

RENEW CSCU

INVESTMENT CASE REPORT

By:





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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this report is largely attributed to the invaluable support and insights provided by a host of individuals and organizations who are deeply invested in the success of Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU).

We extend our deepest gratitude to the students, staff, faculty, and union leadership who provided invaluable feedback in the dozens of focus groups that were conducted, as well as the administrative staff who provided vital assistance in organizing the focus groups.

This report was also made possible by the enthusiastic support of the CSCU Board of Regents, and substantive collaboration with CSCU's Chancellor, Institution Leadership, and Executive Staff. This collaboration was significantly enhanced by CSCU's Office of Decision Support and Institutional Research whose contributions were invaluable.

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2. BACKGROUND



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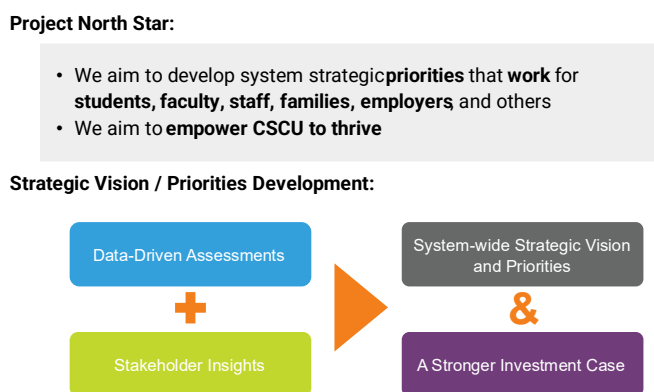
In January 2024, Chancellor Terrence Cheng engaged Social Impact Partners (SIP) to collaborate with the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities System (CSCU) on a comprehensive review. SIP was tasked with assessing CSCU’s long-term strategic goals in academic programs, student support services, financial management, and alignment with statewide education and workforce initiatives.¹

After a year of analysis, SIP continues to work alongside CSCU leadership to identify opportunities for improvement. This report outlines the strategic investments necessary for CSCU’s long-term success and for providing students with the support they need to achieve their goals. It complements ongoing CSCU initiatives aimed at financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and the development of more agile systems—key foundations for implementing these recommendations.

SIP’s conclusions are based on both quantitative data analysis and qualitative insights gathered to understand key factors shaping the student experience. Our work has provided a deeper appreciation of CSCU’s diverse student body, the faculty and staff who support them, and the critical role education plays in shaping a stronger future for students, their families, and the state.

As the largest and most accessible provider of higher education in Connecticut, CSCU plays a crucial role in expanding economic opportunity. Most students seek to improve their lives through education, and the state’s economic future depends on the system’s ability to meet this demand. SIP’s overall approach is detailed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. SIP’s Project North Star and Process



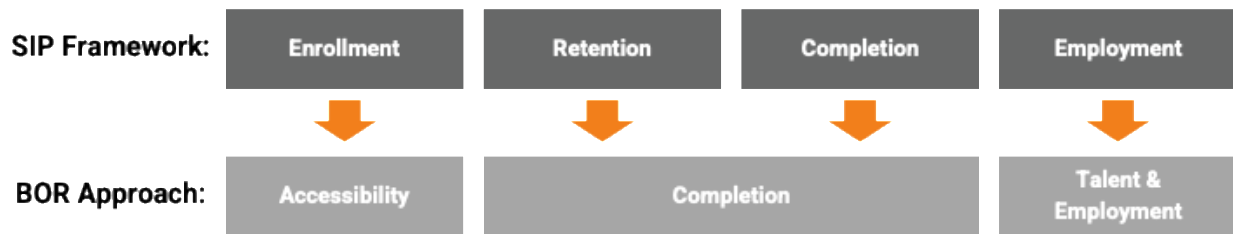
¹ CSCU SIP Memorandum of Understanding



OUR APPROACH

Our analysis centers on four key aspects of the student experience: enrollment, retention, completion, and employment outcomes. Notably, the Board of Regents adopted a similar framework during our research, demonstrating alignment in prioritizing student success (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Strategic Alignment with CSCU Board of Regents



SIP’s evaluation of these four areas included two key workstreams:

- **Quantitative analysis** of CSCU key student experience trends, comparisons with other public higher education systems in the Northeast, and benchmarking against national best practices.
- **Qualitative stakeholder engagement**, incorporating insights from focus groups and individual interviews with more than 600 participants—including students, faculty, staff, administrators, employers, and public-school professionals—to identify the most significant factors influencing student outcomes and the overall student journey.

Based on this assessment, SIP has identified key areas for targeted investment that will directly enhance student outcomes.

Additionally, this report quantifies the projected impact of these investments—both at the system level, in terms of enrollment, retention, completion, and career outcomes, and at the individual level, in terms of lifetime earnings. Notably, over 95% of CSCU students remain in Connecticut after graduation, making CSCU a critical pipeline for the state’s workforce. CSCU serves one in four higher education students in the state making it the driver of Connecticut’s long-term economic growth.



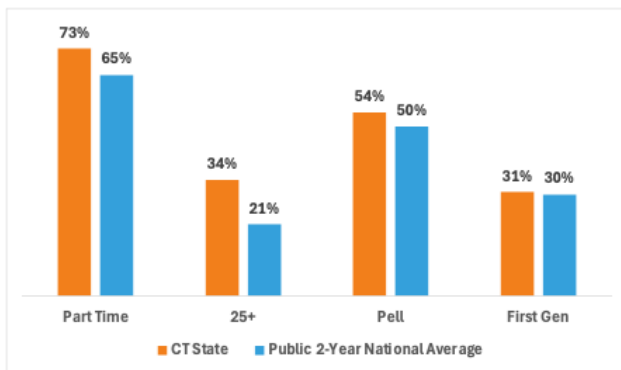
3. FINDINGS



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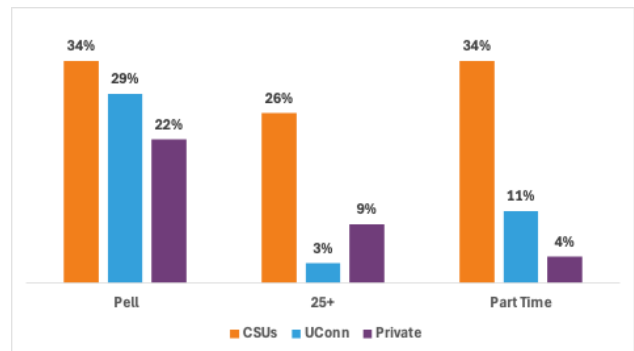
CSCU serves a unique group of students. Compared to national averages and other Connecticut institutions, CSCU students are more likely to be part-time, over the age of 25, from low-income backgrounds (Pell-eligible), and the first in their families to attend college. Any proposed solutions must be designed to meet the needs of this diverse student population.

Figure 3. First-time Enrollments at Two-Year Schools, by Student Type (2022-2023)



Source: SIP Analysis of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Data

Figure 4. First-time Enrollments at Four-Year Schools, by Student Type (2022-2023)



Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data, Private Excludes Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan, Yale, Hartford International University, and Holy Apostles College and Seminary

Despite the dedication of CSCU faculty and staff, the system faces significant challenges that require urgent attention. Declining enrollment, lower retention and completion rates compared to peer institutions, and weaker post-graduation employment outcomes make immediate action imperative.

The five initiatives outlined in this report are designed to work in tandem for maximum impact. While implementation should be phased in alignment with available resources, full-scale execution will take several years.

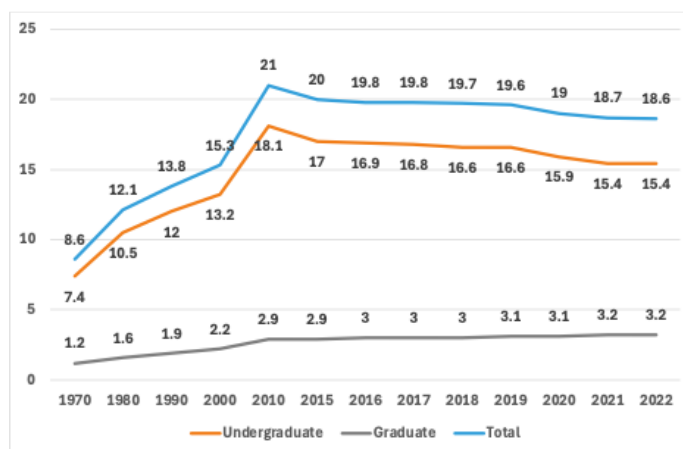
Building on the SIP Strategic Framework, we identified key challenges to **Enrollment, Retention & Completion, and Employment**.



ENROLLMENT CHALLENGES

Nationally, undergraduate enrollment grew sharply from the 1970s through 2010 (Figure 5). Since then, enrollment has steadily declined nationwide. While COVID-19 briefly accelerated this trend, the broader issue of declining year-over-year enrollments persists.²

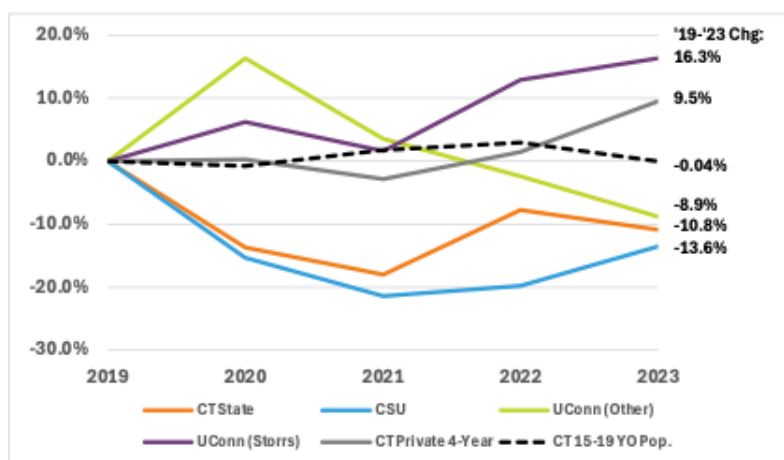
Figure 5. Historical College Enrollment, 1970-2022 (M)



Source: Education Data Initiative – National Center for Education Data Statistics

While this is a national trend, CSCU’s institutions have been disproportionately affected. Since 2019, both CT State and the Connecticut State Universities (CSUs)³ have experienced a sharper enrollment decline than other higher education institutions in the state (Figures 6). CSCU’s enrollment challenges extend beyond the state’s sluggish growth in its college-aged population:

Figure 6. Change in First-Time College Enrollment, 2019-2023 (%)



² https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/enrollment_retention_covid2021_post.pdf

³ Central Connecticut State University, Eastern Connecticut State University, Southern Connecticut State University, Western Connecticut State University, and Charter Oak State College.

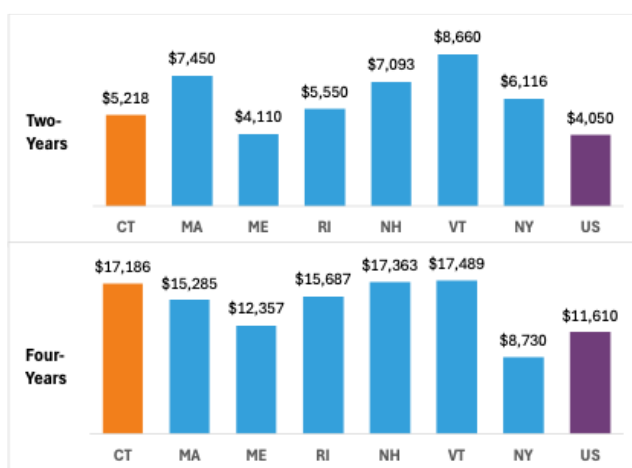


Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data, Privates are 4-years Excluding Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan, Yale, Hartford International University, and Holy Apostles College and Seminary

A major driver of CSCU’s enrollment challenge is affordability. While tuition for Connecticut’s two-year programs is competitive regionally (Figure 7), the cost of four-year programs is approximately 20% points higher than the peer average and over 96% points higher than New York, the most affordable peer.

