Executive Summary

The California State University (CSU) provides high-quality, affordable education and is committed to the success of its students. In 2009, CSU launched its first concerted graduation initiative to improve six-year completion rates and cut in half achievement gaps for first-time freshmen by 2015. As the first phase of the initiative was concluding, faculty, student and campus leaders gathered in fall 2014 to establish new campus and system targets for the year 2025 that included the following expanded set of measurements:

- Four-year freshman graduation rates
- Six-year freshman graduation rates
- Two-year transfer graduation rates
- Four-year transfer graduation rates

- Achievement gaps for under-represented students
- Achievement gaps for low income students

In fall, 2015, the final results of the first phase of the graduation initiative indicated tremendous improvement in student success. The CSU exceeded its original completion goals, and achieved the highest graduation rates in recent history. Consequently, it became evident that more ambitious goals were needed to build on the success of the first phase of this work. As such, the CSU committed to revisit its goals during summer 2016.

Accordingly, the CSU has established ambitious revised graduation goals for 2025. In developing the goals, the CSU formed an advisory committee from across the system including representatives of students, faculty, staff, academic and student affairs leadership, presidents, and trustees. In establishing the revised goals, the committee developed a set of guiding principles that included maintaining academic quality, ensuring access, setting ambitious, challenging and realistic goals, and respecting campus differences. The revised 2025 goals are listed in the table below.

Completion Metric	Current Rates	Revised 2025 Target
First-Time Freshmen Four-Year Graduation Rate	19%	40%
First-Time Freshmen: Six-Year Graduation Rate	57%	70%
Transfer Students: Two-Year Graduation Rate	31%	45%
Transfer Students: Four-Year Graduation Rate	73%	85%
Achievement Gap by Ethnicity	11 points	0 points
Achievement Gap by Pell Eligibility	8 points	0 points
Achievement Gap by First Generation Status	13 points	0 points

The improvement sought through GI 2025 is of unparalleled magnitude. Achievement of these goals will place the CSU among the top Public Comprehensive universities in the nation in timely student degree completion, particularly when considering institutions of similar demographic, income and academic preparation profiles. Each CSU campus has developed a plan outlining strategic efforts to support the achievement of their goals. Further, the CSU system will undertake a number of capacity-building strategies to support institutional effectiveness in improving timely degree completion. Attainment of these goals will require commitments, not only by the university communities, but also by the State of California to provide the sustained investment to achieve these unprecedented outcomes.

Introduction

The mission of the California State University is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever-changing needs of California. Reflecting that commitment, the first Graduation Initiative (GI) launched in 2009, brought baccalaureate graduation rates to all-time highs, raised baccalaureate completion rates for freshmen by 11 percentage points, and exceeded the CSU's six-year graduation rate goal. This gain translated to 5,500 more students graduated annually. Evidence shows that GI 2009 efforts benefitted students from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Further improvements resulting from the 2009 GI are expected with subsequent student cohorts.

The CSU is committed to addressing the future workforce needs of California. Thus, the system has established very ambitious revised goals for student success for 2025. When attained, these goals will significantly increase the number of Californians that have earned a baccalaureate degree and place CSU campuses among the very top of comparable institutions across the nation in terms of student outcomes. Indeed, attainment of these goals with the CSU's diverse mix of students would set unprecedented new national standards for outcomes among similar institutions.

Comparison to National Benchmark Data

Graduation Rates

Table 1 shows CSU campuses compared to (a) all Public Master's institutions; (b) 33 high-performing Public Master's universities; and (c) 70 aspirational institutions. Within the Carnegie Classification, twenty-one of the CSU's twenty-three institutions are classified as "Public Master's". The table below includes data on the 260 reporting U.S. Public Master's institutions.

Seventy non-CSU institutions were selected as "Aspirational Similar Institutions" based on methodology developed by the Education Trust's *College Results Online* (CRO). For each CSU campus, five similar but higher performing institutions were identified and their completion rate data was used to set the CSU campus' new 2025 goals. In some cases, a similar peer university was identified for more than one CSU campus.

In these data, CSU campuses were above the average of all Public Master's institutions on six-year graduation rates both overall and for underrepresented students. The CSU's overall four-year graduation rate, was below comparisons in the 2014 IPEDS data (for the 2008 entering cohort), but has risen to 19% in more recent years (fall 2011 cohort four-year rate), closer to all Public Master's.

