ASSOCIATE DEGREE FOR TRANSFER STATUS REPORT 2026

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT CALIFORNIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



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ABOUT AICCU

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is comprised of over 80 independent, nonprofit colleges and universities, which make up the Independent California Colleges and Universities (ICCU) sector. The ICCU sector plays a pivotal role in the development of the state's model higher education offerings and in making California a symbol of innovation across the globe. Within California, ICCU institutions award 21 percent of all undergraduate degrees and 54 percent of graduate degrees, making them the largest preparers of California's advanced workforce.

Independent California Colleges and Universities are recognized in the state's Master Plan for Higher Education as a provider of affordable college access and a partner with other sectors and the state in the preparation of future leaders and the state's workforce. Independent colleges and universities are defined in California Education Code 66010 (b): As used, "independent institutions of higher education" are those nonpublic higher education institutions that grant undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, or both, and that are formed as nonprofit corporations in this state and are accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.

INTRODUCTION

This report to the Legislature and Department of Finance, submitted by the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) on behalf of California independent, nonprofit higher education institutions, provides an annual update on the state of Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) applications to participating independent, nonprofit colleges and universities.

Created in 2010, the ADT program was originally designed to facilitate the transfer of California Community College (CCC) students to the California State University (CSU) system. The core pillars of the program are similar regardless of whether students on ADT pathways transfer to a CSU campus or a participating AICCU institution – a minimum 2.0 grade point average, admission with junior standing, and a guarantee that students can complete a bachelor's degree in no more than 68 additional units (two years) at the receiving institution.

As noted in prior reports, one key distinction for students transferring with the ADT to participating AICCU institutions is that they are guaranteed admission to the specific institution to which they applied, whereas students admitted to the CSU system may be redirected to a non-impacted campus.

2026 UPDATE

Since 2023, ADT targets for the ICCU sector have been determined using a dynamic methodology that sets an annual target based on the prior year's ADT admit count to AICCU institutions, adjusted by the year-over-year percentage change in new transfer student enrollment[1] from CCCs to the independent, nonprofit sector.

Historically, AICCU has utilized the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Data Mart[2] as the source for determining the new student transfer population. This source was selected because it is publicly available and provides the closest representation of students transferring specifically from CCCs into the independent, nonprofit sector. However, the most recent Data Mart release, reflecting 2024-25 transfer data, was not updated in time to support this year's

[1] AICCU based new transfer student enrollment on the entire sector of private, nonprofit institutions to account for any fluctuations in membership.
[2] https://datamart.cccco.edu

ADT target-setting and legislative reporting timeline and, as of April 15, 2026, remains unavailable.

Other federally recognized data sources, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), do not distinguish between in-state and out-of-state transfers, or between upward and lateral transfers. Nevertheless, in the absence of updated CCCCO Data Mart information, AICCU utilized IPEDS data for this year's target-setting calculations.

Using this methodology, AICCU staff calculated an ADT target of 2,265.

STABILITY IN 2025-26 ADT ADMIT NUMBERS

A total of **2,345 de-duplicated ADT students** were admitted to **32 AICCU participating institutions** for the 2025–26 academic year, indicating relative stability in ADT admits compared to the prior year. Two institutions reported receiving zero ADT applications.

Table 1 presents the number of ADT students admitted to participating AICCU institutions since ADT collection began, along with the number of institutions reporting in each year.

Table 1: ADT Students Admitted Since Collection Began

Collection Year	Academic Year	Institutions Reporting	De-duplicated ADT Students Admitted	Percentage Change Over Prior Year
1	2018-19	34	869	N/A
2	2019-20	36	2,372	173.8%
3	2020-21	29	2,175	-8.3%
4	2021-22	37	2,898	33.2%
5	2022-23	36	2,163	-25.4%
6	2023-24	33	2,117	-2.1%
7	2024-25	33	2,367	11.8%
8	2025-26	32	2,345	-0.9%

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Each participating institution was provided a standardized Excel workbook containing basic fields for each student record. Institutional representatives were instructed to coordinate across relevant departments to compile student admit

records, sign a memorandum of understanding for data sharing between AICCU and the institution, and upload the completed file to a secured OneDrive folder. After submission, AICCU de-duplicated records and aggregated the total number of ADT students admitted across the sector.

