

FACCCCTS

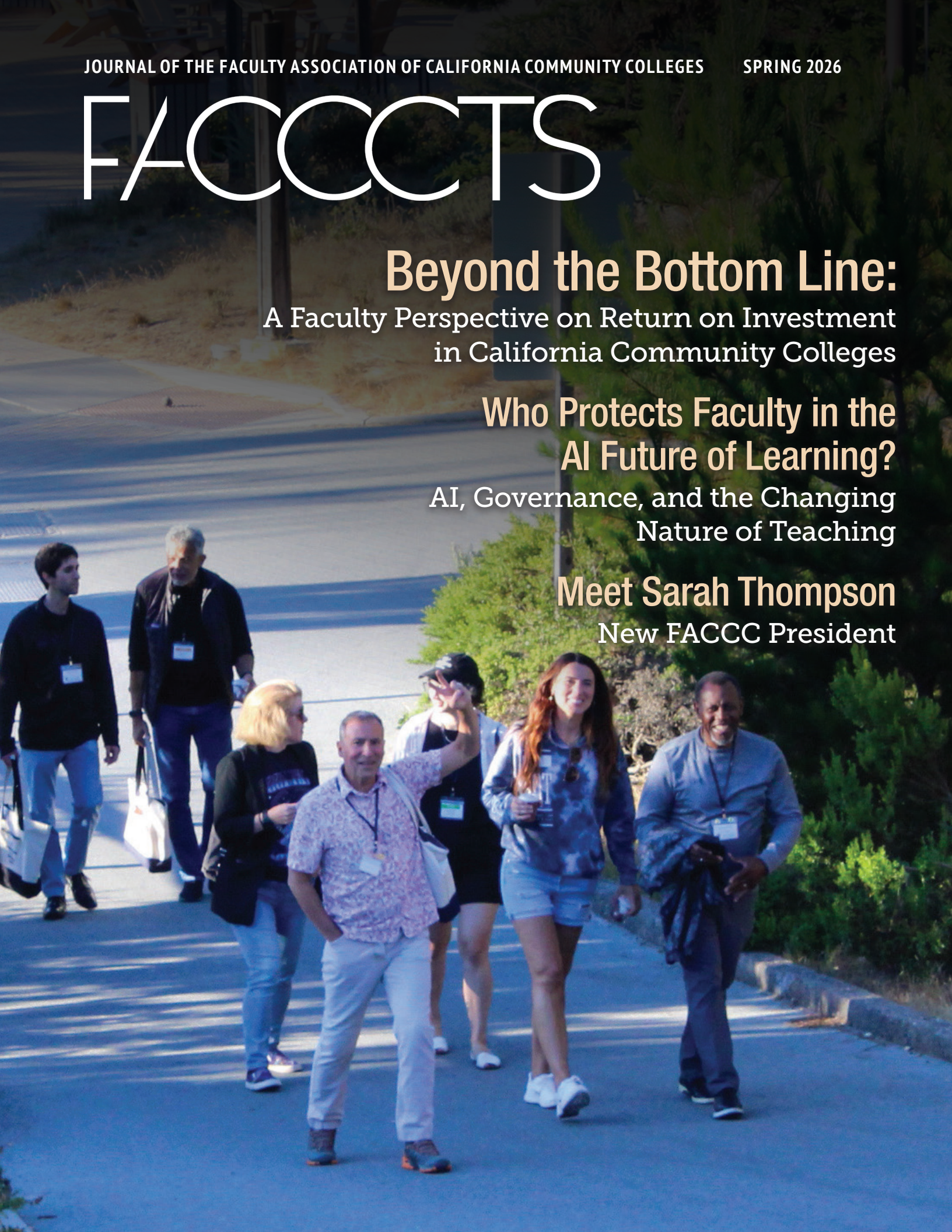
Beyond the Bottom Line:

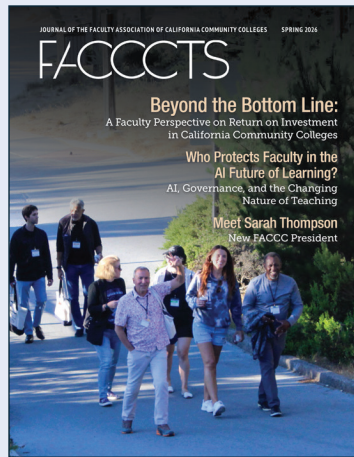
A Faculty Perspective on Return on Investment
in California Community Colleges

Who Protects Faculty in the AI Future of Learning?

AI, Governance, and the Changing
Nature of Teaching

Meet Sarah Thompson
New FACCC President





1823 11th Street
Sacramento, CA 95811
TEL 916.447.8555 | FAX 916.447.0726
info@facc.org

FACCCCTS, Spring 2026, published by the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, 1823 11th Street, Sacramento, CA 95811. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FACCC, 1823 11th Street, Sacramento, CA 95811. Copyright 2025 by the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges and the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges Education Institute. All rights reserved.

FACCC is a nonprofit professional association that advocates for all California Community College faculty, and its sister corporation, FACCC Education Institute, offers information and professional development for faculty. FACCCCTS is typically published twice during the academic year, offering information, analysis, and provocative viewpoints on politics, philosophy, and education. FACCCCTS' primary purpose is to provide a forum for faculty and the California Community College community. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of FACCC, FACCC Education Institute, their boards, general membership, or staff. FACCCCTS publishes letters to the editor, commentaries, and other contributions on a space-available basis. FACCCCTS reserves the right to edit all text according to the American Psychological Association style and as deemed necessary. For a copy of the writers' guidelines, please call 916.447.8555 or email info@facc.org. FACCCCTS is printed in California. Unless otherwise indicated, artwork for this publication is purchased through stock photography companies or shot by staff. For details and questions, contact Editor Ashley Hamilton at 916.447.8555 or email ahamilton@facc.org.



MISSION

To inform, educate, empower, and advocate for faculty in service to students and the communities of California.

VISION

An educational environment that is equitable, accessible, and appropriately funded led by a diverse and empowered faculty.

Every faculty a member, every member an advocate, every advocate informed.

EDUCATION INSTITUTE MISSION

The policy institute that enhances teaching and learning through research, communication, and professional development opportunities for community college faculty.

VALUES

We value the expertise, experience, and professionalism of all faculty, full-time and part-time, as the primary force for advancing the mission of California Community Colleges.

We value students and the significance of the student-faculty relationship and the opportunity to foster mutual growth and success.

We value diverse voices, perspectives, and cultures of both students and faculty in the quest for social justice and equity.

We value community colleges as a driving force for economic growth, social cohesion, and opportunities for personal advancement for all Californians.

We value collegiality and a working environment that recognizes the importance of all organizational and personal voices in serving students.

We value the growth and development of all faculty members as professionals in service of their communities, their institutions, and their students.

FOR THE RECORD

It is FACCCCTS' policy to correct errors promptly. Please notify Ashley Hamilton of any errors at ahamilton@facc.org

FACCCCTS

Editor
Ashley Hamilton
ahamilton@facc.org

FACCC STAFF
Stephanie Goldman
Executive Director
sgoldman@facc.org

Ashley Hamilton
Director of External Affairs
ahamilton@facc.org

Lidia Stoian
Director of Program and Development
lstoian@facc.org

Soni Huynh
Operations Coordinator
shuynh@facc.org

Jason Henderson
Government Relations Specialist
jhenderson@facc.org

Wendy Brill-Wynkoop
Membership Engagement Coordinator
wbrillwynkoop@facc.org

Mikala Hutchinson
Membership & External Affairs Specialist
mhutchinson@facc.org

Martin Orea
Communications Coordinator
morea@facc.org

GENERAL INQUIRIES

EMAIL: info@facc.org

BOARD OF GOVERNORS / EI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
Sarah Thompson
Las Positas College