Only a small minority, 33, of Public Master's universities had attained 40% four-year graduation rates (2008 cohort). The highest performing universities had a significantly higher proportion of tenure-track faculty members, significantly fewer underrepresented students, higher entering student academic preparation (SAT) scores, and many fewer

low-income (Pell-eligible) students.

Table 1

Characteristics of Comparison Institutions					
	All U.S. Public Master's Universities	Highest Performing Public Master's	CSU Aspirational Institutions	CSU System Current	CSU goal
N selected	260	33	70	23	
Top	100%	13%	27%	9%	
Average 6-year grad rate	46%	68%	54%	52%	70%
Underrepresented student average 6-year rate	38%	59%	47%	46%	70%
Average 4-year grad rate	23%	50%	31%	17%	40%
Underrepresented student average 4-year rate	16%	37%	24%	12%	40%
Average % Pell Recipients Among Freshmen	45%	28%	41%	50%	
Average % Underrepresented Minority	29%	13%	30%	41%	
Average Estimated Median SAT / ACT	1,007	1,088	1,026	982	
Average Percent Full-Time Faculty	61%	62%	67%	51%	

More than half of CSU students are low-income (Pell-eligible). Low-income students are more often the first in their family to attend college, they more often originate from underfunded K-12 school districts, and they require additional academic and student support. It is unsurprising that institutions with higher four-year graduation rates tend to have lower proportions of low-income students and vice versa. The institutions that had attained a 40% four-year rate had on average far fewer low income students than the CSU campuses. Only one Public Master's institution attained a 40% four-year rate with a proportion of low-income students comparable to the CSU's 50%.

The CSU aspirational peers had nearly double the CSU's four-year graduation rate, but were quite similar with regards to six-year rates. These institutions, although more similar to the CSU campuses than the highest performing universities, also had fewer underrepresented and low income (Pell) students than the CSU, a higher proportion of tenure track faculty members, and higher entering student SAT scores. It is notable that the CSU's new goals are significantly higher than rates attained by these aspirational comparable institutions.

Goals

Goal Setting Methodology

In setting ambitious graduation rate goals, some key principles informed our approach. First and foremost, academic quality will not be compromised in efforts to increase graduation rates.

Other guiding principles included:

- Set goals that are ambitious, challenging and realistic;
- Sustain a high level of academic rigor;
- Provide access to opportunity;
- Meet students where they are, while helping them to graduate in a timely manner;

- Respect differences among campuses; and
- Understand that goals will require increased resources, intentionality and innovation, along with a relentless focus on student success.

In selecting goals, the CSU brought together an advisory committee from across the system including students, faculty, staff, academic and student affairs leadership, presidents, and trustees. This group reflected on presentations and data provided by the Public Policy Institute of California and California Competes as well as data for all US Public Universities and all US Public Master's universities.

The committee used this information to establish the methodology described below. Because of the variety of institutional profiles within the CSU system, we found that no single methodology produced reasonable or realistic targets for all six goals on all 23 campuses. So although the methodology for each set of campus goals was applied the same way, some goals were adjusted leveraging floors or ceilings to arrive at a reasonable balance of feasibility and aspiration.

Freshman Rates: For each campus, the top five peer comparators were identified using the *College Results Online* ("CRO") web tool developed by the Education Trust. A mean graduation rate (four-year and six-year) was calculated along with an annual mean rate of change for the graduation rates of the top five peers. These rates were then extrapolated to 2025 using the mean annual rate of graduation rate change.

Transfer Rates: Review of community college transfer outcomes data available from The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at the University of Oklahoma ("CSRDE") revealed that the California State University exceeds the 75th percentile with regards to two- and four-year outcome rates for ninety-seven non- CSU campuses participating in the CSRDE data collection. All goals are computed as current campus rates extrapolated through 2025.

System and Campus Goals

CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White had already declared the ambitious goal of eliminating achievement gaps in his "State of the CSU" address at the January, 2016 Board of Trustees meeting. Assembly Bill 1602 also calls for closing achievement gaps for underrepresented, low-income and first-generation students.

The CSU has established ambitious goals for 2025 for each campus. When aggregated together the weighted impacts of the campus goals derive the system goals shown in table 2.

