Beyond Education:

The Impact of AICCU Institutions on the Economy, Workforce, and Communities of the Bay Area Region

2026 REPORT



AICCU | Trellis Strategies

Dear Colleagues,

California has a long history of strengthening its economy by educating, attracting and retaining talent. Today, with affordability dominating the statewide conversation, higher education must deliver more for students and help keep the state competitive.

Independent, nonprofit colleges and universities are a vital part of that work, preparing graduates and strengthening communities in every region of the state. Yet the full scale of their contribution to California's economy, workforce and communities has never been fully measured.

This report changes that.

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) partnered with Trellis Strategies to measure the full economic and workforce impact of our 85-plus institutions. Together, our institutions serve more than 350,000 students and generate $124.4 billion in economic activity each year, supporting 592,000 jobs statewide.

That impact extends far beyond the classroom. Our institutions are major employers, community partners, and economic engines in the regions they call home.

Across the Bay Area, our 21 independent, nonprofit colleges and universities are woven into the region's economy and the communities they serve. They generate $26.2 billion in economic activity each year, support over 93,000 jobs and produce $965 million in state income tax revenue. They employ nearly 30,000 people, bring customers to local businesses and send graduates into the regional workforce.

Our institutions train the people the region relies on most. Among the Bay Area's four-year public and nonprofit universities, we award all physician assistant degrees, 73% of nursing degrees and 58% of medical degrees, along with more than half of new credentialed teachers. More than 8,000 graduates join the regional workforce each year, and five years after they graduate, earn $47,000 more annually than they would without their degree.

Our model is built for student success. Institutional aid helps keep a degree within reach for the vast majority of our students, while low student-to-faculty ratios, close mentorship and internship opportunities contribute to strong retention and completion rates. At a time when affordability and workforce readiness are both critical priorities for California, this approach matters.

None of this happens in isolation. Our institutions are important anchors in the communities they call home, and their doors are open. Neighbors come to our campuses for free legal clinics and health screenings, youth camps and concerts, while high school students come for college courses and summer programs. Each visit shows families who may never have pictured themselves on a college campus that there is a place and a pathway for them.

The findings in this report tell a powerful story about the role independent, nonprofit colleges and universities play in California. We hope the data provides policymakers, employers and community partners with a clearer understanding of what our institutions contribute and creates new opportunities to work together to expand educational opportunity, meet California's workforce needs, and strengthen communities across the state.

Sincerely,

Kristen Soares
President, Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities

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Beyond Education: The Impact of AICCU Institutions on the Economy, Workforce, and Communities of the Bay Area Region

AICCU institutions are a vital force in the Bay Area's regional economy, generating substantial economic output, supporting jobs, and creating long-term value through the success of their graduates. Beyond these economic contributions, the institutions strengthen the region's workforce, expand opportunities for students, and serve as important anchors in their local communities.

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) represents over 85 independent, nonprofit colleges and universities in California. 21 of these institutions are located in the Bay Area region.[1] Together, they serve over 74,000 students and grant over 20,000 degrees and credentials each year, more than one-third of all degrees granted by four-year public and nonprofit institutions in the region. 41% of graduates remain in the Bay Area region, adding significantly to its workforce and economy.

This economic impact analysis, conducted by Trellis Strategies, measures the total dollar value of AICCU institutions' contributions to the Bay Area regional economy each year through day-to-day operations, capital projects, additional spending by the campus communities, and increased economic activity by graduates. This analysis also assesses the job creation associated with this spending, state income taxes generated, and the impact on the region's workforce. In addition, this report highlights more intangible economic impacts in the form of community engagement, organizational partnerships, and alumni activities, demonstrating how AICCU institutions support their local economies in meaningful ways beyond their financial footprints.

21
independent nonprofit colleges and universities in the Bay Area region

[1]The Bay Area region includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Solano counties.