PAST-PRESIDENT
Wendy Brill-Wynkoop
College of the Canyons

VICE PRESIDENT
Leslie Banta
Mendocino College

TREASURER
Mario Martinez
Santa Monica College

SECRETARY
Jason Mayfield
Diablo Valley College

PART-TIME FACULTY OFFICER
Linda Sneed
Cosumnes River College

GOVERNORS

Andrew Aleman
College of the Desert

Cornelia Alsheimer-Barthel
Santa Barbara City College

Ruby Christian-Brougham
Los Angeles Valley College

Grace Chee
West Los Angeles College

Joshua Christ
Mt. San Antonio College

Chris Cofer
Los Angeles Mission College

Susan Finley
Santa Monica College

Katia Fuchs
City College of San Francisco

John Govsky
Cabrillo College

Michelle Haggerty
College of the Redwoods

Crystal Huckabee
Long Beach City College

Richard Mahon
Allan Hancock College

Siobhan McGregor-Gordon
Santa Rosa Jr. College

James Nguyen
De Anza College

Michael Peterson
Las Positas College

Antonio Rivas
Mt. San Antonio College

Emily Schmidt
Santa Rosa Jr. College

Jacob Traugott
Sacramento City College

Ian Walton
Mission College

FACCCCTS

SPRING 2026

FEATURES

4 The Fire Next Time, or What Comes Next?

By Richard Mahon, Allan Hancock College,
FACCC Communications Committee

8 Fading Guardians - Declining Faculty Leadership

By Ian Walton, FACCC Board of Governor for Retired Faculty,
FACCC Communications Committee

18 Who Protects Faculty in the AI Future of Learning?

By K. Frindell Teuscher, CCI President, Santa Rosa Jr. College,
FACCC Communications Committee

22 Beyond the Bottom Line: A Faculty Perspective on Return on Investment in California Community Colleges

By Wendy Brill-Wynkoop, FACCC Past-President, College of the Canyons, FACCC Communications Committee Chair

DEPARTMENTS

12 Meet Sarah Thompson, New FACCC President

16 Advocacy & Policy Conference

20 Voices of FACCC: Meet Our Staff

Mikala Hutchinson, Membership & External Affairs Specialist and
Jason Henderson, Government Relations Specialist

30 March in March



The Fire Next Time, or What Comes Next?

By Richard Mahon, Allan Hancock College,
FACCC Communications Committee

Those of us within the California Community Colleges (CCCs) system are used to the roller coaster. We are “counter-cyclical.” If the economy improves, students get jobs, and we struggle for enrollment. If the economy tanks, students return to our colleges to up-skill, but there’s no budget to support their needs. Accustomed to this cycle, we may be slow to recognize existential threats. When I set out to draft this article, I intended to focus on threats to academic freedom in American higher education, but it became apparent that we face a broader threat. This article reflects on the Trump administration’s higher education policy priorities. It is likely that the landscape will have evolved significantly since this piece was drafted, so I will try to reflect on the current crisis and consider long-term challenges.

It helps to remember where we started. California’s community college history began with Fresno City College, but enrollments remained low until the 1950s. The GI Bill was first authorized in 1944 and provided educational funding to returning servicemen and women. This led to a substantial increase in community college enrollments across the country. That trend continued unabated and accelerated after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957. Abruptly, the fear that the Soviet communists might beat the U.S. into space led to enormous investment in science education and research in American colleges and universities; a college education became

a necessity. The California Master Plan for Higher Education had as one of its primary goals the need to plan for the broad expansion of California public higher education. Until the second Trump administration, the inherent value of supporting higher education in general and federal investment in science and research were not seriously questioned. Are we now making America “great” again and putting America “first”? What does that look like for American higher education and California community colleges—and the students they serve?

Challenges to Diversity

Vats of ink have been used to discuss how the Trump administration seems to mean putting white Americans first and making America great for the 1%. Both the word and the concept of diversity have multiple meanings, but in the CCCs, serving diverse students means serving the students who live here. California was the first state in the nation to become a “majority-minority” state, with more residents identifying as non-white than white. Although levels of diversity vary across the state, very few community colleges resemble the narrow, traditional image of a college student implied by the administration’s rhetoric. If community colleges don’t serve diverse students, there will be so few students left that there will be no budget to serve white students. California has outlawed race-based admissions since Proposition 209 took effect in 1996, but the selective California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems

continued on page 6

include many diverse students whose grades, test scores, and extracurricular records earned them a seat in a selective classroom.

Under the Master Plan, the CSU admits the top third and the UC the top eighth of California high school graduates; 12.5% was the original goal, while the current UC guarantee seems to be 9%. The Trump administration tried to extort \$1.5 billion from UCLA, using federal grants as leverage. As has been the case with several of Trump's priorities, judges saw issues differently, and the attempt to extort UCLA, as part of the UC system, seems to be on the sidelines for the time being.

Challenges to Immigrants

Trump made demonizing immigrants central to his brand. Recent immigration actions near Bakersfield, in Camarillo, Los Angeles, and Santa Maria underscore the ongoing scope of these policies. While Trump campaigned on making America safer by evicting dangerous criminals, reporting continues to indicate that the majority of individuals detained, arrested, and even deported include very few persons convicted of criminal wrongdoing. Other reporting suggests that detaining and holding American citizens is not uncommon.

Meanwhile, the increasing use of masked federal agents and aggressive enforcement tactics has intensified concerns about transparency and civil liberties. Recent legal rulings strengthened federal enforcement authority in certain contexts, even as civil rights advocates question how those powers are exercised on the ground. Throwing a sandwich at a federal agent may become a chargeable felony; though, it's not yet a convictable felony.

Challenges to International Students

In its rush to put America "first," the Trump administration wants to severely curtail the number of international students. While many international students come for an undergraduate education, a

significant number enroll in graduate and professional programs. Some return to their home countries, but many remain in the U.S. and use the education they received to contribute to the knowledge and technology economy, which, in turn, contributes to continued American global economic dominance.

While both the federal financial aid policy and the higher education tuition funding structure keep costs lower for domestic students, international students do not benefit from either, and their fees subsidize the enrollment of native students. At the UC, for example, public support via the general fund has declined from over 70% to less than 15%. What happens to affordability (as though we had it) when that subsidy disappears?

Challenges to Research

While community colleges may not conduct extensive research, they play a critical role in preparing students for transfer to research institutions. What happens when we get students all dressed up, and they have nowhere to go?

We've already seen a sustained pattern of blaming community colleges when CSU campuses do not consistently comply with SB 1440 (Padilla), making student transfer preparation unnecessarily challenging. Meanwhile, CSU and UC campuses receive far greater per-student funding than CCCs, and our funding also lags behind K-12. The imbalance is real.

What happens to CCC budgets and our students if federal policies damage the CSU and UC systems and make a public four-year degree even less attainable?

When I attended the UC as a graduate student in the early 1980s, annual tuition and fees were \$891. In the fall of 2025, they were \$16,785. At the current inflation rate, that should only be \$3,503.19. Instead, current tuition is nearly five times that figure.

Trump policies will accelerate that trend.

What We Should Be Doing:

- Stay engaged with FACCC: every faculty member an advocate, every advocate informed.
- Pay attention to local governance; academic senates and boards of trustees are tools of democracy at its most immediate.
- Join and support your local union, even when disagreement is uncomfortable; that, too, is democracy.
- Consider joining and supporting the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We all owe the AAUP a debt of thanks for its 1940 statement of Academic Freedom. The AAUP has, in the past, had a more robust relationship with both the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and FACCC, but it has been a leader in pushing back. It is now affiliated with the national American Federation of Teachers.
- Stay informed through higher education journalism, even when issues don't yet affect your campus.
- Look for opportunities to share why education mattered to you and why you chose to serve in a community college.

Challenges to Accreditation

California community college faculty have had more than their share of complaints about accreditation processes. The number of CCCs placed in "show-cause", a final warning requiring a college to prove why it should not lose accreditation and face potential closure, is sobering. Accreditation is an imperfect process, as all human processes are. But the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is led by colleagues who know and are committed to the community college mission; the ACCJC has retained 5 of its 21 seats for academic (faculty) commissioners. The short-term impact of Trump's policy was to remove regard for diversity and inclusion from accreditation standards, and the long-term goal seems to be to replace current accreditors and create new accreditors whose only concern is the bottom line. It's worth remembering that Trump himself ran a "university" that even Marco Rubio called an "absolute scam."

Academic Freedom for Me but Not for Thee...

The meaning of "free speech" has been highly contested over the past 75 years. The Free Speech movement at UC Berkeley quickly deteriorated into the filthy speech movement. This right has been rapidly jettisoned in states where legislators didn't like the speech reported to them secondhand. Both the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the ACCJC, accreditors for four- and two-year colleges in California, have accreditation standards that require colleges to respect free speech. Most community college districts subscribe to the service of the Community College League, which represents CEOs and trustees, and provides model board policy, including law, regulation, and accreditation standards. That means virtually all community colleges have policies that guarantee free speech rights, guarantees that should protect most full-time faculty, if not their contingent cousins.

continued on page 28

FADING *Guardians*

DECLINING FACULTY LEADERSHIP

By Ian Walton, FACCC Board of Governor for Retired Faculty,
FACCC Communications Committee

A LONG TIME AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

...my undergraduate institution, the University of St. Andrews, was founded in 1413 as a corporation of masters and students. Historian R.G. Cant writes in “The University of St. Andrews - A Short History”: “All were partners in the craft of scholarship” and “All this was essentially under the control of the faculties.”