Table 2 – CSU System Goals

Completion Metric	Revised 2025 Target
First-Time Freshmen Four-Year Graduation Rate	40%
First-Time Freshmen: Six-Year Graduation Rate	70%
Transfer Students: Two-Year Graduation Rate	45%
Transfer Students: Four-Year Graduation Rate	85%
Achievement Gap by Ethnicity	0 points
Achievement Gap by Pell Eligibility	0 points
Achievement Gap by First Generation Status	0 points

Each campus has been given revised goals for four-year and six-year graduation rates for students entering as freshmen and two-year and four-year transfer student graduation rates. The expectation is that through more deliberate and coordinated efforts, achievement gaps for all groups will be closed. When looked at together, the range of improvements reflected by these new goals is formidable, and reflects the unique characteristics of each individual campus.

Table 3 CSU Campus Revised 2025 Goal Ranges

Completion Metric	Revised 2025 Target campus range
First-Time Freshmen Four-Year Graduation Rate	30-71%
First-Time Freshmen: Six-Year Graduation Rate	55-92%
Transfer Students: Two-Year Graduation Rate	23-64%
Transfer Students: Four-Year Graduation Rate	68-93%
Achievement Gap by Ethnicity	0 points
Achievement Gap by Pell Eligibility	0 points
Achievement Gap by First Generation Status	0 points

System Plan

The CSU's plan includes key principles, identifies core strategies and supportive activities, highlights key improvement areas, articulates strong central leadership and support from the Chancellor's Office, presents accountability metrics, and provides long- and short-term timelines.

Key Principles

Closing Achievement Gaps
Closing achievement gaps will require campuses to amplify attention on traditionally underserved students through investments in campuses efforts that expand access to resources supporting academic and student success.

Quality of Learning
Each campus has long had in place quality assurance mechanisms such as program review, accreditation, and assessment of student learning outcomes. A key principle of our timely graduation work is that the quality of learning will remain high, unaffected by the time to degree.

Access to Opportunity
Access is a long-standing value in the CSU, which has historically been one of the most accessible universities in the nation. Access will continue to be a core value and will not be sacrificed.

Meet Students Where They Are
Our students are diverse and have complex lives. Our strategies must support them from their current points in life all the way to degree completion. We must balance our expectation that students must be ready for college with the share responsibility to serve our students well, independent of their academic preparation.

Respect Differences Among Campuses
CSU campuses are diverse, and strategies for closing achievement gaps and improving timeliness of graduation must be adapted to local campus contexts.

Leadership
Our new goals are so ambitious that they will set a new standard for U.S. public universities. When attained, the CSU will become the recognized national leader in student success. To attain these goals, the CSU must exercise an unprecedented degree of leadership on every campus and at the system level.

Core Strategies and Activities

In order for the CSU to succeed in attaining these revised goals, students must earn more units that fulfill degree requirements in less time. For example, fall 2015 data shows that about 4,000 fall 2011 freshman cohort entrants completed their degrees in 4.5 years. Efforts moving this group to a four year pace would boost system four year rates by eight percentage points.

To help achieve graduation rate goals, strategies have to be targeted to students who are on degree progress plans that have the potential to be shortened to the target timeframes. Analytics will be needed to identify students. However, not every student targeted will be successfully moved to an accelerated pace, so campuses will have to more than minimum numbers of students to have a reasonable chance of making goals.

Each core strategy must be supported by key activities, as described following;

Strategy 1: Increase the average number of courses students earn during the academic year

One strategy is to increase course taking in the academic year. Costs include those associated with added sections and advisors to work with students. For campuses with space limitations, online course development will be necessary.

This strategy will raise the average unit load (AUL) carried by students, which is currently about 12.9 units per term or 25.8 units per year. Key activities that can support this strategy include (a) adding courses in the academic year, (b) using proactive advising to encourage students to take additional courses, (c) developing online courses to make added course-taking more convenient for students, and (d) supporting students in higher course loads with general and targeted student support services.

Strategy 2: Increase summer/winter course taking

Another straightforward strategy is to increase student course-taking during summer and winter sessions. The costs are similar to those associated with increasing course-taking during the academic year but a significant barrier that exists in the lack of financial aid for summer school.

This strategy will be supported by key activities including (a) adding courses that students need to summer and winter schedules (b) use of proactive advising to encourage students to add courses, (c) developing online courses to make added course-taking more convenient for students.