Impact on the Bay Area Regional Economy

AICCU institutions have a significant impact on the Bay Area regional economy, contributing a total of $26.2 billion each year. Initial direct operational and capital spending by AICCU institutions, along with spending by employees, students, and visitors, generates $11.4 billion of economic activity. This initial spending then circulates throughout the economy, bolstering overall spending in the region. This additional indirect and induced spending (known in economics as the multiplier effect) generates an additional $5.7 billion in economic impact each year. In addition to these contributions from AICCU's campus communities, AICCU graduates add $9.0 billion annually to the regional economy through increased earnings and spending. AICCU's total impact, $26.2 billion in annual economic activity, is equivalent to the support of over 93,000 jobs in the Bay Area region.

$26.2B **Total Regional Economic Impact**

$11.4B	$5.7B	$9.0B
Direct Spending	Indirect & Induced Spending	Alumni Impact

Components may not sum to the total due to rounding.

Direct Spending - $11.4 Billion

Direct spending measures the economic value of initial spending by AICCU institutions, their employees, students, and visitors. There are five components of direct spending:

Employee Spending - $6.6 billion

AICCU institutions in the Bay Area region employ nearly 30,000 people each year. These employees are paid wages and benefits, much of which they spend on housing, food, utilities, transportation, and entertainment.

University Spending - $2.8 billion

This includes spending by AICCU institutions to support their day-to-day operations. These operating expenses include items such as facility maintenance, professional services, and supplies. This does not include spending on employee wages and benefits, depreciation, or interest.

Student Spending - $1.1 billion

Student spending also contributes to the economy. Nearly half (49%) of first-time undergraduate students attending AICCU institutions in the region come from outside of California, bringing additional spending to the region. Spending on items such as rent (for off-campus students), transportation, food, and entertainment brings additional dollars into the areas surrounding AICCU institutions. Student spending does not include spending on tuition or on-campus room and board (which is assumed to be spent by the institutions), or spending by distance-only students.

Capital Expenditures - $764 million

AICCU institutions invest significantly in capital projects such as new construction, major renovations, and large-scale capitalized maintenance each year. Trellis used the average of the past three years of capital expenditure to minimize the variance that occurs with these investments.

Visitor Spending - $259 million

Institutions attract many visitors each year for activities such as commencement ceremonies, sporting events, tours for prospective students, and seminars and conferences. These visitors include people from both within and outside the Bay Area region, many of whom spend additional dollars on meals, lodging, and entertainment.

Investment on Campus: Samuel Merritt University

In January 2026, Samuel Merritt University opened its new flagship campus in downtown Oakland, a 10-story building that represents a $240 million investment in the community. The campus includes simulation labs, classrooms, a library, study spaces, a café, campus store, and a state-of-the art anatomy lab. The new campus is centrally located near the BART, which allows greater integration between SMU and the local community and easy access to clinical and volunteer opportunities for students.

Indirect and Induced Spending - $5.7 Billion

Initial expenditures generate additional demand for goods and services in the Bay Area region. Businesses respond by hiring workers, purchasing raw materials, and ordering supplies to meet the demand created by spending by institutions, students, employees, and visitors. These transactions represent the indirect effects of direct spending.

The boost in business activity also increases the overall salaries and wages received in the region, either through increased productivity or growth in the number of employees. Thus, the additional demand is also followed by an increase in household income. Households then spend this income within the economy, generating further economic activity in the region. This additional household spending is considered induced impact.

Indirect Effects
Additional industry output, employment, labor income, and taxes generated by direct transactions that create further business-to-business purchases along the supply chain.

Induced Effects
Spending of additional labor income by households due to the direct and indirect effects, leading to further increases in output, employment, and labor income.

Alumni Impact - $9.0 Billion

Since 1986, nearly 590,000 students have received a degree or credential from an AICCU institution in the Bay Area.

AICCU institutions provide graduates with the skills and expertise that are essential for sustained professional success, significantly enhancing their earning potential and career development. In 2025, AICCU institutions in the Bay Area region granted over 20,000 degrees and credentials to nearly 20,000 individual students. Since 1986, nearly 590,000 students have received a degree or credential from one of these institutions, and 41% of these graduates are still working in the region. These degrees result in an average earnings premium for graduates of over $47,000 five years after graduation, increasing household incomes and spending in the region. In 2025, the increased earnings of AICCU graduates working in the Bay Area region led to a total alumni impact of $9.0 billion.