Tuition changes also impact enrollment, particularly among low-income students, who are highly sensitive to cost fluctuations. This is evident in the decline in Pell Grant recipient enrollments in three of the last four years when tuition increased.⁴

Figure 7. Average 2024-25 Tuition and Fees (Enrollment-Weighted) at Public Institutions



Source: College Board, Annual Survey of Colleges; NCES, IPEDS Fall Enrollment data

As affordability concerns grow, CSCU faces increasing competition from private and public in-state alternatives. To remain competitive, CSCU must enhance its value proposition—demonstrating a balance of affordability, academic excellence, and career-ready outcomes—while also minimizing barriers to enrollment.

In addition to potential financial challenges amongst CSCU’s target student population, CSCU’s enrollment trends and perceived value proposition could also be influenced by:

- **Perceived academic alignment**, including innovative course offerings that better meets the needs and interests of an evolving student body
- **Career readiness**, including degree programs that meet the needs of today’s employers and expand the potential audience of students who might consider attending CSCU

⁴ SIP analysis of IPEDS Pell enrollment and tuition data



- **Student supports** including academic and career advising that keeps students on track for completion and careers. Additional supports such as childcare can also expand the pool of potential applicants while improving retention
- **Attracting new student populations**, including non-traditional learners (working adults, career changers, and part-time students) out-of-state students seeking affordable, high-quality programs, career-focused students interested in in-demand fields, and high school students participating in dual enrollment programs

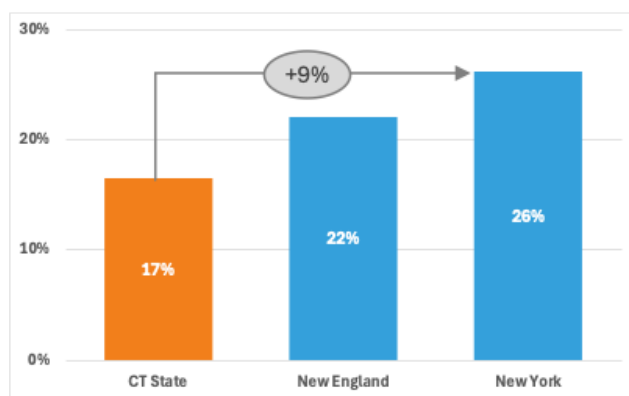
Solving these challenges will be critical to sustainably increasing enrollment across both the two-year and four-year colleges within CSCU.

RETENTION & COMPLETION CHALLENGES

CT State

Ensuring student persistence and program completion is critical, particularly amid financial pressures linked to enrollment declines. However, CT State trails neighboring states and other Connecticut institutions in graduation rates. CT State’s graduation rate for for-credit programs is 9 percentage points lower than New York’s, while the CSUs lag UConn by up to 24 percentage points (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Three-Year Graduation Rates at Public Two-Year Colleges, 2016-2022

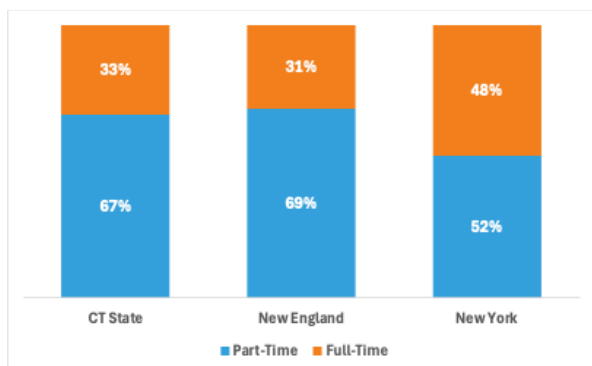


Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

A key driver of these lower graduation rates is the high proportion of part-time students. At CT State, 67% of students are enrolled part-time, compared to 52% in New York (Figure 9). New York has implemented targeted student support initiatives designed to help part-time students transition to full-time enrollment. Regardless of the state, part-time students at two-year colleges consistently have lower persistence rates than their full-time peers (Figure 10).

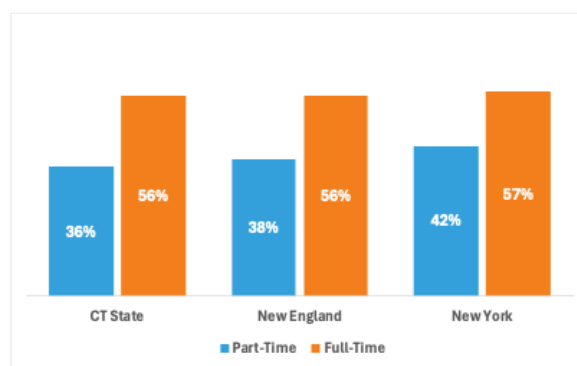


Figure 9. Enrollment at Public Two-Year Institutions by Enrollment Status, 2021



Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

Figure 10. Persistence Rate at Public Two-Year Institutions by Enrollment Status, 2021



Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

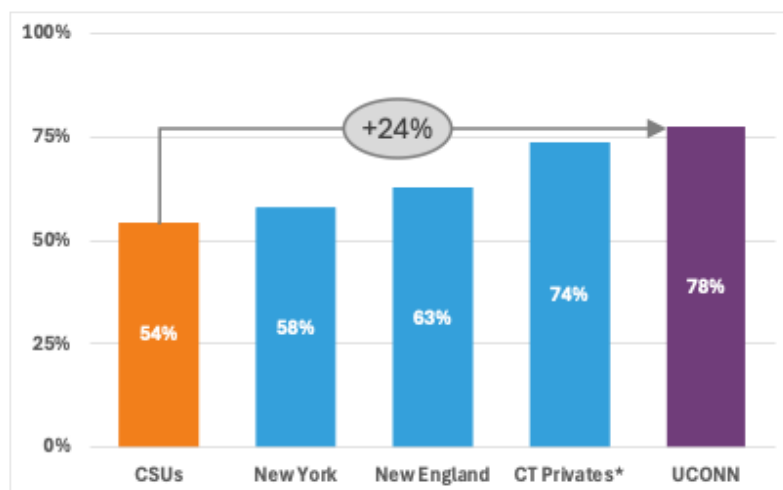
To improve graduation outcomes, CT State should expand efforts to support part-time students in transitioning to full-time enrollment. Key strategies could include:

- Flexible scheduling options
- Increased childcare support services
- Comprehensive student support programs
- Enhanced financial aid packages tailored to encourage full-time enrollment

CSCU Four-Years

At the four-year institutions, graduation rates at the CSUs lag comparable institutions, including UConn, by up to 24 percentage points (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Average Six-Year Graduation Rates at Public Four-Year Colleges, 2016-2022





*Excludes Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan, Yale, Hartford International University, and Holy Apostles College and Seminary

Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

Several interrelated factors contribute to the graduation rate gap at CSUs :

- **Student body composition:** CSUs have, on average, a greater share of low-income students enrolled (35% at CSUs vs 24% for CT Privates and UConn, using Pell Grant recipients as a proxy⁵) and graduation rates for these students are generally lower those for students without financial constraints
- **Student support for low-income students:** CSU's Pell Grant students have materially lower graduation rates than in-state peers (47% vs 60% for private peer colleges vs.70% for UConn⁶); CSUs may not be providing enough support to their low-income students through financial aid, advising, or other structured initiatives
- **Broad Availability of Financial Aid:** As we will see later, the financial aid gap between CSUs and its regional peers may limit affordability, making it more challenging for students to persist and complete their studies

EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

For the modern American college student, the promise of improved career prospects is the primary motivator for enrollment and persistence. Input from student focus groups suggest that CSCU students are largely aligned with the national sentiment in the value they place on career outcomes.⁷ While earning a degree generally leads to increased income, CSCU graduates experience lower earnings growth compared to their peers at other two-year and four-year institutions (Figures 12 and 13). This wage gap can significantly impact lifetime earnings and long-term financial stability.

⁵ SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

⁶ SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

⁷ <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/644939/state-of-higher-education.aspx>



Figure 12. Median Salary of Two-Year College Graduates, Five Years Post-Graduation* (\$000s)

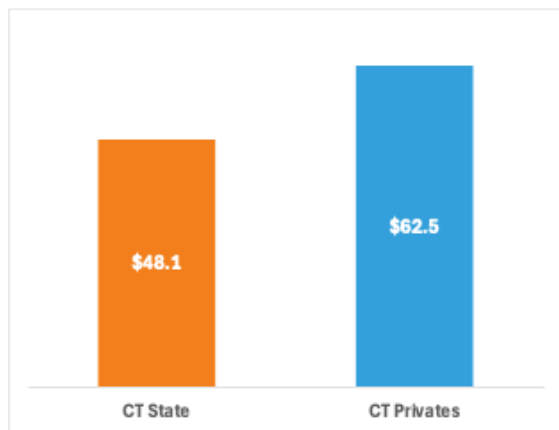
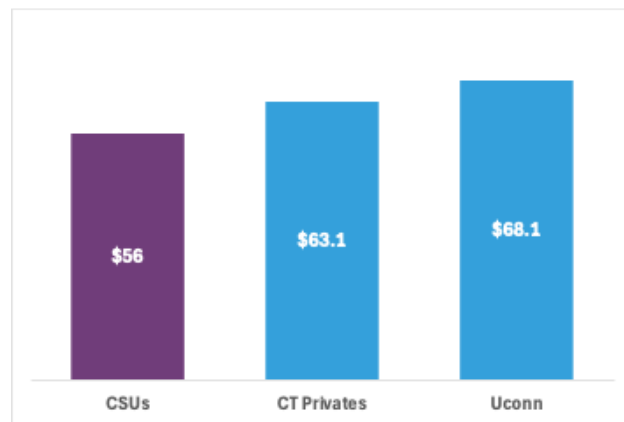


Figure 13. Median Salary of Four-Year College Graduates, Five Years Post-Graduation* (\$000s)



Source: Average of '10-'12, '13-'15, and '16-'18 cohorts,

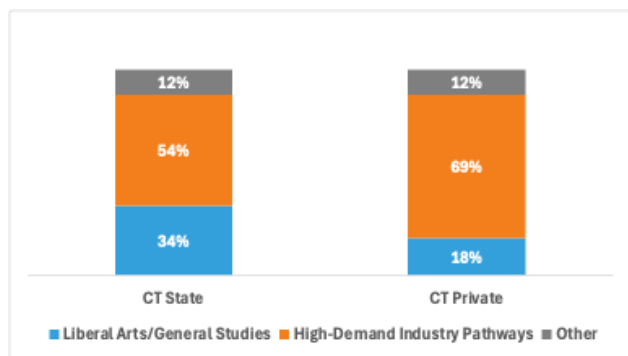
SIP Analysis of Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes U.S. Census Data; UConn Career Services

The earnings gap may be partly attributed to the differences in the student bodies served by CSCU compared to peer schools. Overall, CSCU is intentionally more inclusive of students across a wider range of academic abilities and scholastic readiness. Even so, there are several issues that likely contribute to the earnings disparities between CSCU students and their peers:

