

## **Improving Equity and Completion: An Adult Learner Toolkit for California Community Colleges**

*May 2021*

California Community Colleges are a powerful force for advancing equity, economic mobility, and prosperity. With this past year’s racial reckoning, disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people of color, natural disasters, and attack on civic institutions, our colleges have been at the forefront to fulfill the promise of the system’s north star, the [Vision for Success](#). Their agile response to students’ changing needs have demonstrated a powerful impact on local, regional and state recovery efforts – there has never been a more important time for community colleges.

The *Vision for Success* was designed with equity at its core and meeting the goals requires a multifaceted approach that addresses students’ unique needs. One population of current and prospective students that is simply too large, too diverse and too important to ignore is Californians age 25 and older without degrees – “adult learners.” As college leaders know, advancing equity and increasing certificate and degree completion among this group is key to improving outcomes statewide, including the milestones set forth by the [Governor’s Recovery with Equity Task Force](#). With colleges adapting to meet students’ needs in response to COVID-19, now is a pivotal time to reassemble the student experience to enable continuous lifelong learning.

As system leaders explore policy and budget changes to better support currently enrolled and prospective adult learners without postsecondary credentials, college leaders are well-positioned to take immediate action for their communities. This toolkit was designed to guide colleges through a self-reflection of their strengths and weaknesses in serving this population to improve equity and completion. Based on the Adult Promise Initiative (see “About this Initiative” page 3) and research and best practices from across the country, the toolkit offers recommendations and guiding questions in key areas where adult learner needs are especially pronounced: access, student support, course modality, and affordability.

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### **Why Focus on Adult Learners?**

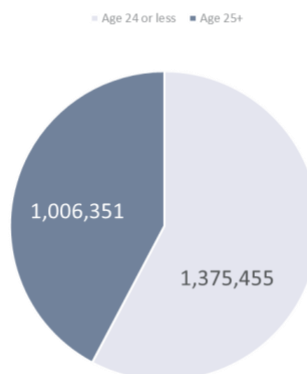
Misperceptions abound about “adult learners” in higher education nationwide, including the California Community Colleges. This can impact program design in ways that marginalize adult learners and the college leaders, faculty, and staff focusing on their success. Because adult students have inaccurately been deemed “non-traditional,” many stakeholders believe they are predominantly engaged in non-credit pathways or adult-focused programs like the California Adult Education Program. However, the student population is evolving and adult learners are no longer a small minority. In fact, students age 25 and up now comprise about 42 percent of total enrollment, which disrupts the inappropriate narrative of the “traditional” versus “non-traditional” student at California community colleges. As a response to these changing demographics, colleges must continue to

reform and implement policies and practices that honor the unique needs and characteristics of today’s community college students.

### **The Equity Imperative**

California community colleges must advance racial equity among the significant number of current and prospective adult learners to close achievement gaps. The *Vision for Success* and the [Call to Action](#) empower colleges working to enable the success of students of all ages by adopting anti-racist policies and practices. More than half of current adult students are people of color, and more than half of the 6.8 million Californians ages 25-54 with a high school diploma but no postsecondary degree are people of color, with many having been hindered by systemic racism.<sup>1</sup> As a result, black and brown Californians experience disproportionately low educational attainment, which may explain why they are over-represented in low-wage jobs in fields such as construction and extraction, office and administrative support, transportation, and material moving.<sup>2</sup>

Adults age 25+ are nearly half of total CCC enrollment



### **The completion imperative**

California community colleges are also focusing on adult learner completion to meet workforce needs and *Vision* goals. Millions of working-age Californians are competing in an economy tainted by a pandemic and a workplace where transformed jobs increasingly require new skills and knowledge. Adults in the “Baby Boom” generation will increasingly exit the workforce over the next decade and newer generations will need industry-valued credentials to acquire jobs with living wages.<sup>3</sup> And, as numbers of high school graduates in California will start to decline by 2024 and continue through at least 2037,<sup>4</sup> colleges can expect adult learners to increase as a share of total enrollment.<sup>5</sup> Our commitment to optimizing pathways and supports to help current and potential adult learners

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achieve credentials and degrees that lead to living wages is critical. Reforms such as Equitable Placement and Guided Pathways are pivotal to this work. The imperatives to