Strategy 3: Replace course-taking that may not contribute to degree requirements with courses which do contribute within the target timeframe

Some gains will be achieved by reducing unneeded course taking and better use of existing seats in classes. Students often earn additional units because they are exploring a variety of disciplines, and those that change majors have often accumulated credits which do not apply to their new academic path. Currently on average, students take about one semester's worth of units beyond the minimum required for a baccalaureate degree. Improvements in four-year degrees will come almost entirely from efforts to target the latter group and the opportunity to decrease time to degree by reducing unneeded units is more limited than is initially apparent.

This strategy will be supported by key activities including (a) developing and using capabilities to accurately forecast needs for classes, (b) managing enrollment to ensure all needed seats are provided, (c) proactive and intrusive advising, (d) developing programs to reduce major-changing and prompt earlier choice of majors by students, (e) reduced exploratory course taking through advising, (f) work with K-12 and community colleges to

promote early major and career selection, (g) benchmarking curriculum against appropriate peer curricula and streamlining where appropriate.

Strategy 4: Increase student success rates in courses within the target time frame, especially in gateway and past high failure rate courses

Some gains will also be achieved by reducing students repeating courses. This improvement requires course redesign with some combination of better screening and placement of students, additional supports, and/or changes pedagogy toward active learning. CSU has been working on this for several years. This is labor-intensive work that requires resources.

Key activities that support this strategy include (a) working with K-12 to reduce remediation in math and English, (b) innovations in remediation such as "stretch" courses, (c) improved student screening and placement in key courses, (d) more support such as tutoring, (e) innovative pedagogy toward more active learning and high impact practices, (f) developing physical spaces to encourage study and engagement, (g) ensuring that faculty hires are prepared to work with diverse students. Sample expenditure include faculty time for course redesign, staff for tutoring, supplemental instruction, learning communities.

Additional Strategies

K-12 pipeline partnerships will be considered as a mechanism to increase college readiness. Campus specific best practices that can be scaled to all CSU campuses will be shared through periodic meetings of campus leadership. Similarly scalable national best practices will be considered and shared.

Key Improvement Areas

To support students to timely degree completion, all parts of the campus – not just a few programs -- have to function well and to work together. This why there is no "magic bullet" for student success; rather a campus has to ensure that all of its working parts are working well and coordinating to benefit students. Reflecting this systemic perspective, we have identified a set of key improvement target areas. Note that closing achievement gaps will be a prominent aspect in each target area.

2016-17 Timely Graduation Efforts

The first priority will be to provide support to campuses for implementing strategies for moving students close to four-year and two-year plans of study onto target time to degree plans. This will be an immediate project. CO will develop support strategies to help campuses understand how to identify and engage students, options for providing incentives for students, and strategies in course delivery. Target campus audiences for this support include university and college enrollment planners, advisors, academic and student affairs leaders, and faculty leaders.

Enrollment Management from Recruitment to Graduation

Starting in spring 2017, first among the next set of priorities will be enrollment planning and management. With the expected infusion of funding to increase student units, campuses will need to develop infrastructure to institutionalize measures to accurately

predict student needs for seats in classes, organize the schedule of classes to deliver those seats, and use proactive advising to make sure that students enroll. A key activity is using degree-planner data to ensure that all needed sections are offered based on student outstanding requirements. Some campuses will wish to fine tune their admissions strategies, particularly at the transfer level to make sure that pipelines are as smooth as possible. Some campuses will wish to use impaction (carefully) to align with student success goals. Target campus audiences for this support include university and college enrollment planners, university fiscal leadership leaders, academic and student affairs leaders, and faculty leaders.

Improved Advising
Almost all of our strategies will require advising. We will develop support structure for campuses to share best practices related to using predictive analytics in working with students and strategies for proactive and intrusive advising to engage students. Target campus audiences for this support include advisors, predictive analytics planners, faculty leaders, and academic and student affairs leaders.

Data Capability
Data capabilities are foundational to student success work and this is an area in which we anticipate that some campuses will benefit from assistance. The CSU system has built some dashboard capabilities that are available for campus use and some campuses have capabilities. There will be a need to engage more faculty and staff in using available data and in developing capabilities at the campus level to conduct local research to inform strategies. There will also be needs to engage leadership in discussions of how to develop and use these capabilities strategically. Target campus audiences for this support include advisors, predictive analytics planners, managers from institutional research and/or enrollment management, faculty leaders, and academic and student affairs leaders.