Some might argue that the recent Trump “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education” is merely the latest manifestation of a 600-year, worldwide decline in faculty authority and leadership in higher education. In our much younger California Community Colleges system, there are many examples of how the faculty leadership role has eroded over recent years. Three of those areas were the subject of 2025 FACCC Policy Committee papers: “Protecting the 50% Law,” “The Evolving Mission of the California Community Colleges”, and “The Role of the CCCCCO in Upholding Education as a Public Good.” This article examines these and other related developments and explores how many seemingly unconnected changes have contributed to the decline of the faculty leadership role.

BACKGROUND

The high point for faculty leadership in our system came in the years following the passage of AB 1725 (Vasconcellos.) This landmark legislation sought to remake the California Community Colleges from an afterthought of K-12 to one of three partners in California’s higher education landscape. It gave local academic senates primary responsibility for making recommendations to local college governing boards on matters concerning curriculum and academic standards. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges played a corresponding role at the state policy level by advising the system’s Board of Governors and participated, along with other statewide faculty groups, including FACCC, in the Consultation Council. In its best years, the Consultation Council was a forum where informed discussion led to thoughtful, effective implementation of solutions that respected faculty leadership and benefited students and the public good.

PUBLIC GOOD

In “The Role of the CCCCCO in Upholding Education as a Public Good,” FACCC’s Policy Committee described how the Chancellor’s Office is risking failure in its role of protecting the wider public good and how the Consultation Council has, at times, prioritized initiatives aligned with external stakeholders, including the technology and student loan industries. Donors to the Foundation for California Community Colleges exert excessive and undocumented influence on governance and policy discussions, and private foundations and corporations set the system agenda by funding nonprofit advocacy groups. FACCC has called on the Chancellor’s Office to immediately implement transparent consultation processes that prioritize the voices of faculty, students, and system stakeholders over external corporate interests, to demonstrate accountability for public funds and protect the open access that originally defined the system and its multiple missions. Discredited corporate efficiency measures are used to attack open access.

NARROWING MISSION

One dramatic effect of the failure to uphold the general public good is the significant narrowing of the mission as described in the FACCC Policy Committee’s “The Evolving Mission of California Community Colleges.” The 1960s Master Plan for Higher Education intended that the “California Community Colleges were to admit any student capable of benefiting from instruction.” Over the intervening years, heroic efforts were made to improve access and inclusion, diversity and equity and resultant success for all students. According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Data Mart, in 2007, the system served 2.7 million students.

However, recent changes, spearheaded by outside special-interest foundations, have focused on graduation and transfer as the only worthwhile goals, resulting in a narrowed curriculum that neglects the diverse needs of the broader student body. In

continued on page 10

particular, the reduction of basic skills development in English and math limits students' options. As a result, many students have been turned away, and enrollment figures have decreased dramatically. Other students have enrolled in classes for which they were underprepared, failed and gave up. Other fundamental missions, such as workforce education and lifelong learning, have been severely compromised.

For more details on how education-philanthropist foundations created decades of policy designed to shrink and disinvest from California's community colleges, see former FACCC President Debbie Klein's paper, "How the Austerity Agenda Disappeared Over a Million California Community College Students: A Faculty Perspective."

“IN ADDITION TO DEVALUING THE FACULTY ROLE IN CURRICULUM DESIGN AND STUDENT EVALUATION, THE USE OF DUBIOUS METRICS FROM OUTSIDE GRANT-FUNDED SOURCES PRODUCED AN ADDITIONAL PROBLEM.

INAPPROPRIATE METRICS

Another development, clearly evident in the basic skills restructuring, is the creation of spurious metrics tailored to demonstrate preordained success in selected policy implementations. The "throughput metric" developed for AB 705 (2017) and AB 1705 (2022), both authored by Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, is a notable example. By design, it was unlikely to show anything other than increased throughput, as overall student enrollment rose dramatically. At the same time, no metric was created to capture the large number of students who dropped out or never enrolled because the courses they needed were no longer offered. Instead, as reflected in testimony to the AB 1705 Oversight Committee, some students were effectively told they did not belong in college.

This pattern of relying on inappropriate or incomplete metrics was evident earlier in the student outcomes measures mandated by the U.S. Department of Education and implemented by accrediting agencies, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. A narrowly defined full-time graduation rate, for example, was proposed as a benchmark for ranking and identifying "unsuccessful" colleges, despite having little practical relevance to the diverse missions of community colleges.

The latest such trendsetter metric is "Return on Investment," which treats education as a purely financial transaction and is heavily skewed toward colleges located in wealthy neighborhoods with wealthy local scholarship donors.

THE 50% LAW

In addition to devaluing the faculty role in curriculum design and student evaluation, the use of dubious metrics from outside grant-funded sources produced an additional problem. To compete for a rotating cast of new grants and to meet the exponentially increasing demand for data and so-called accountability, colleges hired legions of junior administrators who make no direct contribution to students or learning. This bloated the administrative budget and correspondingly reduced the percentage of the budget that actually provides high-quality, faculty-student interactions—the very thing that has consistently been shown to improve student success.

Administrator groups repeatedly seek to overturn the California Community Colleges' 50% law designed to protect colleges' core instructional mission. The FACCC Policy Committee's paper "Protecting the 50% Law" noted that only 37% of the statewide community college budget is currently spent on instruction. And some of those colleges claiming a lack of budget flexibility actually show a 35% increase in unused reserve funds. Recent data reveal that student enrollment decreased by 20% between 2012 and 2022, while administrators increased by 40%.

California's community colleges are supposed to be teaching institutions—not for-profit companies.

The current situation ought to worry any taxpayer who might reasonably anticipate even worse steps to come. For a more complete analysis, see the FACCC paper "The 50% Law: A Critical Protection for Quality Education." For many years, FACCC and other faculty groups have urged changes to the 50% law to improve its effectiveness.

CORPORATIZATION AND RESPONSES

Two decades ago, there were many articles about the "corporatization" of American higher education, where market values were relentlessly replacing academic values. See, for example, the entire June 2004 issue of *American Academic*, in which Editor Mitchell Vogel writes that the growing influence of market forces and commercial considerations are shaping what happens in our colleges and universities. He cites the replacement of full-time, tenured faculty positions with low-paid contingent faculty with little or no job security and questionable academic freedom. In retrospect, these components are just one part of the puzzle of long-term declining faculty leadership. Many of the forces causing this decline are beyond faculty control or influence. Under the current regime, any opposition to federal policy changes could result in financial retaliation that worsens the on-the-ground experience for students and faculty alike. College attorneys and accrediting agencies are, understandably but depressingly, cautious in their advice, aiming to stay below the radar. Nevertheless, an obvious faculty response is to persuade every faculty member to increase the time and effort they invest in governance activities: personally, with their local academic senate and union, their statewide organizations and their political representatives. It's too easy as a new faculty member to retreat and say, "I'm only interested in my students and my classroom." But all the examples above constrain the teaching environment and devalue the Academy until, at some point, nothing remains of the founding vision to support, whether that vision started in 1413 or in 1988.

At that point, what's left for the students? ■

READING LIST

Core FACCC Policy Papers

- FACCC Policy Committee (2025) *Protecting the 50% Law: Upholding Quality Education in California Community Colleges*
- FACCC Legislative and Budget Committee (2024) *FACCC Position Paper on California's Community Colleges Funding Models*
- Brill-Wynkoop, Wendy (2024) *The 50% Law: A Critical Protection for Quality Education* (FACCTS, Spring 2024)
- FACCC (2023) *FACCC Supports a One-Tier Faculty System (Unified Faculty Model)*

FACCC Research / Faculty Impact

- Gilbert, G. (2019) *Why Faculty Matter: The Role of Faculty in the Success of Community College Students*
FACCC Education Institute

Enrollment, Access, and Austerity

- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office *Data Mart (Enrollment Headcount Data, 2007–2022)*
- Klein, Debbie (2024) *How the Austerity Agenda Disappeared Over a Million California Community College Students: A Faculty Perspective*

Corporatization of Higher Education

- American Federation of Teachers (2004) *American Academic, Volume 1, Number 1 (June 2004)*
Academic Values, Market Values: The Shifting Balance
(Edited by Mitchell Vogel)

Q&A with Sarah Thompson

New FACCC President



Stepping into the role in December, Sarah brings experience, strong policy expertise, and a clear commitment to faculty advocacy. A longtime FACCC Board member, she led key efforts on the Student Centered Funding Formula and continues to influence FACCC's legislative and budget priorities.