<sup>1</sup> [https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes\\_CPL-Brief\\_Final\\_8\\_11.pdf](https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes_CPL-Brief_Final_8_11.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> From *Postsecondary to Prosperity* (2019) retrieved at [https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes\\_P2P-Full-Report.pdf](https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes_P2P-Full-Report.pdf): About 6% of Hispanic Californians, who comprise about 40% of the population, have an associate degree and 15% have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to white Californians (9% and 48%, respectively). About 10% of Black and African American Californians have an associate degree and 27% have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

<sup>3</sup> Only about 64 percent of Californians currently earn a living wage: [https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes\\_P2P-Full-Report.pdf](https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CACompetes_P2P-Full-Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Projections/Public\\_K-12\\_Graded\\_Enrollment/](https://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Projections/Public_K-12_Graded_Enrollment/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CA-Competes\\_Get-Ready-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://californiacompetes.org/assets/general-files/CA-Competes_Get-Ready-Report_Final.pdf)

focus on adult learners should not diminish a focus on younger students (ages 18-24), particularly those of color, though those colleges that serve adult learners well will see success as it pertains to enrollment, meeting local goals, and prospering under the Student Centered Funding Formula.

The need is urgent as students, families and the state's economy suffer in the wake of COVID-19. Recovering with equity will require colleges to take strategic risks, collaborate, and design programs with all students in mind. This toolkit was designed to support colleges as they continue to build, enhance and scale promising practices for adult learners.

### **About the Adult Promise Initiative that informed this toolkit**

California is one of approximately a dozen states that participated in the Lumina Foundation's Adult Promise network. In partnership with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the Success Center at the Foundation for California Community Colleges undertook three activities to better understand the opportunities and barriers to adult student success in the system's reforms, initiatives, and programs. The Success Center team also learned from other states engaged in the Adult Promise Network and from its concurrent work on the Credit for Prior Learning Initiative in California Community Colleges.

The data and lessons from these efforts informed this toolkit:

- 1.) Landscape analysis of policies, programs, and practices to identify what is perceived to be working for adult learners in California Community Colleges and what is not. Reviewed reports on adult learner success (California and national), data, and existing laws and regulations, and interviewed internal and external experts and practitioners (summer 2019)
- 2.) Focus groups with 64 current and prospective adult learners in Fresno, Sunnyvale, Sacramento, and Los Angeles to inquire about their knowledge of and experience with various supports and barriers to success (fall 2019)
- 3.) Collaborative workshop engaging 50 California Community Colleges stakeholders with demonstrated expertise to identify ways our system could better meet adult learner needs (fall 2020)

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### How to use this guide

Please consider the following steps before engaging in the self-assessment:

**Engage diverse stakeholders to examine your college’s readiness to support adult learners.** Engaging broad representation among stakeholders, including students, will ensure that important perspectives are included. You might establish a new task force to guide your efforts or tap into existing workgroups that are designed to improve equity and completion such as Guided Pathways, Strategic Enrollment Management, Student Equity and Achievement Program, or equity-focused committees. An important task of this group might be to establish a definition of “adult learner” in your local context. This could include students who stopped-out during the pandemic due to conflicting priorities of work and family. Be mindful of intersectionality – adult learners are not a small sub-population, and they benefit from supports tailored for disproportionately impacted student groups and student parents, for example. Workgroups already focusing on these students might need to only slightly tailor their efforts to ensure that the unique needs of students over age 25 are met.

**Explore your data.** Partner with institutional researchers to discover your students’ average age, for example, or how many students are balancing family and work responsibilities in addition to college. You might find that your “non-traditional” adult students are more the norm than other students. Examine student [success metrics](#), disaggregated by age; how are adult learners doing on leading indicators such as completion of transfer-level math and English, retention, unit accumulation? How are they doing on lagging indicators such as certificate and degree completion and transfer? How do adult student outcomes compare to younger students (ages 18-24)? Explore community data, such as the American Community Survey (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>), which provides key information about prospective adult learners in your community, including those who may have been previously enrolled and stopped out. This survey can also help you examine whether your college population reflects your community’s demographics.

**Remember that awareness is key.** This toolkit is not designed to provide definitive answers for what must be done at every college. Rather, it is designed to help you reflect on your adult students, how they experience their educational journeys, and their outcomes. Small changes in perspective might be all you need to make significant changes in access, student supports, course modality and affordability.