Jobs Supported - Over 93,000

The $26.2 billion in total economic impact supports over 93,000 jobs in the Bay Area region each year. Nearly 52,000 of these jobs are at AICCU institutions and at businesses that grow in response to demand from AICCU institutions, their students, visitors, and employees. Increased spending by AICCU alumni who live and work in the region supports nearly 42,000 additional jobs.

State Income Taxes Generated - $965 Million

Employees and graduates of AICCU institutions in the Bay Area region generate $965 million in state income tax each year. This does not include additional taxes generated by the employees of businesses responding to demand from AICCU institutions and graduates. It also does not include any sales or property taxes supported by the operations of AICCU institutions.



A Brief Note on Methodology

This report uses industry-standard input-output analysis methods and Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II) multipliers from the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis to evaluate the economic impact of AICCU institutions' operations, student spending, employee spending, and visitor spending on industries and economies in the Bay Area region, defined as Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Solano counties. Input-output analysis is predicated on the macroeconomic idea that initial changes in economic activity lead to multiple subsequent instances of new spending in economies that would not have happened without the initial spending change. Data inputs are sourced from both internal AICCU data and public databases including the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and College Scorecard and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The analysis uses data from the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years, supplemented with more recent data when available.

The analysis quantifies the direct economic activity generated by the 21 AICCU institutions in the region, as well as the additional indirect and induced spending generated from these initial expenditures. In addition, the analysis measures the economic impact of AICCU institutions through job creation. This measure of impact examines the number of full- and part-time jobs needed to support the change in local economic activity caused by the existence of AICCU institutions. Economic impacts are examined in both dollars and jobs throughout this report.

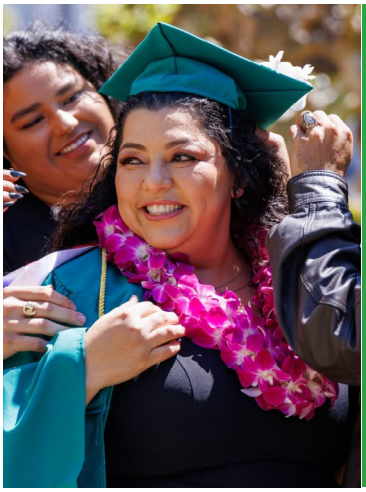
The economic impact of AICCU alumni is also examined. Alumni drive further economic activity in the region as a result of their increased earnings potential, which is then spent on goods and services. This study examines the one-year economic gains of graduation cohorts over the past 40 years. Salary gains relative to counterfactual earnings are calculated for each graduation cohort based on their time in the workforce, and these gains are restricted to the last 12 months of available earnings.

Additional questions about methodology should be directed to the authors.



Impact on the Bay Area Regional Workforce

AICCU institutions contribute significantly to the Bay Area regional economy each year. Beyond these explicit economic benefits, the valuable, in-demand degrees and credentials offered by AICCU institutions help to serve the needs of students in the region and advance regional workforce goals. Many AICCU institutions are closely connected within their communities, working directly with local businesses and organizations to prepare their students for careers in the Bay Area.



Institution Highlight:
EDvance College

EDvance College supports the Bay Area's early education workforce by providing an affordable path to a bachelor's degree for working early childhood educators. Evening classes, work-embedded learning, and institutional grants allow learners to earn their degree while continuing to work, keeping experienced educators in classrooms while they study. Partnerships with employers, community colleges, and regional organizations connect education, work, and financial support, and nearly 8 in 10 learners participated in a partner or Registered Apprenticeship pathway last year. In 2025–26, 51% of learners worked at state-subsidized worksites and 29% at Head Start worksites, extending the impact of their education to children and families across the region. As of Fall 2026, EDvance serves 405 learners in San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara counties, with 93% fall-to-fall retention.