- Compared to private institutions, CSCU students are over 70% more likely to major in liberal arts or general studies and not in one of the higher-paying pathways (Figures 14 and 15)
- There are material disparities in wage outcomes between several majors in high-demand career pathways such as manufacturing, healthcare, and IT compared to general studies (Figures 16 and 17)
- While UConn has a lower share of completers in high-demand pathways, it has a strong focus on employment outcomes: 80% of students participate in experiential learning and 83% use career advising services (30% higher than US average)



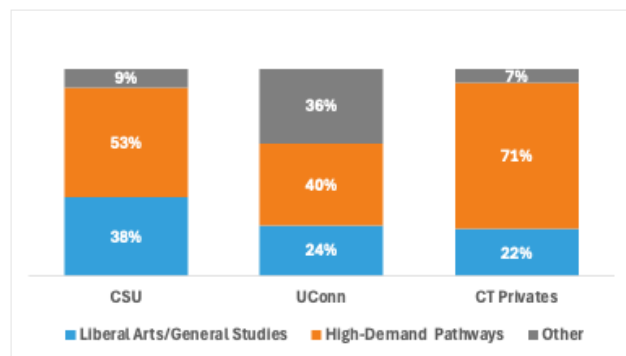
Figure 14. Share of Two-Year Completions, by Award Type



Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

High-Demand Pathways include IT, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Business, and Education (Other is majors that are not in the five “high demand” or liberal arts areas)

Figure 15. Share of Four-Year Completions, by Award Type



Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

High-Demand Pathways include IT, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Business, and Education (Other is majors that are not in the five “high demand” or liberal arts areas)

Figure 16. Post-grad Wage Outcomes of CT State Completers by Award Type



Source: P20WIN⁸

Figure 17. Post-grad Wage Outcomes of CSUs Completers by Award Type



Source: P20WIN

Focusing on Connecticut’s most in-demand industries is critical to reversing CSCU’s enrollment declines, particularly as private colleges in Connecticut gain market share. Investing in career-aligned programs that match high-demand industries will enhance student outcomes, strengthen workforce alignment, and improve overall enrollment, retention, and completion rates.

⁸ [P20 WIN](#) is Connecticut’s state longitudinal data system.



CSCU'S OPPORTUNITY

CSCU has a pivotal opportunity to overcome these challenges by prioritizing accessibility, enhancing student support, and expanding career-aligned programs. Through strategic investments and disciplined execution, CSCU can strengthen its competitive position in high-demand sectors, improve student outcomes, and drive workforce alignment.

The following sections outline targeted recommendations to achieve these objectives and ensure CSCU's long-term sustainability and impact.



4. RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW



4. RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

Figure 18 summarizes CSCU’s key challenges related to enrollment, retention, completion, and employment, outlining the scope of proposed investment initiatives across each stage of the student journey.

Figure 18. CSCU Investment Areas Overview

Executive Summary

Problem Identified	Enrollment	Retention	Completion	Employment
	CSCU Enrollments declined significantly due to demographic headwinds, greater in-state competition, and a degraded perceived value proposition	Lower CSCU retention rates compared to peers could result from poor student preparedness and social and financial pressures	CSCU lags peer institutions both in graduating students and in setting them up for success through transfers	Program misalignment with state workforce needs may contribute to below-median salaries for CSCU graduates
Investment Areas	<div style="background-color: #6a3d9a; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Statewide Early College</div> <div style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Increased Student Support</div> <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Increased Financial Aid</div> <div style="background-color: #7ed321; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Workforce Development Coalition</div> <div style="background-color: #34495e; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">Career Pathways / Career Connected Learning Programs</div>			

Each initiative is designed to address multiple stages of the student experience and should be viewed as complementary to other overlapping efforts. When implemented holistically, these initiatives have the potential to drive measurable improvements, as demonstrated by peer institutions nationwide.

To assess the potential impact, we estimated the Economic Benefit—net of investment—generated as each program scales. This metric reflects the additional earnings a participant can expect over a ten-year period as a result of completing a degree, earning a career-advancing certificate, or transitioning into a higher-earning field. While these earnings increases are likely to extend beyond ten years, we have limited our projections to maintain a conservative, forward-looking assessment.

Additionally, we quantified the cost savings to state and federal governments resulting from reduced reliance on social services as alumni/ae incomes increase. This approach establishes a consistent framework for evaluating the projected quantitative impact of each proposed initiative. For more details on our approach and assumptions, please refer to the appendix.



I. Statewide Early College

Early college and dual enrollment programs enable high school students to simultaneously earn high school and college credits, reducing costs and accelerating their path toward a college degree. A statewide program would provide significant academic, financial, and operational benefits, strengthening Connecticut’s higher education pipeline and improving long-term student success. Below are the key benefits:

1. **Enhanced Academic Preparation:** High school students gain an academic “head start” by engaging in more rigorous coursework than their high schools may offer, improving their readiness for college.
2. **Lower Student Costs:** Students can earn college credits while in high school, reducing tuition expenses and shortening time-to-degree completion.
3. **Stronger Institutional Performance:** Increasing postsecondary accessibility through financial and academic support would drive higher enrollment, retention, and completion rates.

Upon full implementation, the program would deliver measurable improvements across key performance indicators:

- **Increased Enrollment:** Dual enrollment participation increases the likelihood of attending college by 10–30%, with notable gains among underrepresented groups (+20% for academically struggling students, +10% for Black students, +9% for Hispanic students). Systems that have adopted similar programs report an 11% overall enrollment growth for students under age 25.⁹
- **Higher Retention and Completion:** Dual enrollment students are significantly more likely to transfer to four-year institutions (27% vs. 12%) and earn credentials (27% vs. 18%) than their peers. Additionally, low-income participants in dual enrollment programs earn bachelor’s degrees at a 7.6% higher rate than non-participants.¹⁰

To ensure successful implementation, this program should be legislatively funded with a goal of serving 25% of Connecticut’s high school students at full scale. The estimated cost is:

- \$12 million for a two-year CSCU pilot program.
- \$73.5 million annually for statewide implementation at scale.

Projected Net Economic Benefit: \$478.6 million per cohort at full scale, reflecting increased student earnings and reduced social service expenditures.

⁹ <https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/news-and-insights/articles/maximizing-the-potential-of-dual-enrollment>

¹⁰ Ibid



By strategically investing in dual enrollment, Connecticut can expand access to higher education, improve student outcomes, and drive long-term economic benefits for the state.

II. Increased Student Supports

A comprehensive student support program with will increase retention and completion rates by converting part-time students to full-time enrollment.¹¹ We call this program the “Accelerated Completion Track” or ACT and recommend targeting both CT State and the CSUs.

States that have implemented targeted student support have seen:

- **Higher Completion Rates:** MDRC’s evaluation¹² of CUNY ASAP program participants demonstrated a three-year graduation rate of 53%, more than double the rate of non-participants, and ACE increased four-year graduation rates to 59.0%, a 17.5% point increase.
- **Improved Student Retention:** While a specific effect size is not available, institutions point to higher levels of re-enrollment and fewer leaves of absence
- **Reduced Cost Per Graduate:** While these programs have higher up-front costs, the significant increase in graduation rates ultimately yields lower costs-per-graduate as fewer resources are spent on students who ultimately drop out¹³

The ACT program, targeting 5,500 students per year across CT State and the CSUs, will cost \$35 million annually at scale.

Potential Net Economic Benefit generated per year at scale: \$129.4 million

By investing in structured student support, financial incentives, and cohort-based engagement, Connecticut can significantly boost degree completion rates, drive long-term economic gains, and enhance workforce alignment.

III. Increased Financial Aid

Increased financial aid enables CSCU to offer higher education at a more affordable price, making institutions more accessible across the state and driving higher enrollment, retention, and completion rates.

To align with peer states’ investments in higher education affordability, CSCU should advocate for a \$23.9 million annual increase in state financial aid.

¹¹ CUNY ASAP/ACE Fast Facts, January 2025 (https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/student-success-initiatives/asap/evaluation/Final_CUNY-ASAP-and-ACE-Fast-Facts_Jan25-2.pdf)

¹² Ibid

¹³ MDRC, “Doubling Graduation Rates”, February 2015 (https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/doubling_graduation_rates_fr.pdf)



States with more generous financial aid investments have demonstrated:

- **Higher Enrollment:**
 - Improved college accessibility, leading to increased enrollment rates, particularly among low-income students at four-year colleges.
- **Stronger Retention & Completion:**
 - Increased graduation rates by up to 4%, as financial barriers are reduced.
- **Improved Post-Completion Outcomes:**
 - Lower student debt burdens upon entering the workforce, leading to greater financial stability and economic mobility.

Potential Net Economic Benefit per Year at Scale: \$58.2 million

By matching neighboring states' financial aid levels, Connecticut can expand access to higher education, increase student success, and drive long-term economic gains for graduates and the state economy.

IV. Workforce Development Coalition

To address employer demand and provide students with flexible, high-impact training, CSCU should launch a Workforce Development Coalition focused on short-term, industry-aligned credential programs lasting less than one year. This initiative will expand existing state programs—such as CareerConneCT, the Eastern Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative, MIF Incumbent Worker Training, and Regional Sector Partnerships' Good Jobs Challenge—by providing centralized coordination and deeper employer engagement.

- **Higher Completion Rates:** Nationwide, 57% of certificate students complete their programs—1.5x the associate degree completion rate. CareerConneCT (the state's ARPA funded short-term training initiative) has seen 83% completion rates.^{14 15}
- **Stronger Employment & Earnings:** Graduates earn, on average, 10% more than similar high school graduates.¹⁶
- **Increased Workforce Readiness:** Streamlined employer partnerships ensure training aligns with high-demand, high-wage career pathways.

Investment & Projected Economic Impact

- **Pilot Cost (2 Years):** \$4.9 million

¹⁴ CT Office of Workforce Strategy

¹⁵ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103370/should-the-federal-government-fund-short-term-postsecondary-certificate-programs_0_0.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid



- **Annual Cost at Scale:** \$12.5 million (funded by state government and supplemented by philanthropy and employers)

Potential Net Economic Benefit per Year at Scale: \$362.4 million

By strategically coordinating resources and enhancing employer collaboration, this initiative ensures that CSCU plays a pivotal role in strengthening Connecticut’s workforce and economic growth.

V. Career Pathways Oriented Innovation

To strengthen student success and workforce alignment, CSCU should expand funding for career pathways programs through a competitive grant process within CSCU institutions. These programs will enhance job readiness in high-demand fields by:

- **Partnering with employers** to develop industry-aligned curricula and experiential learning opportunities
- **Establishing stackable credentials** to provide clear advancement opportunities
- **Expanding advising capacity** to help students make informed career decisions
- **Higher Retention & Completion:** Career pathways students earn credentials 2.5x more often than peers¹⁷
- **Stronger Employment Outcomes:** Graduates earn \$8,000–\$51,000 more per year than those with only a high school diploma¹⁸
- **Career Alignment:** 45% of career pathways students secure jobs in their field, compared to 26% of other students¹⁹

Investment & Projected Economic Impact

- **Pilot Cost (2 Years):** \$25 million
- **Annual Cost at Scale:** \$7.5 million

Potential Net Economic Benefit per Year at Scale: \$195.7 million

This investment will enhance workforce readiness, improve student outcomes, and drive economic growth, positioning CSCU as a key player in closing the skills gap and expanding economic mobility.

¹⁷ https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/publications/ETAOP2022-04_A%20Meta-Analysis%20of%2046%20Career%20Pathways%20Impact%20Evaluations_final%20report.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.theccic.org/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/Matter_of_Fact_PDF/median_earnings_by_attainment_ct_2022.pdf

¹⁹ https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/publications/ETAOP2022-04_A%20Meta-Analysis%20of%2046%20Career%20Pathways%20Impact%20Evaluations_final%20report.pdf



Summary

In addition to ongoing operational improvements, the State of Connecticut and CSCU should strategically invest in five key initiatives: early college, student support services, increased financial aid, career pathways, and a workforce development coalition. These programs have proven successful in neighboring states and across the country, driving higher enrollment, retention, and workforce readiness.