Grounded in her work as a faculty leader, past academic senate president, and union communications officer, Sarah leads with collaboration, clarity, and purpose. We're excited to have her at the helm as FACCC moves into its next chapter.

Can you tell us a little about your path into community college teaching and what originally drew you to this work?

My path was a little unconventional. I was a Sociology graduate student and a full-time administrator at Rutgers University. I had completed my coursework and was working on my dissertation proposal when I hit an impasse and, somewhat impulsively, sent my CV to every open full-time faculty position listed in The Chronicle of Higher Education that month.

At Rutgers, I taught gateway retention courses for EOF (similar to California's EOPS) during both their summer bridge program and the academic year. That experience led to my role as Learning Specialist for Livingston College's Learning Center, where I coordinated tutoring, workshops, and academic support for both special programs and the broader student population. I also served as liaison to the Athletic Department, developing retention programs for the men's football and basketball teams.

I truly enjoyed my work at Rutgers. What I didn't realize at the time was that it was perfect preparation for teaching the diverse student population of California's community colleges.

You've been deeply involved with FACCC for many years. What first drew you to the organization, and what has kept you committed over time?

I became involved with FACCC in 2018–19, when both my district and FACCC were raising concerns about the new funding model, the Student-Centered Funding Formula. We attended the same oversight committee meetings and provided public comment.

As a result, my union appointed me as its representative to the FACCC Board of Governors. I've stayed committed because I believe our strength as an organization lies in the quality of our research, advocacy, and feedback on the issues that matter most to faculty. We also invest deeply in relationships with our system partners, ensuring thoughtful, productive collaboration.

Outside of formal roles and titles, what personal values guide the way you lead and advocate?

I can attribute my code of personal values to several of my life experiences:

- Growing up overseas as a religious, racial, and national minority,
- My academic training as a sociologist, and
- My deeply embedded faith beliefs.

I spend a lot of time evaluating my choices, my reactions, and my strategies through the lens of fairness. I try to listen before speaking, and to learn before acting. But once a decision is made, I commit fully to carrying it out. I understand that my role gives my voice weight, and I am accountable to our members who trust me to use it wisely. I also believe in clarity and transparency with our system partners as the foundation for trust.

I believe in radical hospitality and inclusion. This challenges me to be observant in social settings, looking out for those who may be new or feeling marginalized. In line with these beliefs, I try to engage in active "strength spotting" – recognizing both contributions and potential in others. I value perseverance and a strong work ethic, but I balance those with hope, humor, and joy.



continued on page 14

What are your top priorities for FACCC in the coming year?

1. Work with system partners to end the practice of withholding legislatively budgeted COLAs as a punitive measure against “underperforming” districts.
2. Develop long-term solutions to reform the 50% Law.
3. Promote greater honesty and transparency in district financial reporting.
4. Continue evaluating and refining the Student-Centered Funding Formula.
5. Address the most harmful outcomes of AB 1705.
6. Advance our sponsored legislation on part-time faculty healthcare and protections for faculty facing immigration actions such as detention or deportation.

What do you see as the biggest challenges currently facing community college faculty, and how is FACCC positioned to address them?

Federal Attacks on Higher Education

While FACCC primarily focuses on state policy, growing membership strengthens our ability to collaborate nationally. Right now, we are urging the Chancellor’s Office and our state legislature to respond as quickly and humanely as possible to federal attacks on our institutions and the people who populate them. FACCC is sponsoring legislation to protect faculty facing detention or deportation, and recently hosted a forum on navigating immigration policy.

Part-time Faculty Exploitation

FACCC-sponsored AB 1171, authored by Assemblymember Patel, would legislate that all qualifying part-time faculty across the state would have access to health care equivalent to that of full-time faculty. Our position paper on the Unified Faculty model positions us to collaborate with system partners towards a more equitable system.

AB 1705 (Irwin) and Curricular Authority

The fallout of AB 1705 reflects a broader erosion of faculty control over curriculum. FACCC is engaged in data collection, coalition building, and advocacy to address its unintended consequences and to safeguard the Academic Senate’s role in curricular decisions.



The Student-Centered Funding Formula (SCFF)

FACCC opposed the SCFF before it was enacted, as the potential to mitigate the harms of the enrollment-based funding model was outweighed by the SCFF’s potential to harm high-cost-of-living regions. In what is considered a “good” budget year, many districts are struggling with rising costs, dwindling reserves, and threats to solvency. FACCC has been actively engaged in data collection, coalition building, and legislative efforts, including last year’s reserves audit, to address these impacts. Our goal is to work with system partners to develop a funding model grounded in stable base funding, with built-in incentives for success and no punitive withholding of funds.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As AI expands in higher education, faculty must be meaningfully consulted about its benefits and risks. While FACCC successfully supported legislation requiring faculty roles to remain human, automation of faculty duties remains a concern. We need to be ever-vigilant in our senates and collective bargaining agreements, engaging in local consultation before implementing these technologies.

What is something FACCC members might not know about you that helps shape the way you show up as a leader?

I am a great believer in the idea that play is essential for our mental health. Games, make-believe, and outdoor activities give us the break we need from our work and home routines while releasing healthy endorphins. Laughter is medicine, and connection is a powerful antidote to political heaviness.

I organize a meetup group called “Adult Recess,” where adults come together to play dodgeball, Family Feud, Pictionary, and more. One of our most popular events is the annual “Office Olympics,” inspired by an episode of The Office. The picture to the right is a Flonkerton relay where competitors strap reams of paper to their feet and “skate” across the floor.

What do you hope faculty across California feel or experience under your leadership?

Essential. Empowered. Encouraged to act.

“

I spend a lot of time evaluating my choices, my reactions, and my strategies through the lens of fairness. I try to listen before speaking, and to learn before acting.





We were proud to recognize this year's outstanding faculty award recipients:

Dean Murakami Advocate of the Year Award:
Bob Stockwell, Foothill College

Jonathan Lightman FACCCivist Award:
Emily Haraldson, Glendale College

Emancipation Through Education Award:
Juan Huerta Villicana, Diablo Valley College

FACCC Distinguished Faculty Leadership Award:
Oceana Collins, College of the Desert

John Vasconcellos Faculty of the Year Award:
Mary Gross, MiraCosta College

Advocacy & Policy CONFERENCE

The 2026 Advocacy & Policy Conference brought together faculty leaders and advocates from across California for a series of moments that can't quite be captured in agendas or summaries: From breakout sessions on AI in education, the student-centered funding formula, and campus responses to immigration enforcement, to speeches from California's leaders and Legislators.

We extend our sincere thanks to our keynote speaker, Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens, and to Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber for helping make this year's program so impactful. We are also grateful to the many presenters, panelists, and facilitators who brought their expertise and insight to each session!

We look forward to continuing this important work together in the year ahead.



**FEBRUARY 22-23, 2026
SACRAMENTO, CA**



Who Protects Faculty in the Future of AI Learning

By K. Frindell Teuscher, CCCI President, Santa Rosa Jr. College, FACCC Communications Committee



Given the expansion of community college partnerships with private entities over the last several decades, it comes as no surprise that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), along with related technologies and products, have found their way into the California Community Colleges system. GenAI has been billed as “the future of learning” in The Chancellor’s Vision 2030, the roadmap for the California Community Colleges. The Vision (July 2025) introduces the section on GenAI with a note of caution, stating, “Generative AI presents both opportunities and risks for higher education. Policy must prioritize human oversight, data security, and equity to ensure AI enhances learning, protects students, and narrows rather than widens the digital divide.” While protecting students is paramount, this document makes no mention of protecting faculty members, staff, or institutions. Faculty are also entitled to data security and equity, along with other provisions that protect their rights, working conditions, and the very nature of teaching.

Community college faculty earned the right to unionize and engage in collective bargaining under the Rodda Act (Educational Employment Relations Act, or EERA), enacted in 1975. Faculty unions across the state have the right and responsibility to demand negotiations on changes proposed by the administration that either fall within the mandatory scope of representation or have effects that fall within that scope. Under EERA, the mandatory scope includes “matters relating to wages, hours of employment, and other terms and conditions of employment.” There are countless matters deemed terms and conditions of employment by the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). Within this expansive list, many will be affected by an administration’s decision to bring AI into the workplace.