Once students graduate, they are well positioned to fill valuable roles within the regional workforce. AICCU institutions in the Bay Area region offer more than 300 programs across over 160 fields of study, including many in high-demand fields. AICCU institutions grant over one-third of all degrees and credentials awarded by four-year public and nonprofit institutions in the region, and nearly half of graduate degrees. Within the healthcare field in particular, AICCU's share of regional degrees for physician assistants (100%), clinical and counseling psychologists (87%), nurses (73%), and medical doctors (58%) helps support the health and well-being of residents across the Bay Area.

AICCU Degrees Granted in High-Demand Fields

2,635
Healthcare Professions (49%)

970
Credentialed Teachers (52%)

1,375
Clinical & Counseling Psychologists (87%)

1,804
Engineering (30%)

1,888
Computer Sciences (32%)

Percent of degrees granted are calculated as AICCU's share of degrees and credentials granted by four-year, public and independent, nonprofit institutions in the Bay Area region.

41% of graduates from AICCU institutions remain in the Bay Area region, adding over 8,000 people to the workforce each year. These graduates receive an earnings premium from their degree, which they then spend in the regional economy. Five years after graduating, the typical AICCU graduate earns over $47,000 more annually than they would have without their degree.* AICCU institutions provide students with an environment in which they can acquire skills and field-specific knowledge that help them increase their earnings potential, while also addressing the pressing needs of the regional workforce.

Institution Highlight:
Alder Graduate School of Education

Alder Graduate School of Education helps meet the need for teachers by recruiting community members from historically underserved communities and preparing them to earn a master's degree and teaching credential through a one-year residency. Alder partners with public TK-12 school systems across California, including over a dozen school systems in the Bay Area region. Each resident spends the school year in the classroom alongside an experienced mentor teacher, and 88% of residents complete the program. 98% of graduates are hired as TK-12 teachers, and their odds of remaining in the classroom are twice those of other new teachers hired at the same time. The program also opens a path to economic mobility: the average resident is 31 years old with an income under $35,000, and within a year of enrolling, Alder graduates earn $70,000 or more, nearly doubling their family income.

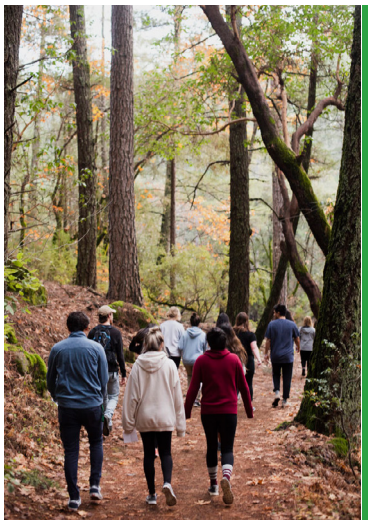


**This earnings premium is an enrollment-weighted average of the gains of AICCU undergraduate degree recipients, compared to the earnings of high school diploma holders in the region, and the gains of AICCU graduate degree recipients, compared to the earnings of bachelor's degree holders in the region.*



Impact on Bay Area Regional Communities

Beyond their substantial contributions to the region's economy and workforce, AICCU institutions are integral parts of their local communities. They serve as community gathering places, expand access to higher education for local youth, and partner with nonprofit and government organizations to provide volunteer services. This section highlights a few of the ways AICCU institutions shape and strengthen the communities around them.



Institution Highlight:
Pacific Union College

Pacific Union College regularly opens its campus to the wider community. Its 1,100-acre forest in Angwin, protected under a conservation easement with CalFire and the Land Trust of Napa County, is open to the public for recreation, and PUC partnered with the Redwood Trail Alliance and the St. Helena Thunderbird mountain biking group to clear its 35 miles of trails ahead of the annual Angwin to Angwish race. PUC also hosts conferences and programs throughout the year. In 2026, these included the West Coast Korean Camp Meeting, held at PUC for decades, which drew more than 1,000 people from across the western United States; the 36th annual Publication Workshop, which trained high school students in journalism, photography, video, and design; and PacificQuest, an early college program introducing students in grades 6–12 to STEM, aviation, and film.

