

## **Study calls for community colleges to up graduation rates**

### **Cal State researchers call for student support, flexible funding are needed**

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California is falling behind other states in the number of college graduates it is producing, and if the state is to catch up, significant reforms are needed in the state's community college system.

Those are among the key findings of a new report from researchers at California State University in Sacramento, calling for more intensive efforts to ensure students are ready for college and a more flexible approach to college funding to allow for more local control.

"The whole system has a lot of regulations that bind the hands of the colleges to serve the students," said Nancy Shulock, lead researcher on the report.

"We recommend there be an additional funding factor be built in for students that are disadvantaged because they are more costly to educate," she said.

Key findings of the report:

-- California is not producing enough college graduates. Among the key 25 to 34 age group, the state ranks 29th for total population figures with associate degrees or higher. About 240,000 students are graduating from public and private colleges in the state each year. Shulock estimates a yearly increase of 132,000 is needed.

-- More students are enrolled at the state's community colleges than the California State University and University of California systems combined. Figures from fall 2006 show enrollment of about 1.1 million for the state's more than 100 community colleges vs. about 344,000 at Cal State and 163,000 for UC. Close 70 percent of all public college graduates — receiving either associate or bachelor's degrees — go through the community college system.