Achieving these outcomes will require:

- **New state investments** to fund scalable, high-impact initiatives
- **Philanthropic partnerships** to expand resources and program reach
- **Stronger employer collaboration** to align training with workforce needs

To maximize impact, prioritization and phased implementation are essential. CSCU leadership, in coordination with state policymakers, should establish a strategic rollout plan, ensuring that foundational elements are in place before expansion. Pilot programs will play a critical role in demonstrating effectiveness, securing funding, and refining execution for statewide scaling.

While these investments (summarized costs below in Table 1) represent a significant amount, the projected combined net economic benefit per year at scale is \$1,224.3M. The benefits outweigh the investments.

Table 1. Annual Investment, by Recommendation (\$M)

	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	'26-'31
Early College	\$1.8M	\$10.2M	\$41M	\$48.20	\$57.80	73.6M	\$233M
Student Success - ACT-A	\$3.3M	\$8.9M	\$11.7M	\$22.3M	\$26.7M	\$30.6M	\$104M
Student Success – ACT-B	\$1.2M	\$2.4M	\$3.3M	\$4.0M	\$4.4M	\$4.4M	\$20M
Financial Aid	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$143M
Workforce Coalition	\$0.8M	\$4.1M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$55M
Career Pathways	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$7.5M	\$7.5M	\$7.5M	\$7.5M	\$55M
Total Yearly Cost	\$43.5M	\$62M	\$99.9M	\$118.4M	\$132.8M	\$152.5M	\$609M



5. DETAILED INVESTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



5. DETAILED INVESTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

STATEWIDE EARLY COLLEGE

Overview & Opportunity Statement

Expanding Access Through Dual Enrollment

Beyond cost, time-to-completion is a critical factor in higher education accessibility. States nationwide are reducing both barriers by investing in state-funded dual enrollment programs, which allow high school students to earn college credits before graduation. These initiatives have proven to increase college enrollment, completion rates, and career readiness.

A Critical Opportunity

Across the country, a growing number of students are leveraging dual enrollment programs to gain early exposure to college coursework²⁰, reduce tuition costs, and explore career pathways. These programs help students develop the skills and confidence needed for post-secondary success while accelerating their degree completion.

While Connecticut pioneered dual enrollment nearly 70 years ago, the state has fallen behind in program implementation and participation. Nationally, 1 in 5 community college students take advantage of dual enrollment, compared to only 1 in 17 in Connecticut.²¹ Moreover, Connecticut remains one of the few states without a statewide dual enrollment strategy.

This presents a major opportunity to reshape educational access and outcomes for thousands of students. Connecticut can leverage proven models from leading states like Colorado, Maine, and California, where well-structured programs have demonstrated strong results. Drawing on best practices from national research centers, including Columbia University, Connecticut can design a high-impact, scalable dual enrollment program that enhances affordability, completion rates, and workforce readiness.

Improved Student Outcomes

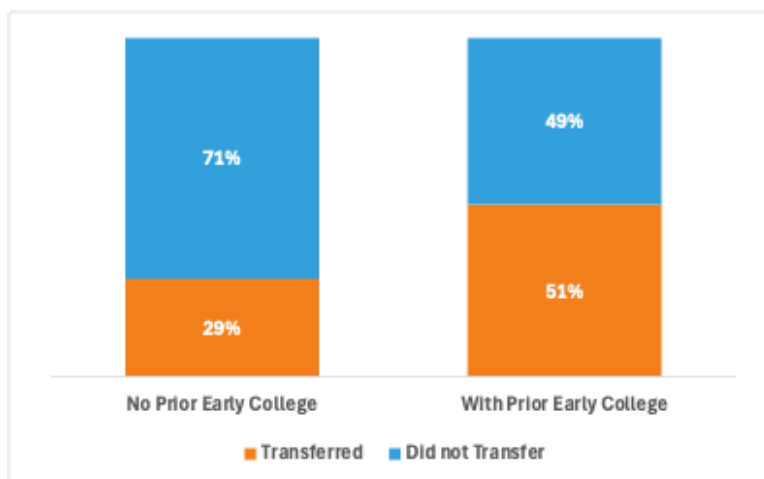
Many students enter post-secondary education unprepared for the academic transition from high school, requiring additional support to build essential skills for success. CSCU faculty have consistently observed a decline in first-year student preparedness compared to cohorts from 5 to 10 years ago, with many students needing academic remediation.

²⁰https://cherp.utah.edu/resources/documents/publications/research_priorities_for_advancing_equitable_dual_enrollment_policy_and_practice.pdf

²¹Number calculated using Edsight Indicator 6 (https://public-edsight.ct.gov/performance/postsecondary-readiness?language=en_US) and expanded to include all high school students in CT



Figure 19. Six-Year outcomes of CT State Students by Prior Early College Experience, 2021



Source: SIP Analysis of IPEDS Data

Dual enrollment programs offer a proven solution by allowing students to complete college-level coursework while still in high school. Data from CT State underscore their impact: students who participate in early college coursework are 76% more likely to transfer to a four-year institution than their peers who do not (Figure 19). Additionally, these programs improve accessibility by reducing both the time and cost required to earn a degree.

Strong Support of Statewide Dual Enrollment Strategy

“The difference between Connecticut and other states is that we don’t have a codified dual enrollment policy – other states are serving more high school students.”

- *CSCU Institutional Leader*

CSCU leadership and faculty show strong interest in expanding dual enrollment opportunities across campuses and are eager to collaborate with local school districts and high schools to increase program availability. However, successful implementation will require additional resources, including funding, staffing, and program design investments.



Recommendations

Fund a Statewide System

Statewide dual enrollment programs have demonstrated success in increasing high school graduation rates, boosting college enrollment by 10-30%, and improving college completion rates by at least 9%.²² Connecticut should adopt national best practices by establishing a single, unified dual enrollment program that replaces fragmented district- and college-level approaches.

A state-funded model with a clear participation target—25% of high school students (approximately 40,000 students) within six years—will provide greater equity, consistency, and accountability. By incorporating equity-based sub-targets and centralized reporting requirements, Connecticut can ensure all students, regardless of background, have access to these opportunities.

Nationally, community colleges serve approximately 70% of dual enrollment demand, with public four years serving about another 20% and private institutions providing the rest²³. A coordinated, statewide strategy is necessary to meet rising student demand, and CSCU needs to build infrastructure to execute at scale.

Align Pathways with High-Demand Industries

Dual enrollment is most effective when it is structured around clear career pathways rather than scattered, uncoordinated courses—often referred to as “random acts of dual enrollment.”²⁴ To maximize student success, Connecticut’s dual enrollment program should align course offerings with high-demand industries, such as healthcare, manufacturing, education, business, and information technology. This ensures students gain early exposure to career-relevant coursework, increasing their likelihood of securing well-paying jobs post-graduation.

Expand Dual Enrollment to Ninth Grade

Most dual enrollment programs in Connecticut begin in 11th or 12th grade, limiting opportunities for students to explore college coursework earlier. Expanding access to ninth graders will provide students with a longer runway to explore career pathways, earn credits, and build the confidence needed for post-secondary success.

Optimize Delivery Modes

Dual enrollment programs must be flexible and accessible to meet the diverse needs of students and schools. Courses can be delivered through on-campus instruction, online learning, or hybrid models. A state-

²² <https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/news-and-insights/articles/maximizing-the-potential-of-dual-enrollment>

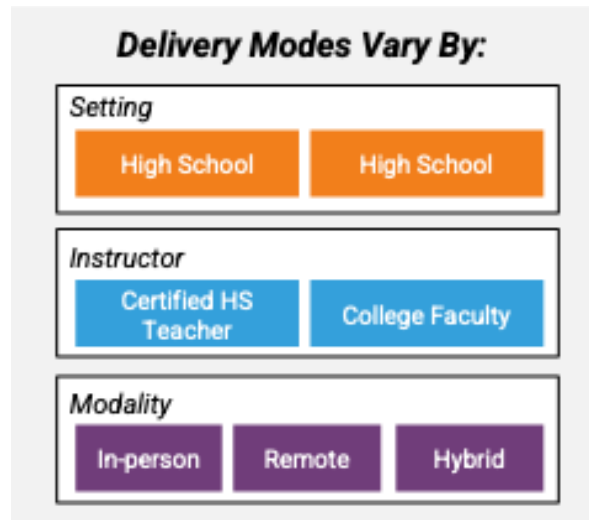
²³ https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/revamping-dual-enrollment-equitable-college-degree-paths_1-1.pdf

²⁴ <https://cloudshare.ccm-ct.org/index.php/s/5QkbG9HUFiOhm58>



funded approach that supports multiple delivery modes will ensure more students across Connecticut can participate, regardless of location or school resources.

Figure 20. Delivery Modes and Modalities



Implementation Plan and Investment

Figure 21 outlines the phased implementation of the proposed dual enrollment pilot, ensuring a strategic, scalable rollout that maximizes impact and informs future expansion.

Phase 0 – CSCU Planning & Infrastructure Development (2025)

- Establish career pathway programs and foundational infrastructure.
- Conduct six-month planning period to develop pathways, build backend support, and coordinate messaging and logistics with school districts.

Phase 1 – Initial CSCU Pilot in Key Alliance Districts (2026)

- Launch pilot in six Alliance districts: Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport, New Haven, New Britain, and Meriden.
- Serve approximately 2,000 students, testing program structure and gathering data to inform statewide expansion.
- Establish which institutions and career pathways are most effective, enabling program design and partnerships refinement before scaling statewide



Phase 2 – Statewide Expansion to All Alliance Districts (2027-2028)

- Expand to all 36 Alliance districts, reaching:
 - 7,500 students in 2027
 - 23,000 students in 2028
- Prioritize underserved communities and resolve logistical challenges.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of outcomes and costs to determine the best approach for scaling statewide.

Phase 3 – Statewide Implementation & Long-Term Growth (2029 & Beyond)

- Expand program statewide, reaching:
 - 27,000 students by 2029
 - 41,000 students annually by 2031
- Scale career pathways and enhance program offerings to align with regional and statewide workforce needs.

Figure 21. Phased Rollout Approach

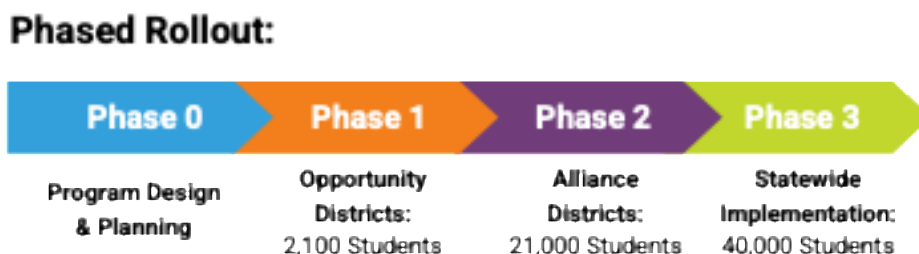


Table 2 presents a multi-year cost projection aligned with the phased implementation plan. The fully funded model includes:

- Tuition and instructor costs to ensure broad student participation.
- Wraparound services, such as academic advising and counseling, to support student success.
- Transportation assistance to improve accessibility.
- Technology platforms to enable open access and streamline program administration.
- Pilot phase is centered on CSCU while the long term vision is a fully statewide initiative. All higher education institutions across Connecticut have a role to play in expanding access to Dual Enrollment.

