A Regional Imperative

Introducing Project Attain!

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NARROWING THE GAP

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

LINKING EDUCATION TO OPPORTUNITY

Yuba City Mayor Preet Didbal envisions greater communities through Project Attain! while graduates like Veunta Dailey close the skills gap with their own road to success.
After a national search, Dr. Jenni Murphy was appointed Dean at the College of Continuing Education (CCE) and she has already hit the ground running, developing a regional initiative titled ProjectAttain! focused on educational attainment. The goal for this initiative is to increase the number of Sacramento’s working age adults with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025.

Dr. Murphy is well known for her passion and commitment to increasing educational access. She joined CCE in 2001 and during the past 17 years has served in various leadership roles including Associate Dean, Senior Director of Strategic Communications and Emerging Markets, Special Assistant to the Dean and Director of Extension Programs. Dr. Murphy has garnered extensive experience in the area of strategy and leadership, built strong relationships with community leaders and stakeholders and developed an understanding of local workforce needs.

Since 2015, Dr. Murphy has served as faculty and on thesis and dissertation committees for the Master’s in Public Policy and Administration and the Doctorate in Educational Leadership programs. She frequently is invited to serve on panels or present findings to stakeholders in higher education and workforce development.

Please join me in welcoming and congratulating Dr. Jenni Murphy on her new role at Sac State and ProjectAttain!. Together, we will narrow the educational attainment gap, support our region’s economic growth and serve as an Anchor University for the Sacramento region and a model for the state of California.

Best wishes,
President Robert S. Nelsen
...a personal note on educational attainment.

I am proud of the work that Sacramento State is doing alongside Align Capital Region to focus on supporting working age adults who wish to complete their education. Education is not a straightforward path for most of us. It can be a long and winding journey with many fits and starts. I dropped out of college to work, but was told to return by my wife who knew that I would need my college degree to achieve my dreams.

Working age adults are an economic powerhouse who have earned valuable life and work experience. They deserve our support in earning their degree or credential. We have a responsibility to serve all students, including those who started college but had to stop out along the way.

I am excited that the College of Continuing Education’s new dean, Dr. Jenni Murphy, is leading the effort to increase our region’s educational attainment for working age adults. Sacramento State is committed to helping all students succeed, including those who took a different pathway to get there.

President Robert S. Nelsen
Access Magazine

| Special Edition: ProjectAttain! |

**Closing the Gap**

Data show that there are nearly 4.5 million working age adults in California between the ages of 25 and 64 with some college but no degree, and more than 345,000 of them are in the eight-county Sacramento region—a disproportionate share of which are people of color and women. Cultivating the overlooked talent pool will accelerate efforts to raise educational attainment, narrow the equity gap and meet our region’s workforce needs.

There is a clear mismatch between future workforce needs and the number of skilled workers available to fill these positions that will become even more pronounced if we stay on the current path.

ProjectAttain! is a comprehensive regional strategy to chart a new course by increasing educational attainment to 60 percent by 2025. While the answer may seem simple—help working age adults finish what they started—the solution is complex. Working age adults face particular challenges when returning to school, like finding accessible classes to fit their schedules, balancing coursework with the responsibilities of work and family and the overall cost.

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**ProjectAttain! Strategic Outcomes**

1. **Increased educational attainment**
2. **Educational equity**
3. **Regional and individual prosperity**
4. **Skills alignment with workforce needs**

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**Research Indicates the Following Obstacles for Adults Returning to Formal Education:**

- **36%** Finances
- **27%** Logistics (work schedule, transportation, childcare, etc.)
- **20%** Lack of guidance
- **11%** Life changes
- **6%** Academic or learning issues

Source: The Graduate Network

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**Engaging the Community**

Stakeholder engagement from the business, government, education and non-profit sectors is critical to ensure that programs are aligned with industry needs and that barriers are addressed.
There are multiple pathways to educational attainment including certificates, apprenticeships, associate’s and baccalaureate degrees. Educational providers must work together to deliver a variety of high-quality credentials that meet market demand and support postsecondary access and success.

**Impacting the Future**

When working age adults complete in-demand credentials it improves individual lives and family trajectories and positively impacts our regional prosperity and economic competitiveness.