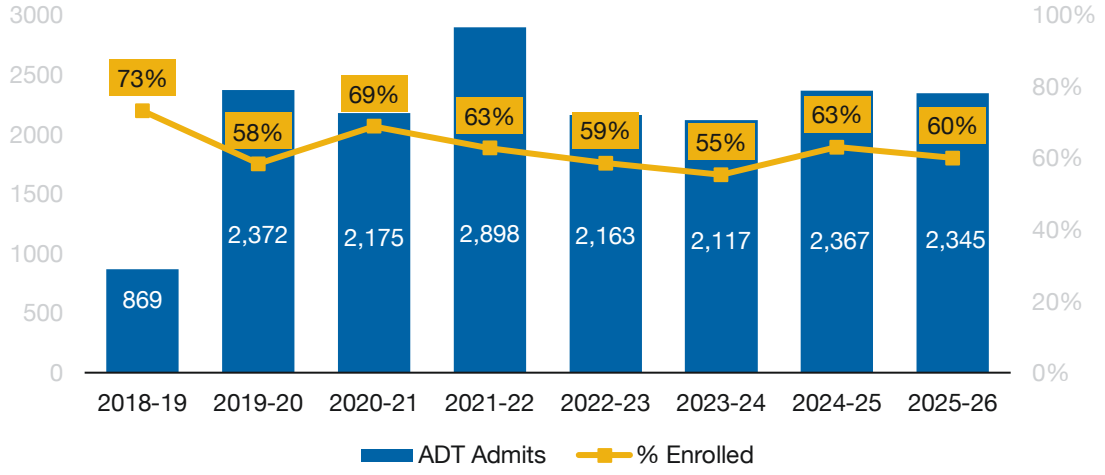
Beginning in 2022, AICCU expanded its data collection efforts to include outcome measures of current and previously admitted ADT students. These additional metrics were submitted through a separate Google form.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In recent years, AICCU has expanded its ADT data collection to include enrollment, demographics, and outcome measures. Collectively, these additional data provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's impact and offer insight into potential equity gaps and student progress through the educational pipeline.

Since participation in the program began in 2018-19 academic year, AICCU institutions have accepted a total of 17,306 ADT applicants. Of those, approximately 62%, or 10,667 students, have enrolled at a participating member institution. The annual breakdown of admits is shown in Figure 1 below.[3]

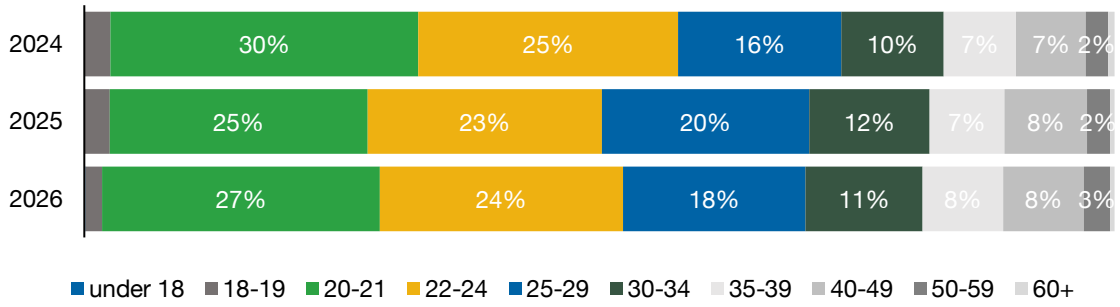
Figure 1: Year-over-year Enrollment of ADT Students Admitted to AICCU Institutions