Table 2. Dual Enrollment High Level Financials



Phased Rollout Plan	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Students Reached							
Phase 1: Pilot	1,958	2,344	2,843	3,451	4,194	5,100	19,890
Phase 2: Alliance Districts	-	5,200	6,293	7,694	9,515	11,930	40,632
Phase 3: Statewide	-	-	13,738	15,731	18,496	23,976	71,942
Total Students Reached	1,958	7,544	22,874	26,877	32,205	41,006	132,463
Direct Cost	\$1.3M	\$7.5M	\$30.4M	\$35.7M	\$42.8M	\$54.5M	\$172.3M
Transportation Cost	\$.5M	\$2.6M	\$10.6M	\$12.5M	\$15M	\$19.1M	\$60.3M
Total Cost	\$1.8M	\$10.2M	\$41M	\$48.2M	\$57.8M	\$73.6M	\$233M

Source: Community College Research Center Working Paper No. 130, February 2023²⁵

Economic Benefit & Outcomes

Table 3 outlines the lifetime net economic benefit of each year's investment in dual enrollment. These projections account for:

- Higher earnings for students who complete postsecondary education.
- Increased tax revenues resulting from a more skilled workforce.
- Reduced public expenditures, including lower costs related to corrections and other state-funded interventions.

Table 3. Dual Enrollment Estimated Net Economic Benefit

Program Year	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Incremental College Graduates	122	472	1,430	1,680	2,013	2,563	8,279
Ten-Year Economic Benefit per Graduate	\$.20M	\$.20M	\$.20M	\$.20M	\$.20M	\$.20M	n/a
Lifetime Economic Benefit	\$26.4M	\$101.6M	\$308.M	\$361.9M	\$433.7M	\$552.2M	\$1783.7M
Program Cost	\$1.8M	\$10.1M	\$41.M	\$48.2M	\$57.8M	\$73.6M	\$232.5M
Net Economic Benefit	\$24.6M	\$91.4M	\$267.M	\$313.7M	\$375.9M	\$478.6M	\$1551.3M

Source: APA Consulting, Colorado Concurrent Enrollment Return on Investment and Cost Model, 09.29.2020²⁶

²⁵ <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/community-colleges-afford-dual-enrollment-discount.pdf>

²⁶ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED608037.pdf>



INCREASED STUDENT SUPPORTS: ACT PROGRAMS

Overview & Opportunity Statement

Graduation Rate Disparities and Opportunities for Improvement

CSCU's graduation rates lag behind regional public institutions at both the two-year and four-year levels. For two-year institutions, a key factor contributing to the 9% graduation rate gap between CT State and New York institutions (Figure 8) is the higher proportion of part-time students at CT State, who experience lower persistence rates (Figures 9 and 10).

The gap in graduation rates between the CSUs and UConn (Figure 11) may be due to the higher percentage of students requiring student support services due to their prior academic background and financial circumstances. Expanding holistic student support services and incentivizing full-time enrollment could significantly improve persistence and graduation rates, especially for low-income students.

Key Challenges Impacting Persistence and Completion

Stakeholder feedback gathered by SIP identified several structural barriers to student success at CSCU:

1. Financial Barriers Driving Part-Time Enrollment

- Financial constraints force many students to work multiple jobs, reducing their ability to enroll full-time.
- Connecticut's higher-than-average tuition rates (Figure 7) and high cost of living further compound financial pressures.

"We attract a working population which adds to budget stress. We have limited dollars, to give people money in their first year and then remove it the second year. If we really gave proper counseling, we would tell people not to come here because they can't afford it and shouldn't add too much debt"

- CSCU Staff

2. Academic Preparedness Gaps

- Faculty report that many students struggle with fundamental academic skills, making coursework overwhelming.
- Some faculty have adjusted curricula downward to accommodate students who lack reading comprehension, writing proficiency, or classroom engagement skills.



One faculty member observed:

“Students are using calculators in chemistry class for basic arithmetic. We are admitting students who are not prepared for college work.”

Faculty emphasize that students need stronger academic preparation before college rather than simply being advanced through coursework.

“Math and English proficiency have dropped, especially with new students. We are seeing the tip of the iceberg.”

- CSCU Faculty

3. Insufficient Advising Services

- Students struggle to access meaningful academic advising due to high advisor-to-student ratios (1:200+), resulting in delays of up to a month for appointments.
- Many advisors feel overburdened and unable to provide personalized, proactive support, leading students to self-advise, which often results in:
 - Course selection errors that increase time to graduation.
 - Unnecessary tuition costs and student debt.
- To improve outcomes, students need:
 - Lower advisor caseloads for more individualized support.
 - Flexible scheduling to accommodate work and family obligations.

“Students have complicated lives and addressing barriers requires a multifaceted approach that includes increased funding, streamlined processes, better communication, and policies that are more responsive to the needs of students.”

- CSCU Institutional Leader

4. First-Generation Student Challenges

- Some first-generation students lack prior college exposure and are not ready to meet college expectations.



- National data²⁷ show that 72% of first-generation students had taken no college preparatory courses in high school, compared to 43% of non-first-generation students.
- In Fall 2024, nearly 70% of CT State students and 30–60%²⁸ of CSUs' students (2021–2025) were first-generation²⁹, making CSCU's student body more likely to face financial and cultural barriers to college success.

Recommendation

To improve student preparedness and support vulnerable student populations throughout their higher education journey, Connecticut should implement a comprehensive support program that integrates academic, advising, and financial assistance into a holistic model for student success. This program should be based on the MDRC SUCCESS³⁰ Framework, which was developed from the CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Program³¹ (ASAP)—a nationally recognized model for improving college completion rates.

While ASAP is designed for two-year students, CUNY has successfully expanded its approach to four-year institutions through the Accelerate, Complete, and Engage³² (ACE) program. We recommend that CSCU adopt a similar framework tailored to the needs of both two-year and four-year students.

Program Components

ASAP primarily serves low-income, first-generation, and minority students, a demographic that closely aligns with CT State's student body. The program requires students to meet enrollment and participation benchmarks in exchange for a structured set of high-impact supports that differentiate it from traditional college services³³:

- **Full-Time Enrollment Commitment:** Students commit to full-time enrollment and are consistently encouraged to graduate within three years.
- **Intensive Advising & Support:** Students receive personalized, proactive advising, tutoring, and career counseling with a significantly reduced advisor-to-student ratio (approximately 75:1 vs. the 600+:1 seen in traditional advising models).
- **Structured Academic Pathways:** Students take blocked and linked courses, integrating remedial education.
- **Cohort-Based Learning:** Students build a sense of community and learn to navigate college more effectively.

²⁷ nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018421.pdf

²⁸ CSU individual student body profiles

²⁹ <https://ctstate.edu/newsroCSUsitem/ct-state-community-college-sees-enCCSUsment-growth-for-fall-2024-semester>

³⁰ <https://www.mdrc.org/work/projects/scaling-college-completion-efforts-student-success-success>

³¹ ASAP – The City University of New York

³² <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/student-success-initiatives/asap/about/ace/>

³³ https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/SUCCESS_One-Year_Report_v2.pdf



- **Financial Incentives:** Students can access additional financial aid and incentives for maintaining academic progress and meeting with coaches.

Outcomes & Proof Points

Programs modeled after ASAP and SUCCESS have demonstrated significant improvements in graduation rates and cost efficiency.

- **Higher Graduation Rates:** As shown in Table 4, ASAP-based programs substantially increase three-year graduation rates (six-year rates for ACE).
- **Lower Cost Per Graduate:** MDRC studies found that while ASAP requires higher upfront investment per student, it reduces the overall cost per graduate³⁴ by improving retention and degree completion.
- **Greater Student Satisfaction & Transfer Rates:**
 - Students report higher satisfaction with their college experience, a key factor as today’s students increasingly assess the economic value of a degree.
 - ASAP participants are more likely to transfer to four-year institutions (25% vs. 17% in traditional programs³⁵).
- **Proven Scalability:** The model has successfully expanded beyond New York, with programs now operating in 15 states³⁶, including Ohio’s adaptation of ASAP for four-year schools.

Table 4. Three-Year Graduation Uplift of SUCCESS Program Participants

	Participants	Control Group	Uplift %
CUNY ASAP	40%	22%	82%
CUNY ACE*	69%	57%	20%
Ohio ASAP	44%	29%	52%

* Six-Year

Source: MDRC

Connecticut’s Model

To align with Connecticut’s unique student needs, we recommend implementing a modified version of the ASAP/ACE model³⁷, referred to as the Accelerated Completion Track (ACT, Figure 22). This adaptation emphasizes enhanced advising, and financial support:

- **Enhanced Advisory Services:**
 - Low advisor-to-student ratio (1:75) to provide personalized, high-touch support across academics, financial aid, and career planning.

³⁴ https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/SUCCESS_One-Year_Report_v2.pdf

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ [Final_CUNY-ASAP-and-ACE-Fast-Facts_Jan25-2.pdf](#)



- **Bridge Program:**
 - A three-credit preparatory course to equip students for the demands of an accelerated program.
 - Complements the existing College and Career Success course, which is required for all incoming CT State students.
- **Access to State-Funded Financial Support:**
 - Covers financial gaps left after need-based aid, reducing student debt and financial strain.
 - Funding would be secured through a separate financial aid initiative to ensure sustainability.

By investing in the ACT model, Connecticut can increase graduation rates, lower per-degree costs, and provide students with the support needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce.

Figure 22. ACT Components

Core Program Based On MDRC SUCCESS

Improve completion rates for students who are underserved by offering comprehensive, yet scalable, support services such as proactive coaching and advising

Institutional Focus: CT State & CSU

Dedicated Staff

- Coaches to proactively engage with students at-risk
- Directors to oversee coaches/program

Financial Commitments

- Affordability and sustainability
- Incentives to meet with coaches, maintain higher GPAs, etc.

Momentum Strategies

- Focused on increasing academic momentum
- Requiring full-time enrollment, summer/winter enrollment, etc.

Data Foundation

- System to provide real-time data to staff members
- Supports efficient program management and continuous improvement



Connecticut-Specific Bridge Programming:

Help transition to college and address academic gaps

Institutional Focus: CT State

Skill Development

- Study & time management skills
- Course proficiency (reading, math, writing)
- College navigation skills: In-depth orientation to college life/resources

Advising Assistance

- Course selection guidance
- Degree planning
- Personalized academic advising



Implementation and Cost

The initial Year 1 investment to pilot both the ACT-A (Associate's degree) and ACT-B (Bachelor's degree) programs is estimated at \$4.4 million:

- \$3.3 million for ACT-A
- \$1.2 million for ACT-B (reflecting the program's smaller initial cohort size)

At full scale, the annual investment increases to \$35.1 million:

- \$30.6 million for ACT-A
- \$4.4 million for ACT-B

The largest cost driver is hiring new advisors, which represents:

- 61% of costs in Year 1
- 67% of costs at full scale

Additional expenses include administering bridge programming and disbursing milestone and participation incentives.

Importantly, this cost projection does not include funding for tuition, fees, or books. While increased financial aid enhances program outcomes, it is not required for core operations. However, we recommend using the ACT program as a structured distribution mechanism for state financial aid (as outlined in the next section).

Path to Scale

Tables 5 and 6 outline the six-year scaling plan for ACT-A and ACT-B.

To ensure program effectiveness and fiscal responsibility, the scaling process includes multiple review checkpoints:

Year 1:

- Launch initial pilot cohort.
- Conduct a one-year review of student outcomes.
- Modify program as needed before expanding in Year 2.