Faculty unions have a unique role as the exclusive bargaining agent for faculty working conditions. Still, they are not the only body that can help protect our institutions from the rush to let AI into every aspect of our system. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has passed resolutions and written policy papers pertaining to academic and



Faculty unions across the state have the right and responsibility to demand negotiations on changes proposed by the administration that either fall within the mandatory scope of representation or have effects that fall within that scope.

professional matters and AI, and local Academic Senates have begun to recommend guardrails for student use of GenAI, discuss integration of AI into curriculum, evaluate standards for academic integrity on GenAI use, and advocate for professional development. Administration should ensure that the GenAI technologies they bring in align with their districts’ strategic plans. The governance systems we have are in place for a reason, and community colleges should deploy them.

In addition to partnering with tech giants Google and Microsoft to make GenAI available systemwide for use by faculty and staff, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) has made a tool called Nectir.ai available to California Community Colleges faculty members in their Canvas shells. Nectir.ai offers “unlimited AI assistant creation for courses, departments, programs, or personal use.” Inviting non-human teaching assistants into our districts’ learning management systems certainly presents an administrative change whose effects can be bargained over at the negotiating table.

continued on page 29

Community College Built Me: My Journey to FACCC

Mikala Hutchinson

Membership & External Affairs Specialist



I am grateful to join FACCC as the Membership and External Affairs Specialist, a role that's deeply personal, shaped by the impact of California's community colleges and the faculty who believed in me before I believed in myself.

My journey began at MiraCosta College at age 22, on the non-credit side, working towards the high school diploma I was unable to complete as a teenager. Systemic barriers, financial instability, and the need to prioritize survival over school shaped much of my early life. Like so many of our students, I understood what it meant to worry more about housing, food, and making ends meet than exams or assignments.

The plan was never to become a college graduate, but my professors saw my potential and encouraged me to keep going. With their support, I earned my high school diploma in 2022. In 2024, I completed three associate degrees with President's Honors, with my two young sons by my side, and transferred to UC San Diego on a full ride. I often joke that they are homegrown community college advocates as well, since their own educational journeys began at my campus Child Development Center.

At MiraCosta, I found my voice through student government and service on the Academic Senate, experiences that introduced me to advocacy and leadership. That path led me to the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, first as an intern and later as a full-time Legislative Specialist, where I worked alongside student leaders to advance policies that expand access and opportunity. Throughout my advocacy work, I fought for policies that reflect students' real lives. I worked to support efforts to strengthen Brown Act requirements to keep student voices central in decision-making, expand basic needs support, such as on-campus CalFresh access, and advance policies that redefine basic needs to better support student parents. I remained committed to protecting our undocumented and immigrant community, ensuring that every student can pursue education in a safe and accessible environment.

Now, at FACCC, I am proud to give back to the system that created the foundation for my life. I bring my lived experience as a community college student into this work every day. I have seen firsthand how education and advocacy can change lives, and I am excited to support faculty across the state as we continue fighting for the future of our colleges and the students they serve.

At the heart of it all is something simple: faculty believed in me, and I am committed to giving back to the community that helped build who I am today.

Q&A with FACCC Staff Member **Jason Henderson** Government Relations Specialist



What changed my trajectory wasn't luck. It was the faculty.

Q. What inspired your career path, and how did it lead you to the work you do today?

A: When very young, I often rode the bus with my grandmother as she went from job to job, where, at any given time, she was a housekeeper, a library custodian, and, occasionally, a schoolyard aide. She strung this work together just so my father could access education. Even at a young age, I recognized the importance of education to three generations of my family, and I also knew I wanted to help shape public education.

Seeing firsthand what it took to open doors for the next generation instilled in me a deep belief in inclusivity and opportunity. As I grew older, that belief became more focused, not just on access to education, but on the systems that make access real. Over time, my focus settled on creating foundational opportunities for learning and ensuring that the people serving our children and communities have equity, stability, and safe places to teach and learn.

Q. Was there a moment or experience that helped shape your professional direction?

A: My educational journey was challenging at first, not because I lacked ability, but because I lacked structure and connection within the large campus. The transition directly into a four-year program was challenging, and I often felt adrift. Something always seemed to be missing. I never finished my classes that semester and eventually had to step away from school altogether.

The experience that ultimately changed my trajectory came when I (re)enrolled at my local community college and took courses from two faculty members who didn't just teach content, they taught me strategic approaches to learning and education. They flipped the switch for me.

That experience stays with me to this day. It taught me that talent alone isn't enough, and that people need support, clarity, and someone willing to invest in them. It's also why mentorship matters so much to me now. I believe deeply in paying forward the guidance and patience that helped me find my footing.

What changed my trajectory wasn't luck. It was the faculty. The system worked for me because people inside it were allowed to care. Thank you, Professor Jason Newman and Professor Georgina Hodgkinson!

Q. What skills or values do you bring with you into this next chapter?

A: I bring a strong sense of preparation and care into my work. I believe in listening closely, taking the time to understand context, and being thoughtful about how issues are approached and communicated. I also place high value on learning quickly, but more importantly, accurately, and from the correct source. My strong work ethic is built on collaboration, follow-through, and building trust.

Q. What motivates you most in your work?

A: The pursuit of creating more equitable opportunities for communities to access public education, along with the constant desire to learn and understand, are deeply motivating factors for me. I'm dedicated to being a lifelong learner, using the knowledge and experience I have gathered from others to advance advocacy.

Q. What is one quality or trait you'd like FACCC members to know about you?

A: I care deeply about representing FACCC and its members with credibility. When I take on an issue or project, I approach it with responsibility and respect. I want members to know that I do this work thoughtfully, with poise and steadiness, and that I take their priorities seriously.

Q. What is something you enjoy outside of work that helps you recharge?

A: Family. Full stop. Spending time with them is how I recharge the most. Whether it's a day trip to a coastal town or sitting together at the dinner table for "Nackie-Nacks" (official name for my son's snacks). These moments of balance make the mission clear when I am present and focused on my work. My wife and my boys really put the battery in my back.

Beyond the Bottom Line: A Faculty Perspective on Return on Investment in California Community Colleges

By Wendy Brill-Wynkoop,
FACCC Past-President, College of the Canyons,
FACCC Communications Committee Chair

A preschool teacher preparation program that has placed graduates in every childcare center in the Central Valley for 20 years is now at risk of closure. It's not because it's failing students, but because federal law will soon measure its value solely by graduates' starting salaries, which average \$30,000 in a sector essential to working families but chronically underpaid. This isn't a hypothetical scenario. It's the reality facing faculty across California's community colleges.

Policymakers are increasingly measuring the value of California's community colleges using a single, narrow metric: how quickly students can recoup their educational costs through higher earnings. Programs that fail to meet earnings thresholds face a stark consequence: loss of federal financial aid eligibility, leading to program closures and faculty job losses.

The Golden Returns report, released in August 2025, previews what's coming. This analysis found that 34% of Inland Empire institutions showed no measurable economic return for students. Nearly a quarter of the state's certificate-granting institutions showed students obtaining no earnings premium whatsoever compared to high school graduates. These findings already are shaping discussions about program discontinuance across the state, even as federal accountability intensifies.

For faculty, this isn't an abstract policy debate. It's a direct threat to job security and the comprehensive mission of community colleges. The time to act through shared governance is now.

What's Changed: Federal Accountability in 2025

The new federal accountability framework represents a fundamental shift in how the government measures college value. For community colleges, the stakes grew dramatically in 2025. On July 4, President Trump signed the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (OBBBA) into law, fundamentally expanding the federal accountability framework. The legislation introduces the Earnings Premium Test, which now applies to certificate programs and associate and bachelor's degree programs. The Department of Education (DOE) is conducting accelerated rulemaking to finalize regulations implementing this test, with completion expected in 2026, though the exact timeline remains uncertain as negotiations continue.

Under the proposed framework, programs that fail the earnings test would lose eligibility for Direct Loan Program funds, though Pell Grants and other Title IV aid would remain available under current regulations. However, the trajectory is clear: future rulemaking will likely expand these penalties to include Pell Grants and all Title IV funding. For programs serving low-income students who depend on federal student loans, even the immediate loss of financial aid is significant. Enrollment could collapse. Programs could close. Faculty positions could be eliminated.

What it Looks Like in California: The Golden Returns Report

The highly publicized Golden Returns report, released by the College Futures Foundation and the HEA Group in August 2025, illustrates what narrow Return on

Investment (ROI) metrics look like for California's colleges. This report examined 327 community and certificate-granting colleges serving more than 1.2 million students and aggregated outcomes across all credential types, short certificates, associate degrees, and transfer pathways into a single institutional metric. While 38% of Bay Area institutions allowed students to recoup costs in under a year, only 6% of Inland Empire colleges achieved the same result. These findings matter because they shape policy discussions within California, even though federal accountability will use a different methodology. The Golden Returns report calculates the Price-to-Earnings Premium (PEP), dividing a student's total net cost by their annual earnings premium to determine how many years of higher earnings it will take to break even.