[3] Source: AICCU ADT Data Collection, 2018-2026

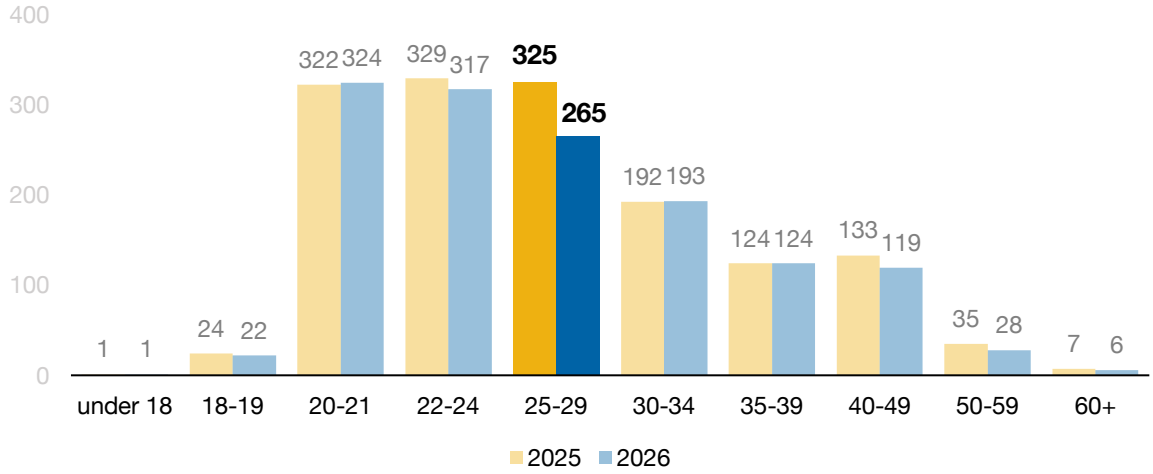
Consistent with the past two years, approximately 80% of the 2025–26 ADT admit population falls within the 20–34 age range. However, a shift within that distribution is evident (Figure 2). This year, 51% of this year's ADT admittees are between the 20–24 age range, compared to 48% last year, while 29% fall within the 25–34 age range, down from 32% last year. This shift may reflect a modest increase in younger transfer students entering ADT pathways more directly following community college completion.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of ADT Admits: 2024-2026



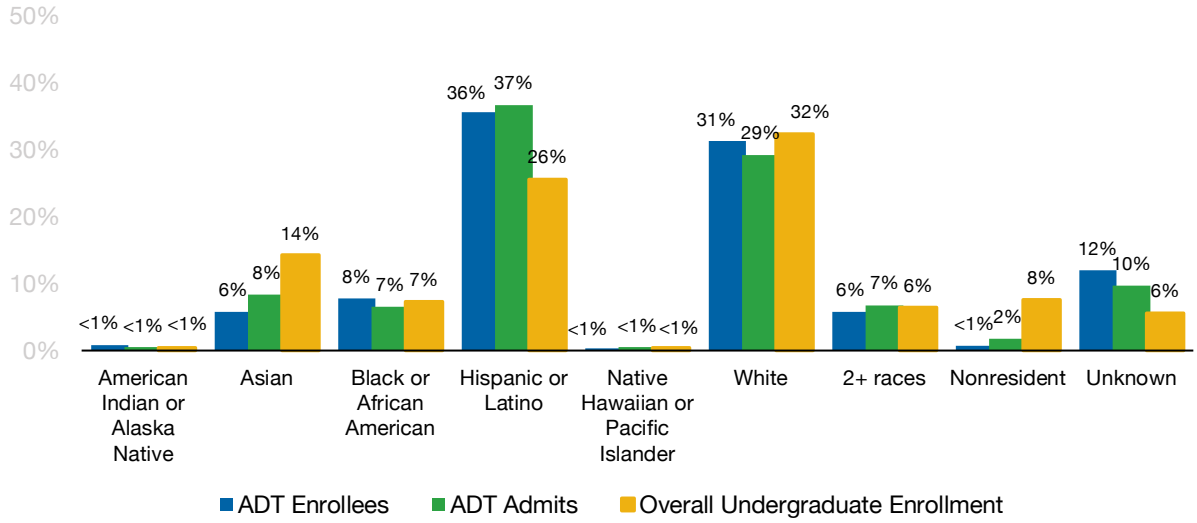
Building on this pattern, the median age of this year's ADT admitted student population remained 24, unchanged from last year and slightly higher than the median age of 23 reported in 2024. Among students who enrolled, the median age was 25, with over 53% classified as nontraditional learners age 25 and older. While age groups 30 and above remained consistent with prior years, the 25–29 age range experienced a notable decline (Figure 3), reflecting a shift within the 20–34 age range among ADT admits.

Figure 3: Age Distribution of ADT Enrolled Students: 2025 vs. 2026



ADT applicants and enrollees continue to be more likely to identify as Hispanic or Latino than the overall undergraduate population at AICCU institutions, while the distribution of other racial/ethnic groups of ADT students largely mirror those of the broader undergraduate student population (Figure 4).[4]

Figure 4: Diversity of ADT Population vs. Overall Undergraduate Enrollment



For 2025-26, 45% of students who enrolled at AICCU institutions through the ADT pathway were from underrepresented backgrounds.