*ProjectAttain! serves as a catalyst to improve the lives of individuals in our communities and the economic vitality of our region.* — Dean Jenni Murphy

**Educational Attainment Improves Lives and Communities**

**Graduates With Postsecondary Credentials Are:**

- 25% more likely to be employed
- 47% more likely to have health insurance
- Using $82,000 less in government spending
- 72% more likely to have a retirement plan
- 2x more likely to volunteer

**Regional Economic Prosperity Is Impacted By:**

- Talent retention
- Increased tax base
- Increased charitable giving
- Direct spending on goods and services
- Recruitment and retention of quality jobs and investment

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Data from the Lumina Foundation show that nearly 22 percent or 4.5 million Californians have enrolled in college and left without receiving a degree or certificate. Emerging data indicate that as many as 1.1 million of these students are within 15 units of completion. This population, referred to as “near-completers,” represents an overlooked opportunity to increase degree attainment in California.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) divides the near-completer population into two groups: potentials and eligibles.

A “potential” student is one requiring less than 15 units to complete their degree or one who has yet to complete a non-academic course requirement, such as a seminar—the situation of an estimated 405,000 Californians.

An “eligible” student is one who has met their requirements but failed to complete an administrative process such as filing for graduation, returning an overdue library book or paying an outstanding parking fee. An estimated 726,400 Californians are members of this group. Many eligibles may not even be aware they have qualified for a degree because their credits apply toward a different degree than the one they were pursuing, or they transferred from a two to four-year institution without applying for an associate’s degree.

Moving California’s 1.1 million near-completers into the completion column will require fewer administrative and academic resources than any other student population that has stopped or dropped out. These students have already invested in their education — as has the State of California — and it is time for both to reap the benefits.
Educational Attainment Snapshots

Educational Demand for Jobs

Year and Number of Working People

- less than high school
- high school diploma
- some college/no degree
- associate’s degree
- bachelor’s degree
- master’s degree or better

Projection
2020
164 million

2010
143 million

1992
129 million

1973
91 million

NATIONAL AND STATE OUTLOOK

It is projected that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.

On the state level, it is anticipated that by 2030 California will fall about 1.1 million college graduates with baccalaureate degrees short of economic demand if current trends continue.

WHO ARE CALIFORNIA’S WORKING AGE ADULTS WITH SOME COLLEGE, NO DEGREE?

- 25-64 year olds
- Have earned some postsecondary education beyond high school but have not earned a credential or degree

63% of adults with some college, no degree work 31+ hours a week

37% of women with dependent children have some college, no degree

One in five of California’s workforce has some college, no degree
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: A REGIONAL OVERVIEW

A comparison of working age adults with some college, no degree in the eight-county Sacramento region.

- **SACRAMENTO**
  - Working Age Adults: 789,380
  - Some College, No Degree: 206,461

- **YOLO**
  - Working Age Adults: 101,745
  - Some College, No Degree: 19,784

- **SUTTER**
  - Working Age Adults: 47,374
  - Some College, No Degree: 12,651

- **COLUSA**
  - Working Age Adults: 10,612
  - Some College, No Degree: 2,430

- **NEVADA**
  - Working Age Adults: 50,056
  - Some College, No Degree: 15,087

- **EL DORADO**
  - Working Age Adults: 169,898
  - Some College, No Degree: 26,760

- **PLACER**
  - Working Age Adults: 194,498
  - Some College, No Degree: 50,191

**TOTAL:**
- Working Age Adults: 1,402,407
- Some College, No Degree: 345,427

Source: Lumina Foundation and U.S. Census Bureau
While the state faces a critical shortage of educated workers, an often overlooked demographic could provide at least one of the solutions — working age adults with some college but no degree or post-secondary credential who need support finishing what they started.

“We’re in a knowledge-based economy that demands higher skills,” said Jade Arn, director with the nonprofit Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

“There’s a real economic imperative to get them back in the education pipeline,” she told the audience at the inaugural Summit on Educational Attainment for Working Age Adults. The event brought together leaders in business, government, education and the community, each sector with an essential role in increasing adult educational attainment.