Year 2:

- Expand to three cohorts based on Year 1 findings.

Year 3:

- Conduct a comprehensive review after the first full cohort completes the program.

Year 4+:

- Expand to a five-cohort-per-year model, reaching 10,000 students annually.



By phasing growth strategically, Connecticut can ensure that ACT achieves the intended outcomes while maintaining cost efficiency.

Table 5. ACT-A (Associate's Degree Program)³⁸

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Program Size						
Cohorts	1	2	2	5	5	5
Student Enrollment	1,000	2,600	3,700	7,200	9,000	10,500
Staff FTEs	15	44	59	108	132	153
Program Cost						
Bridge Program	\$0.6M	\$1.2M	\$1.2M	\$2.9M	\$2.9M	\$2.9M
Incentives	\$0.6M	\$1.5M	\$2.1M	\$4.1M	\$5.2M	\$6.2M
Support Staff	\$2.1M	\$6.3M	\$8.4M	\$15.2M	\$18.6M	\$21.5M
Total Annual Cost	\$3.3M	\$8.9M	\$11.7M	\$22.3M	\$26.7M	\$30.6M

Table 6. ACT-B (Bachelor's Degree Program)³⁹

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Program Size						
Cohorts	1	2	2	2	2	2
Student Enrollment	250	713	1,113	1,475	1,650	1,650
Staff FTEs	4	8	12	16	18	18
Program Cost						
Bridge Program	\$0.4M	\$0.8M	\$0.8M	\$0.8M	\$0.8M	\$0.8M
Incentives	\$0.2M	\$0.5M	\$0.8M	\$1.0M	\$1.1M	\$1.1M
Support Staff	\$0.6M	\$1.1M	\$1.7M	\$2.2M	\$2.5M	\$2.5M
Total Annual Cost	\$1.2M	\$2.4M	\$3.3M	\$4.0M	\$4.4M	\$4.4M

Economic Benefit & Outcomes

The economic benefits of the ACT program are substantial, both annually and over a graduate's lifetime.

Projected Economic Impact Per Cohort

For ACT-A (Associate's Degree):

- 1,000-student cohort → 500 graduates within three years
- 250 of these graduates are incremental, meaning they would not have completed college without the program.

³⁸ Program cost estimates leveraged information provided by MDRC in their open-source [The College Promise Success Initiative Cost Calculator | MDRC](#) and information gathered from CSCU directly, particularly as pertains to staff levels, salaries, benefits costs, etc.

³⁹ Ibid



- Lifetime net economic benefit: \$97 million per cohort
- Annual scaling to full size → \$456 million in lifetime economic benefit generated per year

For ACT-B (Bachelor’s Degree):

- 250-student cohort → 175 graduates within four years
- 50 of these graduates are incremental
- Lifetime net economic benefit: \$167 million generated per year at scale

By significantly increasing the number of students who complete college, the ACT program delivers a strong return on investment, enhancing Connecticut’s workforce and driving long-term economic growth.

Table 7. ACT-A Estimated Net Economic Benefit

Program Year	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Number of Graduates Attributable to ACT-A	-	-	250	500	500	1,250	2,500
Ten-Year Incremental Economic Benefit per Graduate	\$0.1M	\$0.1M	\$0.1M	\$0.1M	\$0.1M	\$0.1M	n/a
Lifetime Economic Benefit	-	-	\$24.3M	\$48.6M	\$48.6M	\$121.6M	\$243.2M
Program Cost	\$3.3M	\$8.9M	\$11.7M	\$22.3M	\$26.7M	\$30.6M	\$103.4M
Net Economic Benefit	-\$3.3M	-\$8.9M	\$12.6M	\$26.4M	\$22.M	\$91.M	\$139.8M

Table 8. ACT-B Estimated Net Economic Benefit

Program Year	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Number of Graduates Attributable to ACT-B	-	-	-	53	105	105	263
Ten-Year Incremental Economic Benefit per Graduate	\$0.4M	\$0.4M	\$0.4M	\$0.4M	\$0.4M	\$0.4M	n/a
Lifetime Economic Benefit	-	-	-	\$21.4M	\$42.9M	\$42.9M	\$107.2M
Program Cost	\$1.1M	\$2.4M	\$3.3M	\$4.M	\$4.4M	\$4.4M	\$19.8M
Net Economic Benefit	-\$1.1M	-\$2.4M	-\$3.3M	\$17.4M	\$38.4M	\$38.4M	\$87.4M



INCREASED FINANCIAL AID

Overview and Findings

Financial Aid and the Cost of Attendance

Financial aid is essential for ensuring equitable access to higher education in Connecticut. The total cost of attendance—including books, supplies, transportation, and living expenses—often far exceeds tuition alone (Table 9).

For example:

- CT State’s in-state tuition is approximately \$5,000 per year.
- Total estimated cost of attendance, according to financial aid offices, is closer to \$30,000 per year⁴⁰.

Table 9. 2024-2025 Estimated Costs of Full-Time, In-State Enrollment at CT State

Estimated Costs for Full-Time Enrollment	Annual Cost
Tuition and Fees	\$5,338
Books, Course Materials, Supplies and Equipment	\$1,500
Transportation	\$2,460
Miscellaneous Personal Expenses	\$7,828
Loan Fees	\$85
Internet Costs	\$450
Living Expenses (Food and Housing)	\$12,077
Estimated Total Expenses	\$29,738

Source: <https://ctstate.edu/admissions-registration/financial-aid>

Without adequate financial aid, many students must take on significant debt or forgo college entirely. Our analysis of public data and stakeholder interviews indicate that Connecticut has substantial opportunities to better align financial aid with student needs.

⁴⁰ CT State Financial Aid Office, <https://ctstate.edu/admissions-registration/financial-aid>



Connecticut's Financial Aid Funding Levels

In 2023, Connecticut allocated \$35.3 million in financial aid for public university students, out of a total \$1.5 billion in higher education appropriations, according to the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)⁴¹. This means only 2.2% of Connecticut's higher education funding went toward financial aid—significantly below the averages for New England states (7.1%), New York (8.3%), and the national average (9.5%)⁴². Table 10 details these disparities across the region and nationally.

Table 10: Financial Aid and Education Appropriations, by State

	Financial Aid (\$M)	Education Appropriations (\$M)	Share of Appropriations
Connecticut	\$35.3	\$1,587.6	2.2%
New England	\$204.9	\$2,892.2	7.1%
Maine	\$40.6	\$344.5	11.8%
Massachusetts	\$130.0	\$2,055.9	6.3%
New Hampshire	\$7.8	\$141.5	5.5%
Rhode Island	\$14.7	\$229.4	6.4%
Vermont	\$11.8	\$120.9	9.7%
New York	\$571.4	\$6,900.6	8.3%
U.S.	\$10,762.6	\$113,105.6	9.5%

Source: SHEEO 2023 State Profiles, <https://shef.sheeo.org/state-profile/>

Aid Per Student: Connecticut Lags Behind

Looking at state financial aid per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) student (Figures 23 and 24):

- Connecticut performs near the national average for two-year college aid, though it trails all neighboring states except New Hampshire.
- Connecticut significantly underperforms in four-year college aid, providing just 15% of the national average, ranking behind all peers except New Hampshire and Rhode Island⁴³.

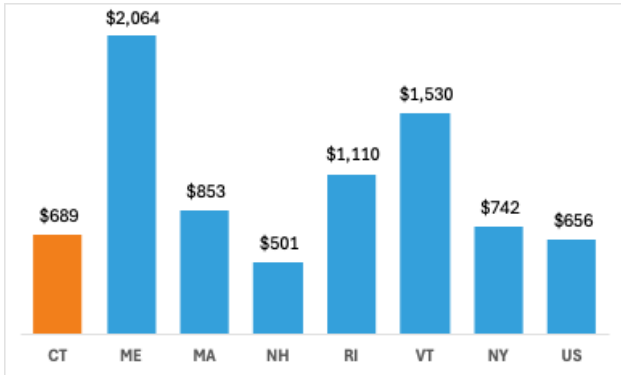
⁴¹ State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2023 Connecticut profile, <https://shef.sheeo.org/state-profile/connecticut/>

⁴² State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2023 Connecticut profile, <https://shef.sheeo.org/state-profile/connecticut/>

⁴³ SHEEO 2023 Annual Report, https://shef.sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/SHEEO_SHEF_FY23_Report.pdf

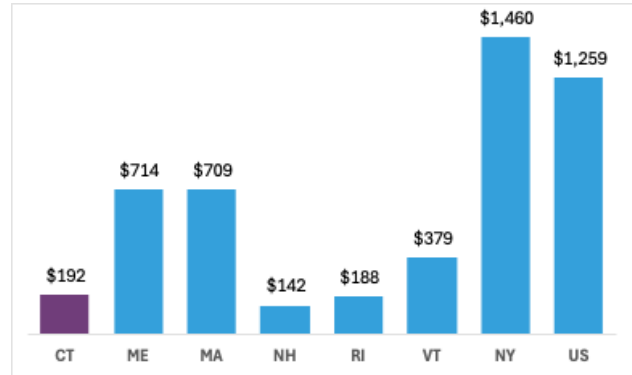


Figure 23. Average Aid Per Two-Year Student FTE, 2023



Source: SHEEO 2023 Annual Report

Figure 24. Average Aid Per Four-Year Student FTE, 2023



Source: SHEEO 2023 Annual Report

Since 2019, most new financial aid funding has been concentrated in two-year colleges, while per-student aid at four-year institutions has declined (Table 11).

Table 11: Connecticut State Financial Aid Per Student FTE, by Sector (2019-2023)

	2019	2023	19-'23 % Change
Two-Year Colleges	\$352	\$689	95.7%
Four-Year Colleges	\$310	\$192	-38.1%

Source: SHEEO 2023 Annual Report

Despite recent improvements, Connecticut still needs to increase financial aid funding to match peer states or develop an innovative financial aid model to address college affordability.

Financial Barriers to Enrollment and Student Success

Enrollment data and stakeholder interviews highlight significant unmet financial needs among CSCU students.

Higher Pell Grant Enrollment Signals Greater Financial Need

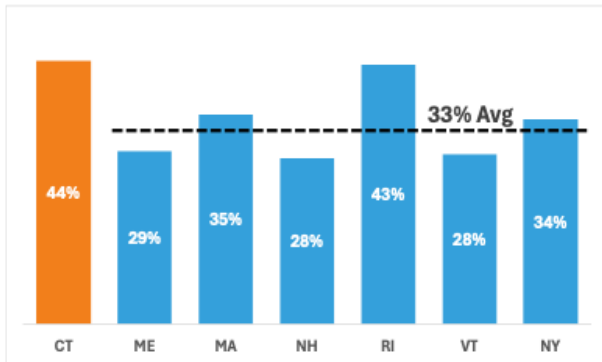
Using Pell Grant recipients as a proxy for low-income students:

- CSCU two-year colleges enroll 44% Pell recipients vs. 33% at peer institutions (Figure 25).
- CSCU four-year colleges enroll 32% Pell recipients vs. 27% at peer institutions (Figure 26).

This indicates higher financial need among CSCU students compared to regional peers.