**Remind ourselves that the time is now.** Significant reduction in enrollment across the system reflects the difficulties many students, especially those caring for children, faced during the pandemic. To help individuals, communities, institutions and the economy recover and thrive, colleges must engage community members without postsecondary credentials and re-engage learners impacted by COVID-19. Now is a pivotal time to build upon lessons from our pandemic response: what did we learn about access to classes and support services that we can build upon now? How can we position our colleges to be the answer for what so many are seeking at this point in time? What will happen if we do not?

Based on the Adult Promise Initiative’s landscape analysis, literature review, adult learner focus groups, and interactive workshop with community college stakeholders, we identified key areas where the needs of adult learners are especially pronounced: access/student support, course modality, and affordability. A March 2021 report to the Chancellor’s Office recommended system-level policy and practice actions to meet adult learners’ unique needs in these areas. This toolkit uses the same recommendations, accompanied by guiding questions and resources, to guide colleges in a process of self-assessment to inform local action. We encourage you to choose the questions that best suit your campus culture and priorities. This toolkit is not designed for compliance. Rather, it is designed to spur thought and conversation about how to fulfill your priorities for adult learners. It is also designed to be an iterative process. We recommend that you revisit this guide at periodic intervals as you continue to strengthen your campus culture, programs, and services to support adult learners and meet equity and completion goals.

## **1.) Access and Student Support**

Adult students can be reluctant to enroll or return to college because they perceive college to be primarily oriented towards younger students (ages 18-24) or due to past negative experiences. Colleges should assess whether their campuses welcome adult learners and invite students with some college but no degree back to something better than they experienced before. To feel a sense of belonging, adult learners require visible signs that they are accepted and included in campus life. Examples of how to address this need include the availability of childcare centers or public benefit resource centers, events that include families, pictures of adult students on websites and in brochures, and adult students represented in student government. Adult learners also benefit when counseling, tutoring and holistic supports are provided to students through on-line and flexible formats. Adults seek out welcoming spaces on campuses, such as adult re-entry centers or Veterans Resource Centers.

*“I want a system that makes me feel they want me to succeed, as opposed to, ‘Just give us your money and good luck.’” – Student*

### **Recommendations to improve access and student support**

#### ***A. Center adult learners in data, policy, and finance decisions***

Research indicates that many community college students share the same responsibilities and obligations as adult learners, such as working and parenting. Centering the adult learner experience in policies and practices, including data, policy, and financial decisions, and designing with the student in mind will help prioritize their needs in your college’s equity work. There is no one department that can handle this alone. Rather, your experts from student services, instruction, the California Adult Education Program ([CAEP](#)), non-credit, marketing, economic/workforce development, research, and others should tackle these questions together to ensure all perspectives are included.



#### ***Guiding questions***

- Do you have a common definition of “adult learner”?
- Do you disaggregate data based on student age? Have you analyzed that data?

- Do your decision-makers understand barriers faced by working or parenting adults?
- Is a targeted goal for serving adults with some college and no degree in your strategic plan?
- Do you have a student development course targeted to the adult learner?
- Do you have outdated residency requirements or unneeded courses that may add time and money to the adult learner journey?
- Do you have “amnesty” policies that will allow re-entering adults to start fresh without inheriting past academic grades that do not represent current abilities?
- Do you have data sharing and/or degree audits that can accommodate/support multiple transcripts?
- Have you convened focus groups of adult learners to better understand their student journey?
- Do you require high school transcripts or other data requirements that may serve as an actual or perceived barrier for adult re-entry?
- Have you explored intersectionality between adults and other disproportionately impacted (DI) populations? Do you target Student Equity and Achievement Program funds or other resources to focus on adult populations to improve equity?
- Does your transfer office have specific strategies for adult learners who have multiple responsibilities and/or those that are place-bound?
- Do you have partnerships with CSUs/UCs that provide applicable pathways and support for the adult learner?
- Do programs provide services for adults who are enrolled less than full time? Can they be used to encourage full-time status?
- Are adults represented in committees, workgroups, mentorship, clubs, student government?

