguez Hills

- *Leveraged data to identify inequities and inform decision-making* – CSU Dominguez Hills' Student Success Committee examined the campus' disaggregated data and found that the greatest equity gaps were for first-generation students. Based on these findings, the committee identified four areas of focus to be addressed collaboratively across the divisions:
 - Understanding, addressing and assessing the high DFW rates in the 20 courses that have been shown to have the greatest impact on first-year retention;
 - Taking a more collaborative, data-informed approach to its Early Alert process;
 - Relaunching the Toro Success Collaborative student advisement and tutoring system; and
 - Removing administrative barriers created by inefficient business processes.

Cal State East Bay

- *Focused on first-generation student retention* – Cal State East Bay implemented a pilot program for first-generation students focused on retention. Of the initial 22 students who participated, 21 returned for the second year. Ninety percent of these students were underrepresented minorities.
- *Hired peer mentors* – The Sankofa Scholars Program for Black students hired four student leaders to support recruitment and operations of the expanded program, including mentoring. This mentoring program was designed over the 2019-20 academic year, and matched upper-division students with alumni and community members who had similar career interests. Sankofa Scholars advising appointments grew significantly in spring 2020, increasing to 503 from 350 in fall 2019.

Fresno State

- *Provided additional instructional support* – At Fresno State, teaching associates facilitate mathematics support classes three times per week for students who need extra preparation. The Department of Math also developed an additional mentoring/advising and support structure for students identified as falling behind to provide them with peer mentors and additional content support.

Cal State Fullerton

- *Launched scholars program to support retention* – Cal State Fullerton created the Tuffy’s Graduation Scholars (TGS) program to serve first-generation, underrepresented and Pell-eligible first-year students. TGS is an ecological support system with participation incentives designed to support retention and timely degree completion. To date, scholars are thriving across several indicators, including retention and completion of 30 units per year.
- *Developed an equity-minded professional development plan* – The 2019-20 CSU Student Success Network Middle Leadership Academy team developed “Titans for Equitable Education,” a campus plan to more deeply engage faculty in the quest for building educational equity. The plan encompassed: faculty development; faculty, staff and administrator use of student data; campus communication and engagement; and dissemination of outcomes resulting from the program execution.

Humboldt State

- *Supported supplemental instruction professional development* – Humboldt State’s Learning Center incorporated an equity-in-tutoring professional development and self-assessment rubric for all tutoring and SI leaders based on the ESCALA teaching model which uses a self-reflective model of change.
- *Invested in equity-minded faculty professional development* – The campus Faculty Diversity and Equity Fellowship program provided peer-to-peer professional development for faculty. Areas of instruction included data-based methods for assessing equity outcomes in courses and examples of empirically-based highly equitable and inclusive teaching practices.

Cal State Long Beach

- *Reduced administrative and financial barriers* – Cal State Long Beach identified its fee collection process as a significant barrier to graduation due to cancelled schedules which adversely impacted student retention. As a result, the campus revised its policy and students were informed that a deposit of \$500 would retain their entire schedule for the fall 2020 term. Students were also given three options: a payment plan, pay the full amount due or pay \$500 deposit. The new policy resulted in a 75 percent reduction from the previous year’s drop rates.

Cal State LA

- *Reduced administrative barriers* – Cal State LA issued “Estimated Financial Aid” packages early in the aid cycle to allow students to register for classes without having to prepay tuition and fees upfront. The estimated aid alleviated financial burdens on families and allowed sufficient time for students to submit the required documents to the aid office during peak processing months.
- *Leveraged data to identify inequities* – The campus added an Equity Box drop-down menu function to all dashboards that disaggregated data to allow for analysis by equity groups, such as gender, underrepresented minorities, Pell-recipient status and first-generation status.

Cal Maritime

- *Enhanced inclusive student recruitment* – Cal Maritime contracted with an enrollment consultant to initiate a plan for improving recruitment and retention of students from all backgrounds.
- *Invested in equity-minded faculty professional development* – The campus initiated professional development to foster inclusive pedagogies and enhance faculty/student collaborative research. It also contracted with a gender-equity consultant to plan for ongoing training in this area.

CSU Monterey Bay

- *Launched an affinity center* – CSU Monterey Bay established a Center for Black Student Success providing academic, professional and personal/cultural support and enrichment programming.
- *Supported graduation candidates* – The campus has seen an increase in students who stopped out requesting assistance in degree completion. In response, it implemented a Graduation Reactivation Process to assist graduation candidates who may have not completed their requirements prior to stopping out. Additionally, graduation counselors have reviewed previously denied graduation applicants in light of policy changes (revised graduation requirements and catalog rights policy) to determine if those changes could help move those students toward degree completion.

CSUN

- *Integrated student services* – CSUN reorganized its Office of Student Success to be a cross-divisional university resource that serves as a navigator to, and expediter of, student success efforts across campus – moving away from silo-based practices. The Office of Student Success and student success faculty affiliates formed a group that meets regularly to share strategies around equity-minded practice and strategies in the classroom.