TRENDS IN STUDENT PERSISTENCE

AICCU again collected data on one-year retention[5][6] and two-year graduation[7] rates for students who enrolled through ADT pathways. Figure 5 compares these metrics for AICCU institutions with ADT students on guaranteed pathways within the CSU system.

AICCU has now collected outcome measures for five cohort years, revealing consistent patterns in student persistence. Across cohorts, the two-year graduation rate for ADT students has generally remained near the 50-60% range, with this year at 49%, while one-year retention rates has consistently been between 73%-85%. These results demonstrate that students transferring through

[4] Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, 2024-2025, 12-month enrollment

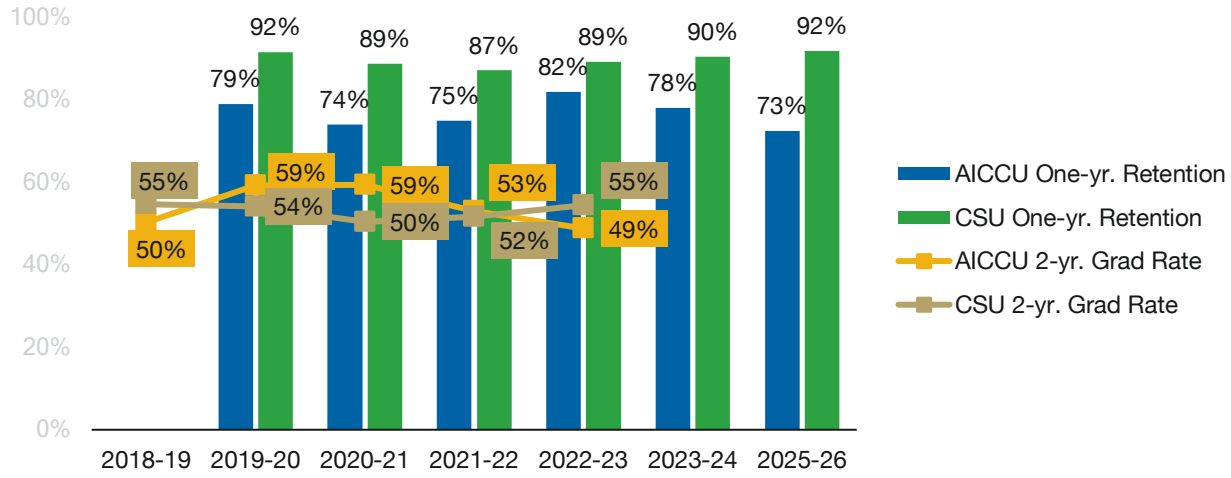
[5] One-year retention was measured as students who enrolled during the indicated year and continued to enroll one year later.

[6] Note: one-year retention was not requested from the 2018-2019 AICCU ADT admit cohort

[7] Two-year graduation rates were used as the measurement of 100%-degree completion, as the assumption is that four-year degrees typically require 120 units, and at least 60 units would transfer for students admitted with an ADT guaranteed pathway.

ADT pathways to independent, nonprofit institutions persist and complete their degrees at rates comparable to their peers on guaranteed CSU pathways.

Figure 5: ADT Persistence Rates



TRANSFER IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

SPONSORED LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE FINANCIAL AID FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

Last year, AICCU introduced sponsored legislation with Assemblymember Darshana Patel to address an existing state policy that prevents nontraditional (25 and older) CCC transfer students from utilizing their remaining Expanded Cal Grant Entitlement Award if they transfer to an AICCU institution. The 2021-22 State Budget Act expanded Cal Grant entitlement awards to all community college students who met income eligibility criteria, regardless of their age or the amount of time since high school graduation. State policy allows students who receive this entitlement award, commonly referred to as an "E3" award, to use the remaining Cal Grant eligibility upon transfer to a UC or CSU, but it does not extend that support to students who transfer to independent nonprofit colleges in California.

As a result, a transfer-seeking nontraditional student loses approximately $9,100 in Cal Grant support if they matriculate to an AICCU institution. AB 402 proposes a policy change that would extend the same transfer portability guarantee to students considering an independent nonprofit college or university. The bill is currently in the Senate Education Committee, and AICCU is actively engaging in budget advocacy to secure $18.2 million for a two-year pilot expansion of this transfer portability.

