Beyond Education:

The Impact of AICCU Institutions on the Economy, Workforce, and Communities of the Los Angeles 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 Los Angeles and Orange counties, our 46 independent, nonprofit colleges and universities are among the region's most important economic and workforce engines. Together, they drive $48.4 billion in economic activity each year, support more than 208,000 jobs and generate over $1 billion in state income tax revenue. They employ more than 47,000 people, bring students and visitors to neighborhood businesses and send thousands of graduates into the regional workforce.

Our institutions prepare the essential professionals Southern California depends on. Among the region's four-year public and nonprofit universities, we award 94% of the region's clinical and counseling psychology degrees from four-year public and nonprofit institutions, 81% of physician assistant degrees, 67% of medical degrees and more than half of nursing degrees, along with nearly half of new credentialed teachers. More than 15,000 graduates enter the local workforce every year, and five years out, the typical graduate earns over $31,000 more annually than they would have 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 Los Angeles Region

AICCU institutions are a vital force in the Los Angeles region's economy, generating substantial economic output, supporting jobs, and creating long-term value through the success of their graduates. Beyond these economic contributions, they 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. 46 of these institutions are located in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Together, they serve nearly 185,000 students and grant over 50,000 degrees and credentials each year, more than one-third of all degrees granted by four-year public and nonprofit institutions in the region. 31% of graduates remain in the Los Angeles 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 Los Angeles 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.

46

independent nonprofit colleges and universities in Los Angeles and Orange counties



Impact on the Los Angeles Regional Economy

AICCU institutions have a significant impact on the Los Angeles regional economy, contributing a total of $48.4 billion each year. Initial direct operational and capital spending by AICCU institutions, along with spending by employees, students, and visitors, generates $19.0 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 $15.3 billion in economic impact each year. In addition to these contributions from AICCU's campus communities, AICCU graduates add $14.0 billion annually to the regional economy through increased earnings and spending. AICCU's total impact, $48.4 billion in annual economic activity, is equivalent to the support of over 208,000 jobs in the Los Angeles region.

$48.4B **Total Regional Economic Impact**

$19.0B	$15.3B	$14.0B
Direct Spending	Indirect & Induced Spending	Alumni Impact

Components may not sum to the total due to rounding.

Direct Spending - $19.0 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:

University Spending - $7.6 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.

Employee Spending - $7.2 billion

AICCU institutions in the Los Angeles region employ over 47,000 people each year. These employees are paid wages and benefits, much of which they spend on housing, food, utilities, transportation, and entertainment.

Student Spending - $2.1 billion

Student spending also contributes to the economy. Nearly 44% 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 - $1.4 billion

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 - $613 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 Los Angeles region, many of whom spend additional dollars on meals, lodging, and entertainment.

Investment on Campus

Claremont McKenna College opened the Robert Day Sciences Center in September 2025, made possible by $400 million in private investment. This landmark facility houses the Kravis Department of Integrated Sciences, a fully integrated undergraduate sciences program designed without discipline-defined departments.

Indirect and Induced Spending - $15.3 Billion

Initial expenditures generate additional demand for goods and services in the Los Angeles 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 - $14.0 Billion

Since 1986, nearly 1.3 million students have received a degree or credential from an AICCU institution in the Los Angeles region.

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 Los Angeles region granted over 50,000 degrees and credentials to over 49,000 individual students. Since 1986, nearly 1.3 million students have received a degree or credential from one of these institutions, and over 30 percent of these graduates are still working in the region. These degrees result in an earnings premium for graduates of over $31,000 five years after graduation, increasing household incomes and spending in the region. In 2025, the increased earnings of AICCU graduates working in the Los Angeles region led to a total alumni impact of $14.0 billion.

Jobs Supported - 208,000

The $48.4 billion in total economic impact supports 208,000 jobs in the Los Angeles region each year. Over 141,000 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 another 67,000 jobs.

State Income Taxes Generated - $1.0 Billion

Employees and graduates of AICCU institutions in the Los Angeles region generate over $1 billion 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 Los Angeles region, defined as Los Angeles and Orange 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 46 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 Los Angeles Regional Workforce

AICCU institutions contribute significantly to the Los Angeles 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 Southern California.



Institution Highlight:
Whittier College

Whittier Works, launched with The Rose Hills Foundation and private donors, connects Whittier's liberal arts curriculum to career preparation through funded, community-based internships. In its first year, the program includes more than 15 organizational partners and about 25 student interns across Los Angeles and Southern California.

Once students graduate, they are well positioned to fill valuable roles within the regional workforce. AICCU institutions in the Los Angeles region offer more than 500 programs across over 200 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 58% of graduate degrees. Within the healthcare field in particular, AICCU's share of regional degrees for clinical and counseling psychologists (94%), physician assistants (81%), medical doctors (67%), and nurses (53%) helps support the health and well-being of residents across Los Angeles and Orange counties. The Los Angeles region is known for its visual and performing arts. AICCU institutions award nearly half (49%) of degrees in these specialized fields each year.