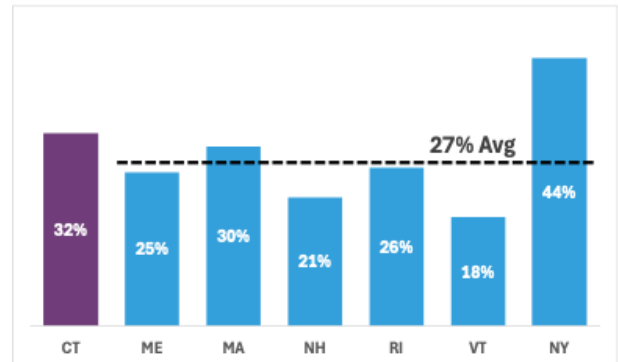


Figure 25. Percent of Undergrad Students Receiving a Pell Grant, Two-Year Public Colleges (2022-23)



Source: SIP Analysis of NCES / IPEDS Data

Figure 26. Percent of Undergrad Students Receiving a Pell Grant, Four-Year Public Colleges (2022-23)



Source: SIP Analysis of NCES / IPEDS Data

Financial Challenges Drive Student Attrition

Stakeholders and faculty report that **financial difficulties are a top reason students pause or drop out**. Key issues include:

- **High upfront deposits and unexpected fees**
- **Delays in financial aid processing**, preventing students from purchasing books or attending class
- **Food insecurity and housing instability**
- **Limited financial literacy**, making it difficult for students to navigate aid processes

Additionally, students and faculty **perceive financial aid and student accounts offices as disorganized**, creating barriers to accessing available assistance.

“The biggest issue right now would be financial. It’s a bigger challenge each semester. I got one scholarship but need more help financially.”

- CSCU Student

“The financial stresses faced by students cause them to be ‘worried all the time’ and distracted from learning”

- CSCU Faculty



Financial Aid Disparities Affect Enrollment Choices

Many students find it more affordable to attend private colleges or the University of Connecticut due to stronger financial aid packages than those available at CSCU.

While new grants like the expanded Mary Ann Handley Awards (formerly PACT) help improve two-year college affordability, four-year financial aid remains a critical gap.

Key Takeaways for Policy and Funding Decisions

To improve college access and completion rates, Connecticut must:

1. Increase state-funded financial aid, particularly for four-year institutions.
2. Streamline aid processes to reduce delays and confusion.
3. Enhance financial literacy programs to support students in navigating aid options.
4. Ensure equity in aid distribution so that students at CSCU receive competitive financial support.

Recommendation

Closing the Funding Gap: Strengthening Financial Aid in Connecticut

Increasing State Financial Aid to Bridge Affordability Gaps

To align Connecticut’s financial aid funding with other northeastern states and improve access to affordable higher education, the state must prioritize closing affordability gaps (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Connecticut State Financial Aid Framework



Expanding State Funding for Financial Aid

Increasing financial aid funding to match peer states such as New York and Massachusetts is essential for improving college accessibility. While recent investments—such as the \$28 million grant in 2025—have strengthened financial aid for CT State students, significant funding gaps remain for students attending Connecticut State Universities (CSUs). Additional support is needed to ensure these students receive the resources necessary to complete their degrees.



Key initiatives to close these gaps include:

- Increasing funding for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program to meet growing demand and provide essential financial support for CSUs students.
- Expanding the Mary Ann Handley Awards to four-year institutions to cover affordability gaps beyond two-year colleges.
- Allocating financial aid for non-tuition expenses and emergency grants to address hidden financial barriers.
- Integrating the ACT program as a funding mechanism to ensure state financial aid reaches the students who need it most.

Preliminary enrollment data suggests that the expansion of the Mary Ann Handley Awards may have contributed to increased enrollment at CT State institutions. Extending this program to CSUs would likely have a similar impact, strengthening enrollment and retention rates at four-year institutions.

Integrating Financial and Process Education into Student Support

CSCU should focus more directly on helping educate students around addressing common challenges with financial aid such as navigating the application process and interpreting requirements. Financial literacy and education could also be integrated into student services more broadly, giving students the tools to make informed decisions about borrowing, managing debt, and repayment. Ultimately, these efforts will empower vulnerable populations to pursue higher education with greater confidence and success.

Implementation Plan and Investment

Implementation Plan and Investment Strategy

The priority is to increase funding for existing scholarships and grant programs. However, to maximize impact, financial aid initiatives should be strategically aligned with the ACT program to support vulnerable student populations more effectively.

Key Actions:

- Increase funding for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program across CSUs, prioritizing students with the greatest financial need.
- Introduce Mary Ann Handley Awards for CSUs students to address affordability gaps at four-year institutions.
- Provide targeted financial aid incentives aligned with the ACT program's student support framework.
- Develop financial literacy resources tailored to vulnerable student populations within CSCU.



Required Investment

To determine the additional state investment needed, we analyzed per-student aid allocations and compared Connecticut’s funding levels to regional peers (Table 12).

Table 12: Connecticut Target Incremental Aid Per FTE

	Current Aid / FTE	Avg. Peer State Aid / FTE*	Target Inc. Aid / FTE
Two-Year Colleges	\$689	\$835	\$146
Four-Year Colleges	\$192	\$1,108	\$916

* Peer States: New England and New York

Source: SIP Analysis of SHEEO 2023 Annual Report

Based on this assessment, an annual increase of \$24 million in state financial aid—primarily directed toward CSUs —would bring Connecticut’s funding levels in line with neighboring states (Table 13). This investment would significantly reduce financial barriers and increase affordability for students statewide.

Table 13: Enhanced State Financial Aid Annual Investment

	CT State	CSUs + Charter Oak	Total
FTE Enrollment	20,986	22,761	43,747
Incremental Funding / FTE	\$146	\$916	\$547
Annual Additional Aid	\$3.1M	\$20.8M	\$23.9M

Economic Impact and Expected Outcomes

Research from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) demonstrates that increased student financial aid leads to higher retention and graduation rates, reduced student loan debt, and stronger in-state workforce development.

Specifically, SHEEO’s analysis⁴⁴ indicates that for every \$1,000 increase in per-student financial aid, degree completion rates increase by approximately 4%. Given that this proposal calls for nearly \$1,000 per FTE in additional aid for CSUs students, we can expect measurable gains in degree attainment and lifetime earnings (Table 14).

While these estimates do not fully capture the broader economic benefits of reducing student debt and increasing college affordability, they provide a clear indication of the return on investment in state-funded financial aid.

⁴⁴ Public Investment in Higher Education: Research, Strategies, and Policy Implications see all projects, SHEEO, May 2021, https://sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SHEEO_ImpactAppropriationsFinancialAid.pdf



Table 14: Annual Economic Benefit to Increased State Financial Aid

Program Year	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Incremental CSUs Graduates	-	50	101	151	201	201	704
Ten-Year Economic Benefit per Graduate	\$.4M	\$.4M	\$.4M	\$.4M	\$.4M	\$.4M	n/a
Lifetime Economic Benefit		\$20.5M	\$41.1M	\$61.6M	\$82.1M	\$82.1M	\$287.4M
Program Cost	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$23.9M	\$143.5M
Net Economic Benefit	-\$23.9M	-\$3.4M	\$17.1M	\$37.7M	\$58.2M	\$58.2M	\$143.9M

Conclusion: Investing in Connecticut’s Future

Addressing Connecticut’s financial aid challenges is critical to improving affordability, accessibility, and equity in higher education. By increasing state financial aid, reallocating resources to match regional funding levels, and implementing targeted student support programs, Connecticut can close the funding gap and eliminate key financial barriers.

Expanding financial aid is not just an investment in students—it is an investment in the state’s workforce, economy, and long-term prosperity. By prioritizing financial aid reform, Connecticut can strengthen its higher education system, empower students to achieve their academic and career goals, and build a more competitive, resilient economy.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COALITION

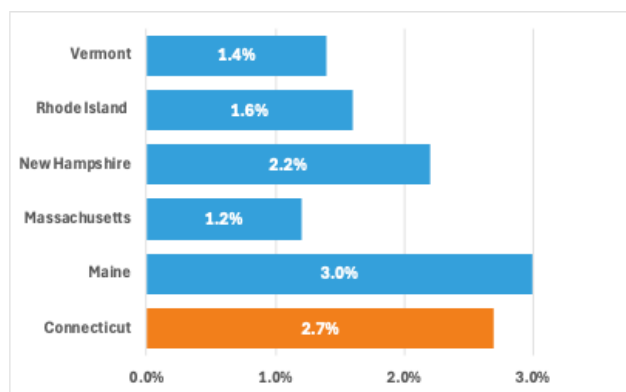
Overview

Many Connecticut residents are eager to gain new skills that can lead to high-paying jobs and greater career advancement. Meanwhile, employers across the state are facing significant challenges in filling open positions. The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system is uniquely positioned to address this gap by equipping residents with the necessary skills to fill these in-demand jobs and progress their careers.

While Connecticut's economy has shown impressive growth in recent years, the state's workforce has not kept pace:

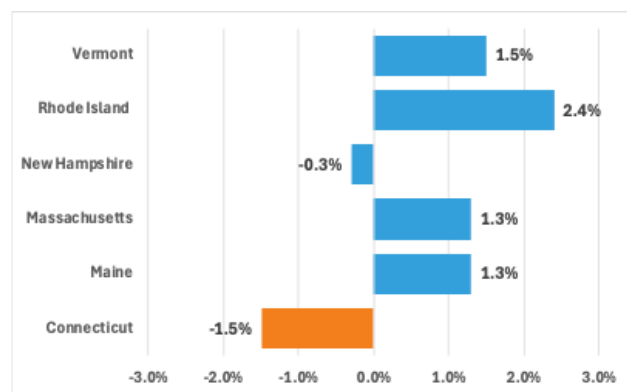
- In 2023, Connecticut's GDP grew by 2.7%, the second-highest growth rate in New England (Figure 28).
- The state boasts the lowest unemployment rate in the region at just 3%.
- Labor market participation rates are among the highest in the country at 67.4%. However, disparities exist across demographic groups, leaving a significant pool of untapped talent to meet the state's workforce needs.
- Connecticut's aging population and the continued departure of younger residents have strained efforts to meet labor market demands. As of June 2024, the state's workforce was 1.5% smaller than pre-pandemic levels (Figure 29).

Figure 28. Real GDP Growth, by State (2023)



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Figure 29. Labor Force Growth, by State (Feb. 2020 – Nov. 2024)



Source: Connecticut Business and Industry Association

This combination of job growth and a shrinking labor force has resulted in a 33% increase in job openings over the last five years. While many residents are eager to fill these roles, a lack of necessary skills remains a major barrier to employment.



Employers also face challenges with incumbent workers who lack the skills needed for optimal productivity and career advancement. These gaps may include industry-specific expertise or general skills such as digital proficiency, AI literacy, English language fluency, and professional or leadership development.

Nearly 75,000 of the projected annual job openings in Connecticut require skills that can be gained through short-term training. These opportunities are concentrated in some of the state’s highest-demand industries, as detailed in Table 15.

Table 15: Key Industries Requiring Short-Term Training

Industry	Number of Jobs Requiring Short-Term Training
Manufacturing and Green Energy	13,777
Healthcare and Social Services	6,469
Business, Sales, and IT	8,925
Construction and Maintenance	2,044
Transportation	9,272
Other Industries	34,446
Total	74,993

Source: SIP analysis of CT Dept. of Labor 10-year occupational employment projections

Despite this demand for short-term training, enrollment in these programs at Connecticut State has declined sharply since the early 2000s. In 2002, 20,091 individuals participated in non-credit programs; by 2012, that number had dropped to 13,889, and by 2018, it had fallen to 11,843. In 2023, just 6,613 students participated in non-credit programs at CT State⁴⁵.

However, evidence shows that demand for short-term training in Connecticut is still strong. For example, the state’s Career ConneCT program, launched in 2021 with \$70 million in ARPA funding, aims to train 6,000 unemployed and underemployed residents in high-demand fields. The program includes the Career ConneCT portal, which serves as a centralized hub for recruitment, registration, assessment, and intake.