Institution Highlight:
Notre Dame de Namur University

Through its Clinical Psychology Program, Notre Dame de Namur University's School of Psychology delivers over 20,000 hours of complimentary mental health services each year. Working at more than 97 practicum sites across more than 15 California counties, students serve children and families, veterans, older adults, and individuals facing trauma, grief, addiction, and severe mental illness, with a strong focus on underserved and marginalized communities. Undergraduates in the B.A. Psychology degree completion program also complete at least 15 hours of community service through the program's Community Engagement course.



Institution Highlight:
University of San Francisco

The University of San Francisco serves its neighbors through both professional expertise and student service. USF's Center for Community Counseling and Wellness offers no-fee or low-fee individual, family, and couples counseling to low-income, uninsured, and otherwise vulnerable San Francisco residents, with referrals from community partners including San Francisco SafeHouse and the District Attorney's Victim Services division. For 19 years, USF's community garden has welcomed students and neighbors to weekly harvest days, and students in the garden's outreach course cook free community dinners and donate produce to a local food bank. USF law students have also partnered with Swords to Plowshares, a Bay Area veterans' nonprofit, to offer estate-planning sessions that help veterans prepare health care directives, powers of attorney, and wills.





Conclusion

Each year, AICCU member institutions in the Bay Area region deliver high-quality education to over 74,000 students and contribute $26.2B to the regional economy.

AICCU institutions play a critical role in the Bay Area region by delivering high-quality education to over 74,000 students each year. This report demonstrates the substantial economic impact of the 21 AICCU member institutions in the Bay Area region and their alumni, who collectively contribute $26.2 billion annually to the regional economy. Through institutions' direct spending on operations; spending by employees, students, and visitors; and investment in capital improvement projects, AICCU institutions contribute $11.4 billion directly to the regional economy. This initial spending, combined with the increased earnings of alumni, is then multiplied throughout the region, adding an additional $14.8 billion to the regional economy.

As centers of learning and economic hubs, AICCU institutions contribute significantly to the growth and sustainability of the region's workforce. 41% of graduates remain in the Bay Area region after graduation, adding over 8,000 degree holders to the regional workforce each year. AICCU institutions grant nearly three-quarters of the medical doctor, physician assistant, and nursing degrees awarded by four-year public and independent, nonprofit institutions in the region, and 87% of degrees in clinical and counseling psychology. Five years after graduation, these graduates earn an average of over $47,000 more than they would have without an AICCU degree.

In addition to these quantifiable contributions to the regional economy, AICCU institutions create value in ways that extend beyond what can be captured in economic measures. Students and faculty provide free and low-cost mental health care to underserved residents, prepare meals for homeless youth, and help veterans with estate planning. Institutions open their campuses to the public, from forest trails maintained for community recreation to summer programs that introduce young students to college. Partnerships with local schools, nonprofits, and employers also create a path to a degree, and the economic mobility associated with that degree, for many Bay Area residents.

AICCU

About AICCU

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is the statewide voice for more than 85 nonprofit colleges and universities dedicated to serving the public good. As a vital component of California's higher education ecosystem, the Independent California Colleges and Universities (ICCU) sector educates hundreds of thousands of students, prepares the next generation of leaders and professionals, strengthens local communities, and drives economic and social mobility across the state.

Learn more at **aiccu.edu**

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Trellis Strategies

About Trellis Strategies

Trellis Strategies is a nonprofit strategic research and technical assistance firm dedicated to advancing postsecondary education and strengthening the workforce by delivering unparalleled insights into the student experience, from application through graduation.

With over 40 years of experience serving higher education institutions and helping students navigate complex processes, Trellis Strategies' dedicated team has the knowledge, insight, and experience to help organizations turn their data into action and action into results.

Learn more at **trellisstrategies.org**

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