Focused Leadership
Campuses are complex organizations and it can be challenging to develop and sustain effective campus wide collaboration across divisions and units. It will be valuable for campus leaders to share best practices in creating leadership structures and empowering campus wide collaboration in support of student success. Once these discussions have been accomplished in some depth with campus senior leaders, it will be timely to ask campuses to revise their student success plans based on their developing perspectives and knowledge. Discussions will begin Fall 2016 with revised submissions about Fall 2017. Target campus audiences for this support include senior campus leadership and senior faculty leadership.

Other Opportunities
Appendix A identifies other improvement areas. Based on campus identified needs, support structures for these may be developed starting in 2017-18.

Chancellor's Office Leadership and Support

CSU system efforts will (a) provide leadership, (b) support campus plans in specific improvement areas, (c) develop key metrics, and (d) summarize and use data both for improvement and for accountability. Support will be provided in the form of workshops and webinars focused on respective improvement areas. Workshops and webinars will share best practices drawn from national experts and research literature as well as from best practices existing on CSU campuses. CSU will provide leadership and logistical support to organize workshops and webinars that address campus needs.

Timelines

Below are timelines for long-term plans to 2025 and for short-term plans for 2016-17.

2016-17 Timeline	2016-25 Timeline
Fall	**2016**
• Plans approved by Department of Finance • CO will develop support for 2016-17 timely graduation efforts including budget and incentive information • Campuses identify target students (those near four-year and two-year degree plans) • Campuses add and repurpose advisors and make other changes needed to support work with target students • Campuses begin to implement strategies for working with target students	• September: System-wide symposium on student success • October: CO identifies support structures for first priority improvement areas: • Spring: CO delivers support structures (workshops and webinars) for first priority improvement areas • Spring: Campuses identify specific resources and actions for subsequent years pending approval of continued funding • June: President's Council and Academic and Student Affairs Council assess 2016-17 timely graduation efforts
Spring	**2017 - 2025**
• Campuses enroll target students in additional Winter, Spring, and Summer courses • CO summarizes data assessing success of first year efforts	• Fall: Revised campus long-term plans Annually to 2025 • Spring and fall: Periodic workshops and webinars on key improvement areas

Assessment, Accountability and Key Metrics

The CSU commits to provide annual spring reporting of cohort progress at system and campus aggregate levels with disaggregation to underrepresented, low income, and first generation populations of interest. Key metrics include:

- Four-year graduation numbers and rates for entering freshmen cohorts,
- Two-year graduation numbers and rates for entering transfers cohorts,
- Fall-to-Fall average unit load for undergraduate freshmen and transfer cohorts,

- Summer course taking units for undergraduate freshmen and transfer cohorts,
- One-year retention numbers and rates for entering freshmen cohorts,
- One-year retention numbers and rates for entering transfer cohorts, and
- Campus implementation milestones of best practices of enrollment management, advising, and data capabilities.

CSU Board of Trustees Feedback

The 2025 Graduation Initiative targets were presented, and subsequently approved at the September 20, 2016 Board of Trustees meeting. Following the presentation, trustees expressed their interest in gaining a better understanding of how the Chancellor's Office intends to track campus progress and develop accountability metrics related to our new graduation rate and equity goals. We have outlined above in the Assessment, Accountability and Key Metrics section of this report several global metrics that will help campuses monitor their progress. In addition, Chancellor's Office staff have developed the CSU Student Success Dashboard to assist campuses in examining and understanding the impact of the global metrics along with the shorter-term milestones and indicators that they have outlined in their campus plans. It is our intent to work closely with campuses to ensure that these data are collected, analyzed, and presented in a manner that is clear, concise, and easy to understand. In addition to reviewing with campus leadership, we will share annual progress reports with the Board.

The trustees also suggested that we consider tracking students who enroll on a part-time basis, and that we begin to collect data related to enrolled time-to-degree. We intend to expand our tracking of student progress in the Student Success Dashboard to include part-time students as well as students who leave the CSU and complete their baccalaureate degree at another four-year institution. The Dashboard will allow users to see the enrollment patterns of students, track "stop-out" behavior, and follow the progress of students who begin at one CSU campus and graduate from another CSU or non-CSU campus. This is important information for campuses to analyze in order to fully understand the enrollment patterns of their students.