Cal Poly Pomona

- *Supported equity in science and engineering* – Cal Poly Pomona expanded investment in its Maximizing Engineering Potential (MEP) and Science Educational Enhancement Services (SEES). MEP provides underrepresented minorities and women engineering students with academic support, peer mentoring, tutoring, scholarships, internships and more. These interventions have led to MEP's highest four-year graduation rate of 20.7 percent in 2019-20. The SEES program serves low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students in the College of Science providing faculty advisors, peer mentoring, Academic Excellence Workshops for high fail-rate classes, paid research fellowships and more. SEES narrowed the equity gap in for underrepresented minorities to 3.9 percent.
- *Supported undocumented students* – The Bronco Dreamers Resource Center (BDRC) trained more than 600 faculty, staff, and students to serve undocumented students. The center responded to more than 3,300 inquiries for varying assistance with the California Dream Act.

The BDRC provided case management services and connected students to free legal services to navigate a myriad of legal concerns pertaining to work permits, DACA status and other issues.

Sacramento State

- *Launched a peer mentorship program* – Graduation Initiative 2025 funding enabled the Sacramento State to launch a peer mentorship program for first-year Native American students, transfer students and continuing students.
- *Raised awareness of equity gaps* – The campus hosted an all-campus Student Academic Success Day and Closing the Achievement Gap Summit to educate campus faculty, staff and students on advancing student success in times of challenge.
- *Launched a center for first-generation students* – The Center for First Generation Student Initiatives helps meet the diverse needs of students from first generation student populations. Efforts included securing the First Gen Forward Designation and establishing an Honor Society for first-generation students on campus.

Cal State San Bernardino

- *Implemented an integrated strategy to address equity* – At Cal State San Bernardino, equity gaps were addressed using a three-pronged approach consisting of: advising; academic support and customized student services. In advising, data driven campaigns were engineered around student completion and graduation. Campaigns consisted of progress reports for early intervention and graduation check campaigns for completion. Academic support was offered utilizing supplemental instruction, tutoring and mentoring to target students in courses and majors that historically generate lower grades or withdrawals.
- *Expanded efforts to support basic needs* – As with many CSU campuses, Cal State San Bernardino addressed the COVID-19 pandemic impact on student well-being through increased services and resources. In 2020, it provided more than 700 laptops and 400 hotspots to students, faculty and staff who did not have access to reliable technology or connectivity needed to work remotely. The campus also broadened its basic needs program with new and innovative efforts to address student food, housing and financial insecurity, including launching the YOU@CSUSB health and well-being platform as a confidential, online space for students to take charge of their own well-being.

San Diego State

- *Increased student advisement support* – San Diego State launched the Academic Success Program in 2019-20 to provide academic case management and targeted interventions for students from groups most impacted by equity gaps in the six-year graduation rate: Pell-eligible Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Latinx men and Black men. The program hired advisors, graduate student “academic coaches” and tutors to advance its goals.
- *Leveraged data to identify inequities* – The campus’s Analytical Studies and Institutional Research office supported its 2019-20 Data Champions project in generating new data-based

understanding of equity gaps, high challenge courses, barriers to graduation and advising in the service of student success.

San Francisco State

- *Created additional identity-based centers* – San Francisco State continued its work to provide all students with a sense of belonging through the addition of two student resource centers: Latinx Student Services and LGBTQ/Pride Student Life. Along with existing centers, students are provided with more purposeful, and frequent, opportunities to engage around issues of inclusion, identity and social justice.
- *Invested in student advisement services* – The campus expanded and coordinated student advising by adding roles of graduation specialists, college specialists, retention specialists and transfer advisors.

San José State

- *Supported undocumented students* – San José State’s UndocuSpartan Summer Academy provides newly admitted undergraduate students a learning community centered around topics impacting undocumented students. The Summer Academy helped students gain the confidence they need to be successful as students regardless of their perceived limitations due to their status.
- *Implemented summer transition program* – The campus’s SESP Transition program, started in fall 2019, focused on supporting incoming students from East Side Union High School District located in a racially diverse area. Initial outcomes saw that 97 percent of ESUHSD students who started in fall 2019 remain enrolled for spring 2020.

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

- *Increased research opportunities* – Cal Poly San Luis Obispo’s BEACoN (Believe, Educate & Empower, Advocate, Collaborate, Nurture) Research program offered research opportunities for underrepresented students. In 2019-20, 43 mentor-mentee pairs were selected representing all six colleges, nearly double the participation from the prior year.
- *Launched a transfer student center* – Developed from a senior research project conducted by Cal Poly students, the new transfer student center launched in January 2020. It created an online transfer orientation, hosted 215 prospective transfer students at a virtual open house with New Student and Transition Programs, Admissions and University Housing, and revamped and launched the transfer center faculty and staff advisory board.

CSU San Marcos

- *Increased awareness of and reduced administrative barriers to financial aid* – Through communication campaigns, workshops and a streamlined application process, CSU San Marcos increased the number of students that applied for and completed the financial aid process by 2,000 applicants in 2019-20. As students from lower-income, first-generation and underrepresented backgrounds often take longer to complete their degrees, the campus also

educated students on research that shows timely graduation is possible with a 15-unit course load.