Currently in Sacramento County, 39.6 percent of working age adults have at least an associate’s degree, compared with 48.2 percent in Yolo and 50.6 percent in Placer, according to the Lumina Foundation.

A single number doesn’t tell the whole story of a community, but it does serve as “a proxy for an advanced economy,” said Bill Mueller, chief executive officer for Valley Vision, who opened the summit.

“If we’re going to compete, we have to boost the numbers.”

Sacramento State and Align Capital Region hosted the summit, which introduced ProjectAttain!’s ambitious goals to increase the number of working age adults with a degree, certificate or credential to 60 percent within the next decade.

Presenters from around the country shared their experiences implementing programs and linking education to opportunity. “In Kansas City, we had to show adults that a certificate translated into an above-average paying job,” said Cedric Deadmon, outreach and advising project manager, KC Degrees Mid-America Regional Council.

For older students with sometimes conflicting priorities, the path to success rarely follows a straight line.

“There are points where we can lose them,” said Jessica Gibson, an assistant executive director with the

Moderated Panel

Jessica Gibson
Assistant Executive Director, Adult Learner Initiatives
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Cedric Deadmon
Project Manager, Outreach and Advising
KC Degrees Mid-America Regional Council

Buffy Tanner
Director, Accelerated College Education and Bachelor’s through Online & Local Degrees
Shasta College
Tennessee’s program responded by adding a navigator to advise and encourage adult students “from start to finish.”

Hadass Sheffer, president of The Graduate! Network whose national organization helps adults complete college, cited an immense payoff. Higher skilled workers have more career opportunities and their families a higher standard of living. “There’s a multigenerational effect,” she added, “less reliance on social services, less reliance on the criminal justice system and an uptick in tax revenues.”

The summit also featured three mayors from our region: Preet Didbal from rural Yuba City, Christopher Cabaldon from the port city of West Sacramento and Darrell Steinberg from urban Sacramento. All three have launched successful initiatives around youth and education, and each one embraces ProjectAttain!

The three mayors agree that a significant cultural shift will have to take place in their communities. Conversations have “to be a two-way street between business and education,” said Didbal, a Sacramento State alumnus and the first female Sikh mayor in the country.

CCE Dean Jenni Murphy, who is spearheading ProjectAttain!, has traveled the route herself as an adult student and a working mother and has researched the topic for nearly a decade. “Completing formal education is a pathway to a better life for individuals and their families,” she said. “ProjectAttain! serves as a catalyst to improve our communities and our region’s economic vitality.”

“Educational attainment has an impact on every family’s bottom line and on our regional economic vitality. We cannot underestimate the importance of a well-trained, well-educated workforce — not only to maintain and fill the jobs today, but to be ready to serve the needs of the industries and workplaces of tomorrow.”

“Educational attainment provides people with the opportunity to have financial stability in their life, whether through a college degree or a career technical certificate. We can provide support for those who need some career aspiration and help fill positions that are lacking in our area such as in construction, healthcare and technology.”

“We have people ready to go, but they need training that aligns to jobs and opportunities for upward mobility.”

—Mayor Didbal

“Educational attainment is about making sure you have some kind of employable skill set. We’re really interested in stackable and employable certifications that keep up with the labor market. Without these credentials, people end up working in entry level jobs and low skill employment.”

“Educational attainment means there are no barriers to moving forward in life — academically as well as economically. In today’s 21st century economy, and especially with advancing technologies, it’s critical to keep your skills sharp and be prepared for the next opportunity.”
Bachelor’s Degree

“\textit{I neglected school because I was happy making what I thought was a lot of money at the time.}”

—Veunta Dailey

Veunta Dailey juggled a new semester at Sacramento City College with classes that started at 5:30 a.m. and a full-time job. She barely passed.

“I neglected school because I was happy making what I thought was a lot of money at the time,” said Dailey, who had her own apartment at 19. She went from being a math tutor to an administrative assistant and worked in accounting and finance.

Dailey invested five years earning her associate’s degree in accounting, and another five years towards a bachelor’s degree in accounting but “made no headway,” she said. Her educational path kept drifting until the day her company shut down.

“I knew a degree completion program would help me to finally complete my bachelor’s degree and realize my true potential in real time.”