***B. Remove barriers between non-credit and credit that impede student transitions***

Many adult learners begin in adult education and non-credit programs. With support and a transparent pathway, more could transition into credit programs that will lead to further postsecondary credentials and higher-wage jobs, advancing equity and completion goals at colleges. [Launchboard](#) data shows that nearly 1 in 10 students who began in CAEP’s adult basic and secondary education or English as a second language courses transitioned to postsecondary in recent years.<sup>6</sup> About 5 percent of CAEP’s adult secondary education students subsequently earned a postsecondary credential.<sup>7</sup>



***Guiding questions***

- Are the faculty and staff who work with non-credit students integrated into campus conversations and operations?
- Do Guided Pathways program maps incorporate non-credit courses and certificates of achievement?
- Are campus constituents aware of non-credit rules, options and funding formulas?

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<sup>6</sup> Launchboard defines the transition to postsecondary as a student from Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, or English as a Second Language enrolling in either a K-12 adult education course or non-credit or credit CTE course, or a non-developmental credit college course for the first time at any institution in the selected or subsequent year. Data for 2017-17 and 2017-18 retrieved from <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved on March 17, 2021 from <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

- Are your non-credit and credit offerings coordinated?
- Are non-credit courses articulated into credit programs?
- Do you have ways to validate non-credit programs other than through completion of certificates or degrees (such as tracking raises/promotions, transition to other educational pathways)?
- Do you capture information regarding employment outcomes resulting from non-credit training?
- Do you connect students enrolled in non-credit workforce training programs to campus resources?

### ***C. Connect adult learners to resources to help them get on a path and stay on a path***

Many systems across the country are deploying human capital (“navigators”) to acclimate adult learners to their institutions. In California, rather than adding layers of support to help adults navigate the complexity, colleges are working diligently to simplify the process through Guided Pathways, holistic support services, and automation. This is especially important for adult learners who do not have time to spare seeking clear pathways to their educational and career goals.



#### ***Guiding questions***

- Do you have a designated counselor and/or support staff to welcome and guide adult learners that are seeking to re-enroll from your college? From other institutions?
- Can student services staff help adults mitigate time barriers that exist because of family and work responsibilities?
- Who on your campus is responsible for ensuring equitable services to the adult learner?
- Can students access essential services off-hours, such as counseling and financial aid support?
- Do student parents feel welcome on campus or “othered”?
- Are some services more efficient and accessible if they are offered remotely?
- Do you have family-friendly locations for adults to connect with peers, study, and network?
- Do you have “dual generation” strategies that focus on parents and their children simultaneously?
- Do you have automation strategies to simplify processes for adult and/or returning students upon entry, such as MyPath?

### ***D. Tailor communication and marketing efforts to adult learners***

Tailoring communication to adult learners is paramount in enrollment strategies and for student retention. In focus groups, students said they are more likely to enroll if they see themselves reflected in communications materials. One student acknowledged that the representation of student parents “makes [adult learners] feel like we can actually achieve and follow through with education, because some of us have kids and work full time.”



#### ***Guiding questions***

- Are your marketing materials targeted to adult learners in terms of the images they portray, the language they use, and how they are distributed?

- Does your webpage encourage adults to enroll through targeted messaging and links to key services for adults?
- Have you surveyed audiences to understand how they prefer to receive information?
- Do you have automated strategies or tools that can provide access to tailored resources for adult learners upon enrollment/re-enrollment?

Seeing adult students in marketing materials *“really spoke to me. It’s a reminder that it’s never too late. It’s okay that I’m thirty and in school.”* - Student



### **Spotlight Resources:**

- [Los Angeles Valley College Family Resource Center](#) – centralizes resources for student parents including childcare, counseling, tutoring, and public benefits access, among other resources
- Aspen Institute [2-Gen Toolkit](#) – helps colleges support student parents and their children
- [Tennessee Reconnect](#) – an access portal that provides targeted resources tailored to learner needs
- [Oregon Adult Learner Outreach Toolkit](#) – helps institutions tailor communications
- [Degrees When Due](#) - Degree Reclamation Strategies for data analysis, degree conferral and adult reengagement strategies
- Indiana’s [“You Can. Go Back.” Initiative](#) – focused on re-enrollment
- [CAEL Adult-learner 360](#) Tool for better serving adult learners
- [High-Impact Practices and Gains in Student Learning](#)- Lumina Foundation Report
- [Strategies for Earning Credit for Non-Credit Courses](#)
- [Ed Strategy Group’s Accelerating Recovery Through Credentials Rapid Response Toolkit](#)
- [A More Unified Community College](#) – Ed Strategy Group’s guide to align non-credit and credit programs
- [Relative returns to credit and non-credit credentials](#) – AIR research