ASSIST.ORG INTEGRATION UPDATE

Since the $1.5 million allocation in the 2022-23 State Budget was provided to the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) to integrate AICCU member institutions into the ASSIST platform, AICCU staff have worked closely with member institutions and the ASSIST team to develop plans for system integration and memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreements with participating institutions.

As of March 2026, 34 member institutions currently participating in ASSIST. Several are at different stages of integration, including several actively publishing course articulations on the platform and three that recently signed the MOU and are currently in the onboarding process.

AICCU staff continue to collaborate with ASSIST to do conduct outreach and informational meetings with additional member institutions who are considering joining the platform.

ADDITIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS

AICCU is a member of the Office of Cradle-to-Career (C2C) Governing Board, which, in addition to developing the data system for the state, houses eTranscript CA. AICCU participated in the 2024 eTranscript CA Task Force and now has a representative on the eTranscript CA Evaluation Committee, which will review requests for proposals to update the current system. Input from AICCU is critical to ensure these tools are usable by both students and institutions to minimize burdens on students and enhance transfer to four-year institutions, including nonprofit higher education.

AICCU has also been an active member of the Common Course Numbering Council and provides input on implementation of common course numbering at nonprofit colleges and universities to make it easier for potential transfer students to understand which courses articulate at a four-year institution. Faculty from nonprofit institutions have participated in developing common course descriptions, and to date three institutions have adopted the common course numbering. AICCU remains supportive of the Common Course Numbering efforts to support streamlined transfer and reduce confusion about articulation of courses from different community colleges to four-year institutions.

CONTINUED AICCU REGIONAL COUNSELOR CONFERENCES

As part of AICCU's work through the California Private College is Possible initiative, in September 2023 AICCU began organizing and hosting a series of regional counselor conferences throughout the state. These regional counselor conferences invite high school and community college transfer counselors to learn more about opportunities for their students at AICCU institutions.

In September 2025, AICCU offered this programming for a third consecutive year, free of charge to attendees. Five regional events were held throughout the state at AICCU institutions, including Fresno Pacific University, Menlo College, California Baptist University, Point Loma Nazarene University, and Otis College of Art & Design. AICCU also offered one virtual session. More than 300 counselors attended these events, a turnout consistent with prior years.

Each event featured sessions on admissions, financial aid, and student services that were designed to connect counselors directly with institutional staff. Each in-person event ended with a college fair, allowing counselors to meet with different campuses. Over 25 member institutions participated in these events, and AICCU is currently finalizing the host campuses and dates for programming in September 2026.

COLLABORATION WITH CCCCO LEADERSHIP ON NEW MOU

Since the prior report, AICCU has engaged in discussions with senior leadership at the CCCCO to develop a new MOU between their system and AICCU. The goal is to craft an MOU that closely matches language in an existing MOU between AICCU and ASSIST. Doing so would provide an opportunity for more institutions within AICCU membership to sign the MOU, which then would create a pathway for significantly more member institutions to be incorporated into the ICanGoToCollege website.

Increasing the visibility of AICCU institutions on the ICanGoToCollege website has been a long-standing issue in ensuring ADT pathways to AICCU institutions are communicated and highly visible in this prominent tool utilized by community college students. A draft MOU is currently in development. AICCU wishes to express our deep appreciation to CCCCO leadership, specifically Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs James Todd and his team, for the ongoing engagement on this issue.

CONCLUSION

AICCU continues to advance the visibility, access, and understanding of its members institutions through coordinated statewide efforts, including participation in ASSIST, regional counselor conferences, the Common Course Numbering Council, eTranscript California, and ongoing partnership with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

Our member institutions remain deeply committed to the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) as a critical pathway for community college students to pursue a bachelor's degree at an independent, nonprofit college or university. This commitment is reflected in both scale and impact: more than 17,000 ADT students have been admitted to AICCU institutions, with nearly 11,000 enrolling. These outcomes underscore the ADT's essential role in expanding access, strengthening transfer pipelines, and supporting student success across California.

Looking ahead, AICCU is focused on three strategic priorities:

1) Finalizing an updated memorandum of understanding with the CCC Chancellor's Office;
2) Expanding participation in the ICanGoToCollege platform to increase student awareness of independent nonprofit options; and
3) Growing the number of member institutions actively participating in the ADT program while strengthening regional partnerships between community college districts and AICCU institutions to expand transfer pathways.

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