In 2017, Dailey earned her degree in career and technical studies at Sacramento State, an online program critical to her success. Today, Dailey, 30, helps manage the University’s bachelor’s degree completion program in child development.

As a program coordinator at the College of Continuing Education at Sacramento State, she recruits working adults in six counties and coordinates the program’s curriculum off-campus in their communities. And she coaches them to overcome obstacles and fears. “I want to help people realize what they can accomplish.”

Dailey is still on a journey to reach her potential and plans both a master’s degree and doctorate in educational leadership.

Associate’s Degree

After more than 35 years in the workforce, June Watson-Sherman is back in college to finish her associate’s degree. She is halfway there.

She set aside her college dreams, having to work full time as a single parent of two children, and concentrated on professional development. “I love learning new things and whenever there were new classes or training, I was there,” said Watson-Sherman.

She spent hundreds of hours in professional development and earned certificates in human resources and Lean Six Sigma Green Belt from CCE. As her years of experience grew, she moved up the ranks into management, overseeing day-to-day operations and human resources for several companies.

She described her recent return to Sierra College as “something that felt right” for herself and something to tell her grandson one day. She hopes to complete her degree in a year.

“I’ve always wanted to finish what I started,” said Watson-Sherman, who’s not only a college student again but one of the first community volunteers for ProjectAttain!

“There are probably a lot of older adults who left college and would like to finish their education, if only they knew where to start and had the support,” she said, “because learning never stops.”
Career Technical Education

For his senior project in high school, Elliott Reyes researched fire investigations. He started hanging out at a local fire station and was fascinated when an arson investigator explained “the art of reading burns.”

“I always wanted to be a fireman,”
said Reyes, 30, who graduated from the Sacramento State Paramedic Program in 2018.

If he could, Reyes would have become a firefighter right out of high school but was too young for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). He spent a year at Santa Rosa Junior College and after turning 18 joined CAL FIRE in Humboldt County.

He spent his summers fighting wildfires across California and in the off-season went to school. He completed his associate’s degree in fire science in four years and joined the Sacramento City Fire Department as an emergency medical technician (EMT).

“With critical patients, I was able to do things like chest compressions, but I didn’t have a lot of other knowledge or skills. And I wanted to contribute more to the team,” he said.

Reyes earned a spot in Sac State’s hybrid paramedic program designed for working EMTs. He worked his 48-hour shift, attended classes around his schedule and completed the rest online.

“I could read the assignments, attend the lectures and then go back to work and apply the knowledge. I saw theory come to life.”

Reyes plans to earn his bachelor’s degree online in fire science management in a couple of years and eventually train a new generation of paramedics.

Apprenticeship

Evan Mulliner finished at the top of his class in high school. “Everyone said I had to go college, that’s all I ever heard growing up,” he said.

And no one was more disappointed than Mulliner when he dropped out after his first year. “It felt like the end of the world, and for a time I pretended that I was still going.”

After graduating from Corning Union High School in 2009, he headed to Cal Poly Pomona as a mechanical engineering student. But it wasn’t the right fit for him and neither were the jobs that followed, working as a store clerk, beekeeper and vending machine supplier.

Mulliner, 26, grew up working with his hands and had always been comfortable interacting with people. A career opportunity that played to his strengths came along a few years ago that changed his life.

He became an electrician apprentice.

Mulliner entered a five-year apprenticeship program that combined coursework through the Los Rios Community College District with paid on-the-job training.

“Everything I’m learning applies directly to what I’m doing on the job.”

He’s already worked at several commercial building sites, including new electrical projects at Chico State, and will earn his electrician’s license in 2020.

‘Electrical is the one trade that’s constantly changing and changing quickly,’ added Mulliner, who plans to continue his education with new classes, more training and advanced certifications.
Images from the 2018 Summit on Educational Attainment for Working Age Adults held at Sacramento State Downtown

Project Attain!

Get involved! Join the movement at projectattain.org

Special thanks to our partners at Align Capital Region

60% Educational Attainment by 2025

A Stronger Nation | Lumina Foundation

I want to get involved!

Name: __________________________
Tel: __________________________
Email: __________________________