AICCU Degrees Granted in High-Demand Fields

6,940
Healthcare Professions (51%)

2,043
Credentialed Teachers (48%)

2,919
Clinical & Counseling Psychologists (94%)

3,812
Visual & Performing Arts (49%)

2,882
Computer Sciences (30%)

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 Los Angeles region.

31% of graduates from AICCU institutions remain in the Los Angeles region, adding over 15,000 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 $31,000 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: Occidental College

Occidental's Center for Community-Based Learning offered more than 100 community-based learning and research courses last year, paired with over 70 community partners across Los Angeles. Through L.A. Encounters, students also took part in 83 different Los Angeles field trips, connecting classroom learning to the city's institutions, industries, and neighborhoods. Together with the InternLA program, which placed more than 50 interns with 48 local host organizations, these programs give students direct experience with organizations that may employ them.



**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 Los Angeles 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.

AICCU institutions are closely connected to local high schools, nonprofit organizations, and employers. Whittier College's Civic Scholars program, a joint effort with the City of Whittier and the Fletcher Jones Foundation, is cultivating the next generation of civic, community, and business leaders for eastern Los Angeles County and northern Orange County. Its inaugural cohort of 11 students is planned to grow to 56 student civic leaders within four years. Biola University's AI Lab recently hosted its first AI Hackathon, bringing local high school students to campus to learn the fundamentals of AI and present their projects.

Making campus spaces available to the community is another way that AICCU institutions connect with their local communities. Laguna College of Art and Design (LCAD) frequently provides access to conference rooms, studios, classrooms, and other campus spaces for meetings, workshops, and special events hosted by local nonprofit organizations and community partners. The Laguna Beach Unified School District, Laguna Beach Food Pantry, and Laguna Beach Live!, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing awareness of and participation in diverse musical experiences, all use LCAD facilities on a regular basis.

Institution Highlight:
Antioch University

Antioch University provides scholarships for Los Angeles Urban League members and staff pursuing bachelor's or master's degrees, paired with a mentorship program that supports their academic and professional development. Antioch's Bridge Program, offered exclusively in Los Angeles, gives students who may not otherwise have access to college up to 12 transferable university credits per term, free of charge, in philosophy, literature, art history, writing, and urban studies. Since 1999, nearly 1,000 students have participated.



Students at AICCU institutions serve their communities in many ways. Biola University students partner with local organizations including the L.A. Dream Center, the Grace EV Free Food Pantry, and The Palms La Mirada assisted living community. Biola nursing students support Lighthouse Outreach Ministries, serving Orange County's homeless population. For more than 20 years, Biola has also run the "Ask a Nurse" program at the La Mirada Activity Center, where 30 nursing students each semester provide information and care to 10 to 15 older adults each week. At Chapman University, students volunteer weekly to provide technology help to seniors at the Orange Senior Center. Occidental College's OxyConnects program connected 160 student volunteers with 10 partner organizations last year.

AICCU institutions also provide valuable services to their communities through their technical expertise. After the 2025 Los Angeles fires, California Institute of Technology scientists and engineers mobilized to provide the public with critical information on environmental lead contamination, air quality, and flooding and debris-flow risk in the burn areas. Their webinars and podcasts reached more than 3,000 live attendees and over 10,000 additional viewers and listeners online. Southern California University of Health Sciences supports its community through free outreach clinics, providing chiropractic, acupuncture, and integrative health services to underserved populations.



Conclusion

Each year, AICCU member institutions in the Los Angeles region deliver high-quality education to nearly 185,000 students and contribute $48.4B to the regional economy.

AICCU institutions play a critical role in the Los Angeles region by delivering high-quality education to nearly 185,000 students each year. This report demonstrates the substantial economic impact of the 46 AICCU member institutions in Los Angeles and Orange counties and their alumni, who collectively contribute $48.4 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 $19.0 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 $29.4 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. 31% of graduates remain in the Los Angeles region after graduation, adding over 15,000 degree holders to the regional workforce each year. AICCU institutions grant more than half of the medical doctor, physician assistant, and nursing degrees awarded by four-year public and independent, nonprofit institutions in the region, and 94% of degrees in clinical and counseling psychology. Five years after graduation, these graduates earn an average of over $31,000 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 services such as health care for older adults, technology help for seniors, and public safety information after natural disasters, free of charge. Many institutions serve as gathering places for nonprofit organizations in the area, and partnerships with local high schools, community groups, and city governments support a path to a degree and the economic mobility associated with that degree for many residents of Los Angeles and Orange counties.

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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