- *Supported students at risk* – CSU San Marcos continued to invest in resources for students struggling with challenges in and outside of the classroom. The Cougar Care Network, to which students from first-generation and underrepresented backgrounds are more likely to be referred, provided information, resources, advocacy and support for students dealing with personal, academic, financial or other challenges which may adversely affect their academic success.

Sonoma State

- *Supported male students of color* – Sonoma State’s Male Success Initiative was created to improve the retention and graduation rates for male students of color. The program focused on academic support, identity development and intergenerational mentoring.
- *Invested in equity-minded professional development* – The campus’s LARC (Learning and Academic Resource Center) Professional Development for Inclusion project expanded training to approximately 100 student employees, peer leaders and staff on such topics as safe zones, neurodiversity, creating inclusive environments collaborative learning and asynchronous, online supplemental instruction.

Stanislaus State

- *Created a care manager position* – Stanislaus State developed a care manager position serving as a single point of contact for all basic needs programs on campus. The care manager partnered with on- and off- campus groups to maintain and expand the basic needs programs aimed to address students’ food and housing insecurity.
- *Reduced administrative barriers* – The campus increased the threshold for drops for non-payment of fees to ensure that students were not negatively impacted by thresholds that are unusually low. As a result, approximately 27.6 percent fewer students were disenrolled for nonpayment.

4 Hiring in Support of Student Success

CSU campuses continue to use a portion of Graduation Initiative 2025 funding to hire additional faculty, staff and administrators, where necessary and appropriate to advance the campuses' student success goals. The chart below outlines the number of net new full-time equivalent positions that were added systemwide from fall 2019 to fall 2020 (regardless of funding source). The hires listed are all "net new" and do not include the replacement of employees who retired or departed for other opportunities.

Employee Type	Number of Positions Added from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020
Tenure-Track Instructional Faculty	108
Lecturers*	0
Mental Health Counselors	11
Faculty Total	119
Academic Advisors (SSP)**	27
Other Support Staff	0
Staff Total	27
Management Personnel (MPP)	51
Total	197

**Due to the fact that the majority of positions listed above are full-time, headcount is represented. Since the majority of lecturers are part-time faculty, full-time equivalent is used for comparison.*

***Data for Academic Advisors include all employees with the Student Success Professional (SSP) classification.*

While every effort was made systemwide to maintain momentum in employee growth to support student success, the rate of hires was impacted by the events of 2020. In some cases, changes in enrollment resulted in more full-time faculty teaching lower-division courses normally assigned to lecturers. Efficiencies in enrollment management also saw more cancellations of lower-division courses with low enrollment, and modest and equitable increases in class sizes for larger lecture or discussion courses resulting in less sections. One campus cited a large hiring cohort of new tenured/tenure-track faculty of which more than half were net-new (non-replacement) positions. This resulted in a reduction of the need for lecturers in those corresponding departments.

All campuses experienced a reduction in their operating budgets for 2020-21 due to the reduction of \$299 million in state funding, and many elected to pause the completion of search for all but the most critical positions while others implemented hiring freezes altogether. A number of CSU campuses are sponsoring early exit programs to help mitigate the need for layoffs, though many have experienced a reduction in work due to COVID-19 and the pivot to a virtual environment. As a result, campuses have identified staff positions for layoff wherein a lack of work existed, including on-campus student services, housing, parking, culinary services, custodial and others.

The immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on state budget constraints, and the overall long-term financial impact, remain unknown. Additional reduction of staff, specifically management personnel, may continue through 2021. Against this complex landscape, the CSU remains steadfast in its commitment to Graduation Initiative 2025 and meeting the demonstrated need that faculty and staff fill in supporting student success. As evidenced by the examples provided throughout this report, and shared in prior Graduation Initiative 2025 reports, CSU employees play an essential role in the lives of students. While advancements were made in leveraging technology to amplify the impact of academic

advisors in a remote learning environment, which helped contribute to a high retention rate of students, there is still more work to be done to ensure students stay on track to earn their CSU degree.

Hiring can also play an essential role in helping to eliminate stubborn equity gaps on individual campuses. Specifically, increasing faculty diversity can have a profound impact on historically underserved communities, such as first-generation students who benefit from seeing themselves represented by professors for whom they share an affinity.

Conclusion

The 2019-20 academic year marked both milestones and major changes for the California State University. It was the year that the CSU community celebrated the legacy of retiring Chancellor Timothy P. White, a driving force and founding visionary of the Graduation Initiative 2025, and marked the middle point of the initiative itself. It was a year of record-setting enrollment and retention rates as well as a year of unprecedented hardship and challenges for students, staff and faculty brought forth by a global pandemic and economic and social crises. This report captures the collective efforts of the CSU community to meet the moment and to ensure that, regardless of the crisis, student success remained at the center of the university's mission. The efforts and accomplishments described in this report represent only a portion of the ongoing and innovative work across the 23 campuses to advance the ambitious goals of Graduation Initiative 2025. With continued investment by the state, Graduation Initiative 2025 will continue to improve outcomes for all students who will, in turn, become the graduates needed to power California's recovery and future prosperity.