Here's how it works:

Take American River College, for example. Students pay a total net cost of \$9,256 for a two-year associate degree. Ten years after enrollment, they earn \$7,686 more annually than California high school graduates. Dividing the cost by the premium yields a payback period of 1.2 years, suggesting the college delivers value.

Why the Data is Problematic

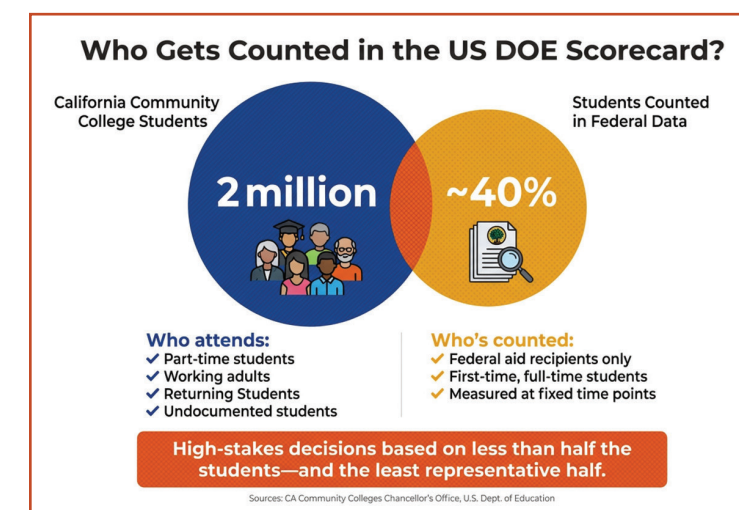
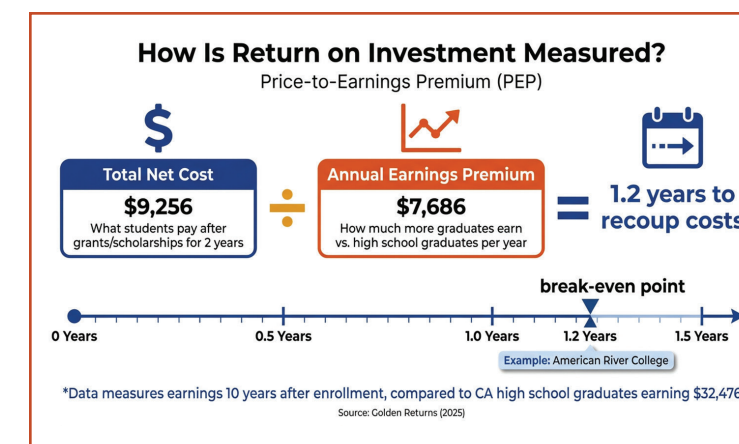
But dig deeper, and the data's profound limitations become clear.

The sample excludes most community college students. The US DOE earnings data includes only data from full-time, first-time students who received federal financial aid and completed a program. But California's community colleges serve a far broader population. According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office Data Mart, more than half of students attend part-time. Many are returning adults, parents balancing work and family, or students taking a few courses to upgrade skills without pursuing a degree. Undocumented students who complete the California Dream Act Application and receive state aid, but not federal aid, are excluded entirely from the federal data. This published ROI reflects only a subset of the student body, not the whole.

The calculation is extraordinarily volatile. Consider Compton College, whose PEP jumped from 4.2 years to 13.0 years in just one reporting cycle. Was this due to institutional failure? No. The college's graduates

actually saw their absolute earnings increase by 13%. The problem was the benchmark: California's median wage for high school graduates jumped 24.5%, mathematically collapsing Compton's calculated earnings premium from \$4,247 to just \$1,705. An institution can actively improve student outcomes while appearing to fail because an uncontrollable, external variable shifted.

Statewide benchmarks punish regional colleges unfairly. California is not economically uniform. A single state-level median wage for high school graduates doesn't account for variations in the local cost of living, minimum wage laws, or industry composition. Research from the Student Success Through Applied Research (SSTAR) initiative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison clearly demonstrates this problem. Colleges in high-wage regions like San Francisco appear to perform better than those in the Central Valley or the Inland Empire, even when local students experience



continued on page 24

similar relative wage gains in their communities. Community colleges in rural areas often serve students who stay and work locally after graduation. Comparing their graduates' earnings to the statewide median, inflated by high-wage metropolitan areas like the Bay Area, creates an unfair penalty for institutions serving lower-income communities. SSTAR found that using regional or commuting-zone-level benchmarks would provide a more accurate and equitable assessment of whether programs deliver value in their specific labor markets. Yet Golden Returns relies on statewide data, disadvantaging colleges in economically depressed regions through no fault of their own.

Institutional averages hide which programs are actually struggling. The Golden Returns aggregated outcomes were calculated across all programs, including short certificates, transfer-focused AA degrees, and career-

technical programs. Yet students who transfer to four-year institutions, often those with the strongest long-term earnings outcomes, are invisible in this data if they don't complete a degree before transferring. A college might have excellent transfer outcomes but struggling certificate programs, or vice versa. The aggregate metric obscures which specific programs are at risk, making it difficult for colleges to target improvements where they're most needed.

Which Programs are Most Vulnerable?

Data simulations conducted by American University suggest that specific fields face disproportionate risk under earnings-based accountability: precisely those programs that serve essential public needs but don't generate high initial wages. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is one concerning example. Associate degrees in

ECE train preschool teachers and childcare center directors. The median national pay for preschool teachers is approximately \$37,120, with entry-level wages in many California regions closer to \$28,000 to \$32,000. In high-wage states like California, where the statewide median income of high school graduates exceeds \$32,000, typical ECE graduates may earn less than or equal to the threshold. Research projects that approximately 52% of borrowers in ECE associate programs are enrolled in programs that would fail earnings thresholds, a catastrophic failure rate that threatens to defund the pipeline of childcare workers exactly when the economy needs them most.

Visual and performing arts programs, as well as human services and social work programs, face potential failure rates of 30-60%. These are not "low-quality" programs. They are essential to functioning, equitable communities. Yet they are

vulnerable to elimination not because they lack rigor or societal value, but because they don't produce high enough salaries to meet a narrow economic threshold.

The Human Cost: What's at Stake for Faculty and Students

For faculty, these metrics are not abstract policy debates; they're tangible threats to job security, academic freedom, and the comprehensive mission of community colleges.

The expansion of earnings-based accountability from certificate programs to degree programs significantly raises the stakes. If a program loses federal financial aid eligibility, it may effectively disappear. Even without federal consequences, programs that perform poorly on metrics such as the Golden Returns PEP face institutional pressure to close or be dramatically restructured. And with these closures go the faculty positions, both full-time and contingent, associated with that program. This establishes a direct causal relationship between a program's earnings outcomes and a faculty member's employment status. Part-time faculty, who already lack the due process protections of tenure and comprise the majority of instructional staff at many colleges, are especially vulnerable.