## **2.) Course Modality**

In focus groups, students highlighted a need for flexible course modalities that allow them to meet their responsibilities outside of education, such as jobs and dependent care, while still making progress towards their educational goals. A survey related to the “I Can Afford College” campaign found that adult students (ages 30-54) are much more likely than younger individuals to cite lack of time as an obstacle to returning to college. They need course offerings outside of the traditional 8:00am to 5:00pm timeframe, and they prioritize opportunities to connect learning to jobs, such as through apprenticeships. The COVID-19 pandemic forced all colleges to reimagine how to facilitate quality learning through different modalities, and lessons can be drawn from these emergency measures to benefit adult learners.

*“Hybrid sounds like a reasonable way to still feel part of a class but get a lot of stuff done at home, so that really appeals to me.”* - Student



## Recommendations to improve options for adult learners

### A. *Expand flexible course modalities*

Offering students credit for prior learning, allowing them to demonstrate mastery and earn credit at their own pace, compressing courses, and offering online and hybrid options are practices being deployed across the country to support adult learners.<sup>8</sup>



#### **Guiding questions**

- What are the programs on campus that serve a high percentage of adult learners?
- What did you learn about access of adult learners during COVID-19? What policy, budget, or structural changes were positive and should be maintained? What can be improved?
- Are there course delivery options that encourage/allow students to attend full-time?
- Does your course schedule allow adults to maintain full-time employment?
- Do you have seamless, transparent credit for prior learning options for students? How is that information shared? Is the process a minimal burden to the student?
- Are there supports to help adults learn/refresh essential computer, math, English and/or study skills that will help with long-term success?
- Do you have robust course selections and academic supports in the summer so that adult learners can continue to progress towards educational goals?
- Are your calendars predictable to allow adults to plan long-term decisions about childcare and employment?
- Are your course offerings in various modalities planned to allow all the requirements in a degree or certificate program to be completed in that modality?
- Can students access academic and student support, such as tutoring and counseling, in a flexible, online format?



#### **Spotlight Resources:**

- [Accelerated College Education Program](#) at Shasta College – allows students to work and attend school full-time and achieve a degree in two-three years
- [Vision Resource Center](#) communities – interactive forums providing California community colleges practitioners with resources and connections to advance Guided Pathways, credit for prior learning, competency-based education, and other student success efforts
- [Competency-based education network](#) - a network of institutions, employers, and experts committed to making education more flexible, responsive, and valuable
- [Fast Track](#) at Chaffey College – enables students to finish classes in half the time as a regular term
- [California Virtual Campus Online Education Initiative](#) – enables students to access online classes from other California community colleges

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<sup>8</sup> Frey, R. (2007). Helping Adults Learners Succeed: Tools for Two-Year Colleges. Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED509935>

- [College for Working Adults](#) at Canada College – enables working adults to complete Associate Degrees in three years without having to adjust their work schedule
- [Credit for Prior Learning](#) resources for students and faculty at Palomar College

***B. Invest in research and professional development on instructional design tailored to adults***

Research suggests that adult students tend to seek practical implications of the subject matter and welcome the opportunity to apply theoretical underpinnings to their lived experiences,<sup>9</sup> and students in focus groups confirmed this. They prefer to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, and they respond better to project-based learning activities. They are grateful when faculty appreciate the experience they contribute to classrooms, honor their prior learning with credit, and acknowledge their commitments outside the classroom. They seek ways to connect their learning to work, such as through experiential learning. Additionally, for at least half of adult students (currently enrolled and potential), English is a second language, which can also pose significant challenges in classroom learning that must be addressed through unique instructional design.



***Guiding questions***

- Do you have professional learning opportunities focused on andragogy (adult learning theory), prior learning assessment, direct assessment competency-based education, and [HyFlex](#) (combination of online and face-to-face)?
- Does your Academic Senate center adult learners in teaching and learning discussions?
- Do you discuss strategies for serving adults in your faculty interview process?
- Do you offer professional development for faculty to incorporate experiential learning in their curricula?
- Can working adults access apprenticeships, work experience or other supplemental learning opportunities?
- Are apprenticeships, work-site learning and complementary learning activities structured so that adult students can access them?

