

Region ranks so-so in college measures

By Laurel Rosenhall

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How well students are prepared for college – and how well they perform once there – varies greatly across California. And the Sacramento region mostly runs in the middle of the pack.

That's what Sacramento State researchers found in a new report analyzing college readiness and enrollment in 14 state regions and among the major ethnic groups.

The study – "The Grades Are In 2008" – found that California's place as a national leader in higher education is declining largely because the state's fastest growing regions are poorly educated.

"This is a huge concern because overall our college going rates are in danger of falling," said Nancy Shulock, a professor and executive director of Sacramento State's Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy.

The Sacramento-Tahoe region – including Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Yuba, Sutter, Alpine and Amador counties – was neither the top-ranked area nor the lowest performer on any of the measures studied.

"In general, Sacramento is at or above state averages but not among the top on most measures," said Colleen Moore, a study researcher.

Where we ranked well:

- The Sacramento-Tahoe region placed sixth of the 14 regions in college participation, with 43 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled. Sixty-three percent of the region's high school graduates go directly to college, compared with 72 percent on the Central Coast and 27 percent in Superior California, which comprises Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou and Trinity counties.
- The Sacramento-Tahoe region placed fifth on measures of educational attainment and per capita income, with 29.9 percent of 25- to 64-year-olds holding at least a bachelor's degree, and income around \$27,000. The area was behind San Francisco, Orange County, San Diego and the Central Coast.

The Sacramento-Tahoe region was in the middle on college preparedness:

- It placed sixth of the 14 regions on eighth-grade test scores. Half of its eighth-graders are proficient in English-language arts and 41 percent are proficient in math. Orange County scored at the top in this category, with the North Coast at the bottom.

- The region placed sixth in the share of high schoolers enrolled in college-prep courses. The San Francisco Bay Area was at the top in this category, and Superior California was at the bottom.

In another measurement of college preparation, our local region fared worse:

- The Sacramento-Tahoe region placed 11th in the number of eighth-graders taking algebra. In this category, the Bay Area again ranked top, and Inyo-Mono counties were at the bottom.

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