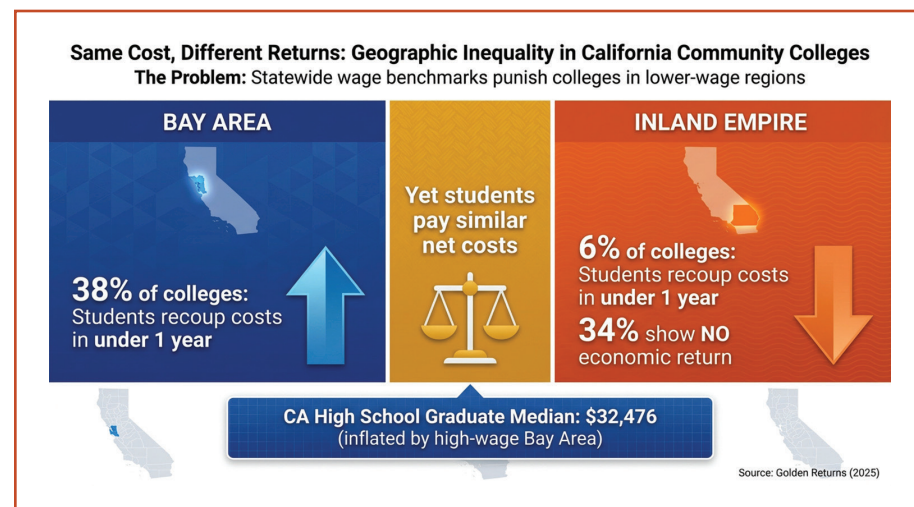
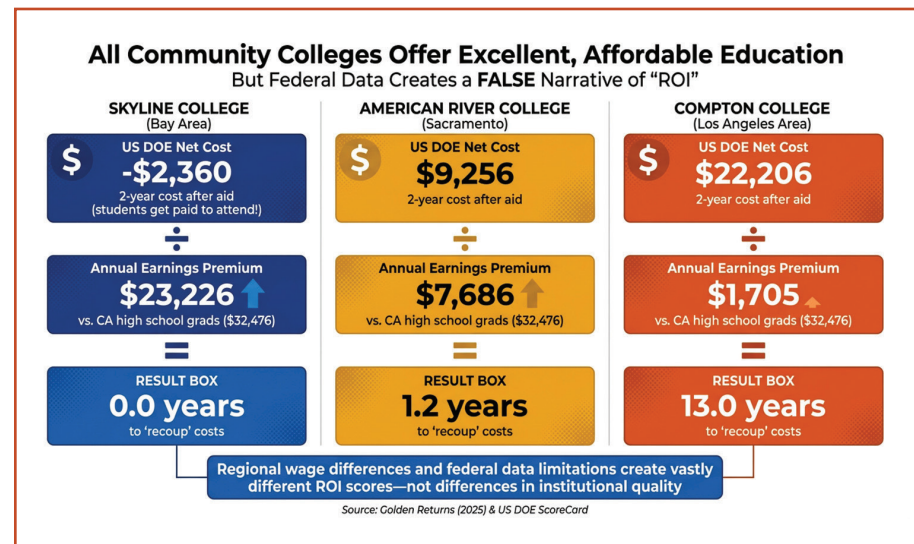
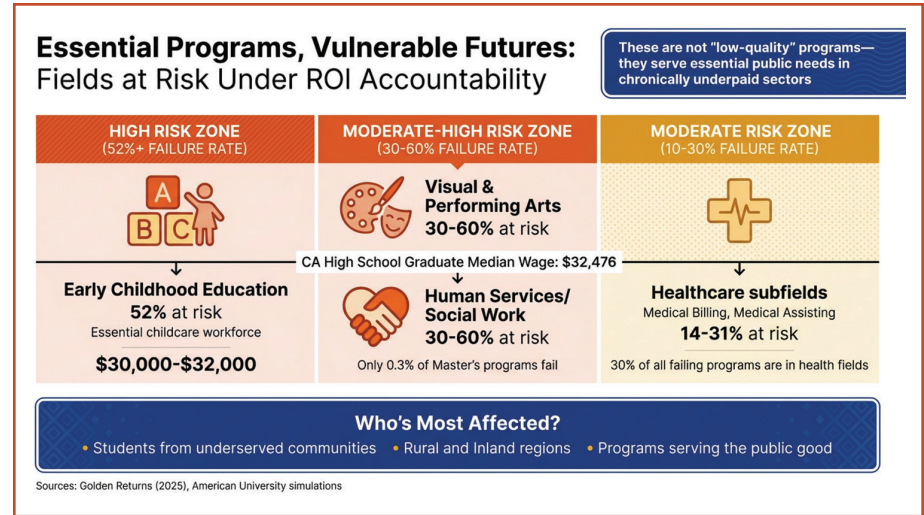
In California's community colleges, local academic senates and unions have a voice in local policy on program viability and discontinuance through shared governance. This faculty voice will be essential in protecting and supporting vulnerable programs, ensuring that decisions are made holistically and with full consideration of community need, pedagogical merit, and the diverse ways programs create value, not just short-term earnings metrics from either federal accountability or state-level analyses like Golden Returns.

But the threat extends beyond job losses. High-stakes accountability systems that reduce institutional value to a single earnings metric erode the professional autonomy and intellectual freedom that are essential to effective teaching and learning. Faculty members report feeling pressured to narrow curricula,

deprioritize critical thinking and civic education, and focus exclusively on short-term job placement at the expense of long-term student development. Perhaps most troubling is the bias in the metrics against fields that serve the public good but don't pay high wages. Early childhood education, social services, the arts, humanities, and public health are essential to a functioning, equitable society. Yet programs in these areas are vulnerable to cuts not because they lack rigor or societal value, but because they don't produce high enough salaries to meet the earnings premium threshold. The pressure to eliminate these programs pushes colleges toward "narrow vocationalism," abandoning their comprehensive mission, including the role in developing engaged, thoughtful citizens who can navigate the increasingly complex and divided democracy, in favor of workforce training alone.

Students from underserved communities bear the brunt of this shift. Low-income students, students of color, first-generation students, single parents, veterans, and justice-involved individuals rely on community colleges precisely because they offer affordable, accessible pathways to economic mobility and civic participation. When programs are cut solely on the basis of students' earnings, doors close for the students who need them most.

The accountability system being constructed, whether through federal regulation or state-level analysis, fails to capture what community colleges actually do and threatens to dismantle the very programs that serve California's most vulnerable students. But faculty have the power to change this trajectory.



continued on page 26

What Faculty Must Do Now

Changing the narrative around earnings-based accountability requires more than critique; it demands action. Faculty across California's community colleges must lead a proactive, strategic response that demonstrates their indispensable role in student success and institutional vitality. With federal rulemaking ongoing, the time to act is now.

Faculty can lead the way forward through the following actions:

Immediate Action: Engaging in federal rulemaking.

The Department of Education will continue to develop proposed regulations and subsequently solicit public comment on proposed rulemaking implementing the Earnings Premium Test following the publication of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Faculty expertise is essential to this process. Faculty must submit comments that:

- Document the limitations of current earnings data and the populations it excludes.
- Provide evidence of programs' comprehensive value beyond short-term wages.
- Advocate for regional earnings benchmarks at the metropolitan or county level.
- Insist on adequate phase-in periods and appeals processes for programs at risk.
- Faculty voices in this process can shape how the final regulations are implemented and potentially protect the programs and students that a narrow, punitive approach would most harm.
- Strengthening data infrastructure through shared governance. The coming requirement for program-level data collection represents both a significant burden and a critical opportunity. Faculty should work through local academic senates to ensure new data systems.
- Capture the full student population, including part-time, returning adult, undocumented students completing the Dream Act Application, and skill-building students—not just full-time, first-time, FAFSA-completing students.
- Track regional labor market alignment and transfer outcomes separately rather than aggregating them into misleading institutional averages.
- Document non-wage outcomes such as civic engagement, career advancement, and community benefit.

- Provide actionable intelligence to improve programs, not just compliance reporting.
- This work will require substantial institutional research capacity, and faculty should advocate for adequate staffing and resources to ensure it is done well. Done right, California's colleges can develop data systems that tell a more complete and accurate story of student success than federal metrics ever could.

Faculty should:

- Lead program review and redesign efforts, using data to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Champion asset-based pedagogies that honor students' diverse cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds as strengths rather than deficits, approaches that research shows improve retention, completion, and long-term success.
- Actively engage in decisions about program viability and discontinuance, ensuring that these decisions are informed by pedagogical merit, community need, and comprehensive definitions of value, rather than solely by a single, flawed earnings metric.
- Demand that program discontinuance policies require multiple metrics, including employment rates, student satisfaction, community need assessments, and transfer success—not just earnings data.
- Insist on multi-year data windows to account for volatility in earnings benchmarks.
- Advocate for appeals processes that allow programs to demonstrate value through alternative evidence.

Colleges can choose to continue offering valuable programs even if the federal government determines them to have poor earnings outcomes. The consequence is the loss of federal financial aid for that specific program, which is significant but not necessarily fatal if the institution commits resources and develops alternative funding strategies. California must commit to supporting its comprehensive mission and breadth of programs, and cannot allow federal metrics alone to dictate what we offer. Students need public higher education that develops the whole person, cultivating critical thinkers, engaged community members, and skilled professionals who are ready to contribute to a diverse and democratic society.

Advocating for Better Policy

Beyond campus, policymakers, accreditors, and state leaders need to fundamentally rethink how they measure the value of community college education. This accountability system can be fair, evidence-based, and designed to support improvement rather than punish institutions serving vulnerable students, but only if faculty and advocates demand it.

The DOE should regionalize the high school graduate wage benchmark used in earnings calculations beyond the state level. A statewide median wage does not accurately reflect local economic conditions. While the proposed regulations do use state-level benchmarks rather than a single national standard, this does not go far enough. Using county- or metro-level data, as recommended by the SSTAR research, would provide a more accurate and fair assessment of whether a program delivers value in its community, particularly in regions with a lower cost of living and different industry compositions. This same principle applies to state-level accountability discussions: California policymakers should demand regional wage adjustments in any earnings-based metric, whether federal or state-developed.