*Students want “hands-on training so when you get out there in the field, you know what you’re doing already and start getting paid.” - Student*



***Spotlight Resources:***

- [HyFlex](#) - an instructional approach that combines face-to-face and online learning and allows students to decide how to participate
- [California Apprenticeship Initiative](#) - a space for professionals across California to learn more about apprenticeship, share best practices, learn about upcoming events, and build meaningful partnerships

<sup>9</sup> Ross-Gordon, J. (2011). Research on Adult Learners: Supporting the Needs of a Student Population that Is No Longer Nontraditional. PeerReview, 13(1). <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/research-adult-learners-supporting-needs-studentpopulation-no>

- [Strong Workforce Program](#) - a California Community Colleges initiative to broaden and enhance career exploration and planning, work-based learning opportunities, and other supports for students
- [Academic Senate for California Community Colleges](#) – resources and calendar of system wide professional development events

### 3.) **Affordability**

Adults experience affordability challenges with education, as they are more likely to have dependent children, higher living expenses, and opportunity costs of being away from work. Currently, both state and federal financial aid do not cover the full cost of community college attendance. Students in our focus groups were largely unaware of financial assistance options beyond Cal Grant and Pell, and most students do not receive limited Cal Grants available to students age 25 and up.

*“When you're 18, usually you might have a place to live with your parents. So, you might need less but if I need to work full-time to pay for rent or if I have a kid, then obviously financial aid becomes even more critical.” - Student*

### **Recommendations to improve affordability for adult learners**

#### **A. Organize holistic supports and adult-centered financial aid including connections to essential needs such as food, childcare, housing and expansion of Zero-Cost Textbook Pathways**



#### **Guiding questions**

- Do you have adult-focused scholarships or other institutional aid? Do the program requirements marginalize adults, such as by asking for high school GPA or transcripts?
- Do counselors and student support staff help braid public benefits and institutional financial aid to support the learner holistically?
- Do counselors help students think about how to transition from part-time to full-time enrollment so that they can access more services and support programs?
- Do students know how to appeal financial aid decisions that do not consider the time lapse and/or relevancy of previous academic choices?
- Do you have a guidebook that connects students to resources to support essential needs?
- Does your Financial Aid office coach adults on the FAFSA and how to maximize aid?
- Are FAFSA outreach tools adult-friendly?
- Is your campus involved in creating zero-cost textbook pathways through the Open Education Resource Initiative?
- Do you have options for low-cost/no-cost course materials? Are those options highlighted for students?
- Do adult students know where they can get financial support for course materials?
- Are adult learners centered in your plans to provide direct assistance to students through COVID-19 Cares/Recovery Act funding?

## **B. Utilize micro-grants and debt forgiveness as a completion and re-enrollment strategy**

Even small fees and debts like car repairs, textbooks, medical bills, unpaid parking tickets, or library fines can cause students to drop out and/or prevent them from re-enrolling.



### **Guiding questions**

- Do you track how many students stop-out due to non-academic reasons, such as finances and outstanding debt?
- Do you require students to repay debts before re-enrolling?
- Do you utilize Student Equity and Achievement Program funds for emergency assistance for students?
- Have you explored options in the COVID-19 Cares/Recovery Act funding which can provide direct aid to students and potentially be used to ease past debt?



### **Spotlight Resources:**

- Wayne State [Warrior Way Back](#) program – a debt forgiveness program for returning students
- Explore the cost effectiveness for student debt forgiveness at [IHEP: Debt Forgiveness as Reengagement Strategy](#)
- Learn about the [Open Education Resources](#) Initiative of the Chancellor’s Office
- More information about the [Zero Cost Textbook Initiative](#) can be found in this CCCCO report
- [Guidance](#) on Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds
- Explore California student debt - [A State by State Snapshot of Stranded Credits Data and Policy](#)
- Ivy Tech [Achieve Your Degree](#) - a partnership between Ivy Tech Community College and community businesses and institutions to offer employees the opportunity to receive a community college education at minimal cost
- [Finish Line Scholars Program](#) through the Foundation for California Community Colleges

### **Conclusion:**

California Community Colleges have a vital role to play in equipping our students with the skills and credentials they need to compete in an evolving workforce and help the state recover with equity. This work is guided by the *Vision for Success* and Call to Action through the Guided Pathways framework. As colleges recover from the pandemic and reassemble student experiences, now is a critical time to focus on adult learners and maximize lifelong learning across our state.