State policymakers should invest in community colleges' comprehensive mission, recognizing that their value extends far beyond immediate job placement. California needs data systems that tell the whole story of what these colleges accomplish, tracking not just first jobs but career trajectories, not just degree completion but skill development, and not just individual earnings but community prosperity. The state should also be prepared to support programs that serve essential public needs, even if they face federal penalties, ensuring that California's commitment to comprehensive education doesn't waver in the face of narrow federal accountability rules. California's leadership also should critically examine state-level reports like Golden Returns, recognizing their limitations and ensuring that policy discussions incorporate multiple measures of institutional value rather than relying on a single earnings metric.

Faculty senates, unions, and professional organizations should advocate for accountability systems that are fair, evidence-based, and designed to support improvement rather than to punish institutions that serve the most vulnerable students.

State policymakers should invest in community colleges' comprehensive mission, recognizing that their value extends far beyond immediate job placement.

Conclusion

California's community colleges educate nearly half of all undergraduates in the state. They serve the students who face the greatest barriers to opportunity. They provide pathways to economic mobility, civic participation, personal growth, and social justice. They are the backbone of California's workforce, the gateway to socioeconomic mobility, and the embodiment of the democratic promise that education should be accessible to all.

Community colleges cannot allow their value to be defined by a single, narrow metric that overlooks the full scope of what they do and who they serve. The strategies that improve student outcomes are fundamentally faculty-driven: curriculum innovation, student support, career integration, inclusive pedagogy, and relational teaching. Investing in faculty, compensating them fairly for expanded roles, supporting their professional development, and honoring their expertise through shared governance are the most direct and effective strategies for improving institutional outcomes and ensuring the long-term health of the colleges and communities they serve.

The federal rulemaking process is underway. Discussions about program discontinuance are happening on campuses across California. Faculty must engage through shared governance to ensure that essential programs serving the public good are not eliminated based on flawed data that excludes most community college students and ignores regional economic realities.

The preschool, human services, humanities, and arts programs that have served California's communities for decades are worth fighting for. Faculty have the expertise, the authority through shared governance, and the moral obligation to lead that fight. California's students and the state deserve nothing less. ■

Are CCCs Vulnerable?

The threats facing higher education are much greater for four-year colleges, especially those reliant on international student tuition and research funding. Community colleges have largely flown below the radar, in part because most of our funding comes from California taxpayers, who continue to value their local community college. Still, community colleges are part of a broader ecosystem, and that educational ecosystem is under threat. First, they came for the UC and the CSU; when they came for me, my colleagues at the UC and the CSU were gone.

Community colleges have largely flown below the radar, in part because most of our funding comes from California taxpayers, who continue to value their local community college.

What Comes Next?

Some of you may be subscribers or supporters of Marc Elias’s Democracy Docket. The Oct. 18 issue opens this way:

“Larry Tribe is the most accomplished constitutional lawyer of the last 50 years. He literally wrote the textbook that has been used to teach a generation of law students about constitutional law and interpretation. So, I was honored and surprised during an event I recently moderated that he asked a question from the audience: “How confident are you that we will rebuild our democratic institutions and norms in less than a decade after Trump leaves office?”

By contrast, the TV personality Jimmy Kimmel filmed an “alternate Christmas message” for British viewers. It skewered the Trump administration in ways that would be familiar to most viewers, but it ended with an appeal to our British cousins to be patient with us:

“...don’t give up on us. We’re going through a bit of a wobble right now, but we’ll come around. ... No one knows better than you, we’re always just a little bit late to the game, but do we come through in the end? Maybe. Give us about three years. Please.”

I realized I had been assuming (or hoping) at some level that some things, perhaps many things, would revert to normal when the Trump era ends; all eras end. It hadn’t occurred to me to wonder how much damage would be done by then and what repairing it would require. Rebuilding democratic norms will fall to all of us, but American higher education and the community college ecosystem, in particular, will largely fall to those of us in the system. ■

When a union demands impact bargaining over a change, that change cannot be implemented until negotiations over those impacts are complete. This means that faculty members who want to use tools like Nectir.ai will have to wait before they can. These GenAI tools were made available to our districts when the CCCCCO authorized their use by all California Community Colleges. This unconventional approach effectively circumvented the normal shared governance process that oversees technology adoption decisions by individual districts. In tech parlance, this is disruption. This is where unions need to step in. If the impacts of GenAI tools on working conditions are not considered before deployment, it may be too late to negotiate.

Areas in which GenAI may affect faculty working conditions include: privacy, surveillance, evaluation procedures, class size, workload, academic freedom, intellectual property, and perhaps even the faculty job description itself. Information about the security and privacy protections provided by the companies that create these AI tools is muddy, at best. Districts may not have the capacity to answer questions from unions, such as “How can I be sure that this GenAI tool will not use my intellectual property as training material for machine learning?” Further, what was used to train the machines in the first place? Faculty contracts across the state address intellectual property rights to varying degrees. Still, the extent to which those rights overlap with the introduction of new technology needs to be addressed, especially for GenAI tools designed to exploit human-generated content.



GenAI tools like Nectir.ai purport to do the actual work of a professor by performing tasks like answering student emails, providing chatbot tutoring, and writing tests and discussion prompts. This type of tool could cause a host of

working conditions issues. Will the use of these tools fundamentally alter our job descriptions? If so, that requires negotiation. If students complain that an AI bot is being used to teach them, will faculty members be subject to discipline, or will districts defend faculty members’ choice to use these bots as an exercise of academic freedom? Will districts attempt to increase class sizes, particularly in online classes, or refuse to hire support staff, citing the increased “efficiency” enabled by AI?

Will bringing in GenAI tools decrease or increase faculty workload? Will faculty members be paid for the time required for necessary training? Do districts want to mandate use of the tools or keep them optional? Can a faculty member be evaluated on the choice they make to use or not use these tools? All of these questions should be considered at the bargaining table.

The Chancellor’s Office suggests that GenAI is inextricably tied to the future of learning and can both undermine and enhance it. The same can be said for the future of teaching. Faculty unions possess significant power to ensure that the nature of our jobs and the conditions in which we do them are mindfully considered before adopting this rapidly expanding technology. Agreements made at the bargaining table should protect faculty members from the disruption central to the tech industry’s goals.

Faculty are perhaps the most integral part of the future of learning. They should have the right to do their jobs without having their privacy or intellectual property compromised, and be able to work with the tools without the tools working against them. ■



How can I be sure that this GenAI tool will not use my intellectual property as training material for machine learning?



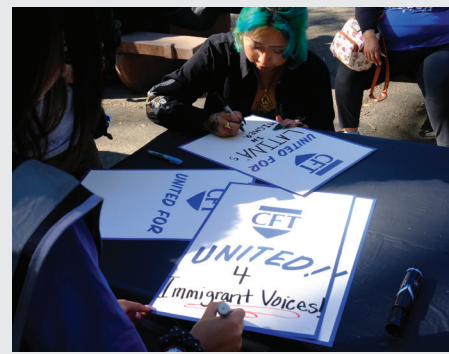
On March 12, FACCC proudly walked alongside students, faculty, and higher education advocates at this year's March in March, highlighting the strength and shared commitment of California's higher education community.

We are especially grateful to the many students, faculty leaders, and organizers from across the state whose dedication and energy made this year's march possible. Your voices continue to uplift and advance the importance of higher education in California's future.

The march concluded at the State Capitol, where attendees heard from an inspiring lineup of speakers representing labor, higher education, and student leadership, reminding us of the power of coming together to advocate for meaningful change.

March in March 2026

Protecting Students & Education





1823 11th Street | Sacramento, CA 95811
 info@facc.org | www.facc.org

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



Non Profit Org
 US Postage
 PAID
 Permit # 144
 Sacramento CA



Featuring 40+ On-Demand Masterclasses to Empower, Equip, and Elevate

CATAPULT



MAKE EDUCATION RELEVANT[®]



Learn from the
 best national
 keynote speakers
 + monthly live
 Q&A sessions



Earn Flex, CEUs, &
 up to 15 college
 credits

1 unit per 3 completed
 Masterclasses
 Undergrad or Graduate



FACCC members
 receive a discount
 on Full Access
 Registration

Catapult is a hybrid learning community for CCC faculty.

We provide personalized professional development led by education thought leaders.

Year-long access. No travel. Greater flexibility. Support FACCC by registering today at FACCC.org

LEAD THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION. ANYTIME. ANYWHERE.