The Career ConneCT portal has had over 18,000 users interested in training for high-demand industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, IT, construction, and clean energy. However, the remaining funds will only support training for approximately 500 additional job seekers, leaving thousands without a clear path to training.

Several factors may explain the decline in CT State’s non-credit enrollment, with funding being a primary issue. Non-credit programs typically receive less funding than credit-bearing programs and are not eligible for Pell Grant funding. Additionally, the complexity of navigating the system is a significant barrier. While numerous institutions offer short-term training, there is no centralized source of information, making it

⁴⁵ [Noncredit-Headcount-2002-2023.xlsx](#)



difficult for students to find available courses, understand registration processes, identify funding options, or access available support services.

Once enrolled in short-term training programs, students and staff have pointed to the need for more career development resources and advising, both of which are currently minimal for these participants. Greater access to data on labor market trends and stronger connections with industry partners are also seen as critical improvements.

Employer engagement is another factor contributing to the decline in enrollment. Some employers have expressed frustration with the consolidation of community colleges into CT State, citing delays in decision-making and a lack of flexibility and responsiveness. This has led some employers to seek training resources from private colleges and educational institutions outside of Connecticut.

Recommendation

To support CSCU students and Connecticut residents in capitalizing on the opportunities of a growing economy, the state should invest in workforce skill development by expanding short-term training programs.

The best way to accomplish this is to establish a Coalition for Workforce Development ("The Coalition"), a partnership among CSCU/CT State, the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), employers, the Regional Sector Partnerships, the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Regional Workforce Development Boards. This Coalition will collaborate to address immediate workforce needs, support economic development, and create employment opportunities for CSCU students and Connecticut residents by providing skilled new hires and upskilling incumbent workers.

Jointly administered by CT State and OWS, the Coalition will be governed by an Advisory Board composed of business, government, and education leaders. It will leverage multiple funding sources, including business, philanthropic, and government investments, while maintaining flexibility in developing and executing training programs aligned with employer needs.

Coalition Goals and Objectives

- Equip workers with skills for in-demand jobs in a rapidly evolving labor market.
- Serve as a bridge between local employers, CSCU/CT State, workforce development partners, and communities.
- Become a trusted partner for employers seeking skilled talent and workforce upskilling solutions.
- Connect short-term training to educational pathways via stackable credentials and provide guidance on career advancement opportunities (Since many of the short-term training programs lead to entry-level or mid-skill jobs, this connection is critical to help students advance their careers).
- Provide students with exposure to potential future academic and training opportunities within CSCU.



Proposed Services and Programs

Connecticut has successful workforce training models, such as CareerConneCT and the Good Jobs Challenge, that address labor market needs but require sustainable funding to scale effectively. Greater employer engagement is essential to maximize the impact of training investments (Table 16).

Table 16: Sector-Based Training, 2022-24

	Career ConneCT (11/2022-11/2024)	WIOA Training (7/2022-6/20/2023)
Number of People Trained	6,086	2,040
Completion %	83%	48.5% (youth and adult) 77.5% (dislocated worker)
Employment %	63%	TBD*

Source: CT Office of Workforce Strategy: Career ConneCT participation began in earnest PY1 Q3

Within the CSCU system, successful programs include the Eastern Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative⁴⁶, Eversource Line Worker Certificate⁴⁷, Allied Health Certificate Programs, and the Accenture Apprenticeship Program⁴⁸. These initiatives demonstrate high completion and job placement rates and enjoy strong employer support.

However, the supply of short-term workforce training programs has not kept pace with employer demand. A stronger workforce development focus is needed within CT State and the CSUs .

The Coalition will prioritize:

1. **New Hire Training:** Expanding workforce programs for high school graduates, college students, and adult learners, including veterans, the re-entry population, and career switchers.
2. **Program Development & Scaling:** Creating new training programs or expanding existing high-performing models to:
 - Align with labor market demand.
 - Lead to industry-recognized credentials and stackable pathways to degrees.
 - Include required testing, certifications, and employability skill development.
 - Provide academic support and work-based learning opportunities.
 - Offer flexible, on-demand scheduling, including evening/weekend and hybrid learning formats.
 - Incorporate employer-designed curricula.
3. **Incumbent Worker Training:** Coordinating and funding employer-led upskilling initiatives to:

⁴⁶ MPI: <https://www.ewib.org/pipeline-initiatives/manufacturing-pipeline/>

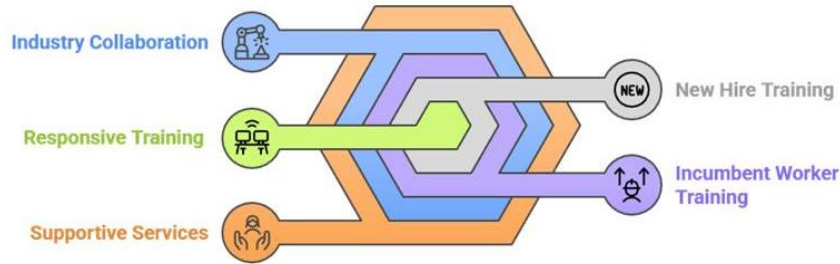
⁴⁷ Eversource: <https://ctstate.edu/programs/lineworker>

⁴⁸ Accenture: <https://ctstate.edu/programs/accenture-apprenticeship>



- Address evolving workforce needs.
- Facilitate career advancement.
- Collect data to identify critical skill gaps.
- Leverage best practices from the Manufacturing Innovation Fund.

Figure 30. Connecticut Workforce Development Coalition Training Focus



Roles and Responsibilities

The Coalition will bring together key workforce and economic development stakeholders:

- **CSCU/CT State:** Lead curriculum development, data analysis, employer engagement, and student career support.
- **OWS:** Provide leadership on workforce strategy and funding opportunities, particularly through the Workforce Innovation and Sustainability Fund.
- **DOL/Regional Workforce Development Boards/AJCs:** Facilitate job seeker recruitment, engagement, and tracking through CareerConneCT. Partner with CSCU to enhance career development services at CT State campuses.
- **Employer Partners:** Actively participate by signing a "Compact" to provide workforce data, funding support, and work-based learning opportunities.

A Model to Learn From: Maine's Harold Alfond Center

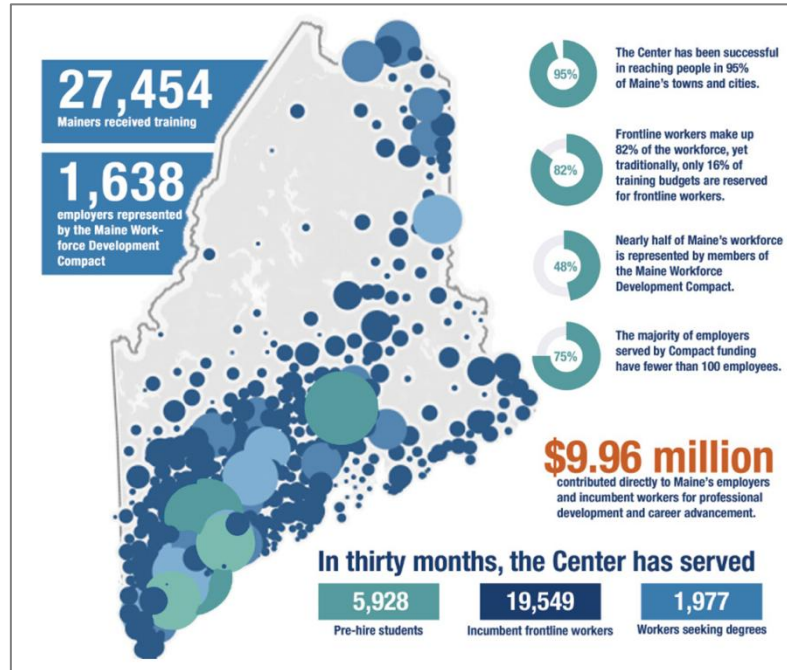
Maine's Harold Alfond Center demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in workforce training (Figure 31). Key takeaways for Connecticut include:

- **Funding:** Supported by state, philanthropic, and employer contributions, with a projected \$163M budget for 2025.
- **Employer Engagement:** Over 1,700 employers, representing 50% of Maine's workforce, participate and contribute matching funds.
- **Incumbent Worker Training:** Strong commitment and financial investment in upskilling.



By adopting key components of a proven model, Connecticut can strengthen its workforce, drive economic growth, and ensure long-term sustainability in workforce development efforts.

Figure 31. Maine's Harold Alfond Center



Source: Annual report 2024 from the Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce

Implementation Plan and Investment

Phase 1: Planning and Development (6-12 months)

- Conduct a comprehensive market analysis to better understand employer needs.
- Form the Coalition with key stakeholders.
- Assess and adapt existing programs to meet industry requirements.
- Streamline scheduling and faculty allocation for statewide program delivery.
- Establish governance and funding criteria for incumbent worker training.

Budget: \$750,000 (for 2 full-time staff, a part-time analyst, consulting fees, travel, legal, and overhead costs).

Phase 2: Pilot and Partnerships (Year 2)

- Expand staff to support program management and employer engagement.
- Establish five on-campus resources.



- Train 1,000 workers at an average cost of \$1,300 per incumbent worker and \$5,000 per pre-hire trainee.

Budget: \$4.1M

Scaling Beyond Phase 2

- Expand program offerings and funding strategy based on pilot results.
- Scale fundraising from employers to match 20% of total costs and leverage philanthropy for the rest
- Continue scaling staff to support program and implement ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement processes
- Target training and upskilling 7,500 workers per year

Projected Budget: \$12.5M annually from CSCU with further fundraising targets of \$6M from employers and \$11M from philanthropy

Table 17. Workforce Development Coalition

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Workers Trained						
Incumbent Workers	-	500	2,500	3,750	3,750	3,750
Pre-Hire Trainees	-	500	2,500	3,750	3,750	3,750
Total Workers Trained	-	1,000	5,000	7,500	7,500	7,500
Program Cost						
Direct Training Cost	-	\$3.2M	\$15.8M	\$23.6M	\$23.6M	\$23.6M
Staffing	\$0.8M	\$1.0M	\$3.3M	\$5.8M	\$5.8M	\$5.8M
Total Program Cost	\$0.8M	\$4.1M	\$19.1M	\$29.5M	\$29.5M	\$29.5M
Employer Share (20%)	-	-	\$3.8M	\$5.9M	\$5.9M	\$5.9M
Philanthropy Share	-	-	\$2.8M	\$11.1M	\$11.1M	\$11.1M
CSCU / State Program Costs	\$0.8M	\$4.1M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M



Economic Benefit & Outcomes

Earning a workforce certificate increases annual wages by approximately \$4,600 compared to a high school diploma. At full capacity including up to 5,000 trained workers per year, the Coalition's programs would generate over \$350M in net economic benefit to Connecticut annually (Table 18).

Table 18. Workforce Development Coalition Estimated Net Economic Benefit

Program Year	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Workers Trained	-	1,000	5,000	7,500	7,500	7,500	28,500
Ten-Year Incremental Economic Benefit per Trained Worker	\$50.K	\$50.K	\$50.K	\$50.K	\$50.K	\$50.K	n/a
Lifetime Economic Benefit	-	\$50.M	\$250.M	\$374.9M	\$374.9M	\$374.9M	\$1424.7M
Program Cost (to CSCU)	\$.8M	\$4.1M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$54.9M
Net Economic Benefit	-.8M	\$45.9M	\$237.5M	\$362.4M	\$362.4M	\$362.4M	\$1369.9M



CAREER PATHWAYS ORIENTED INNOVATION

Overview

A recent Gallup poll found that the primary motivator for student enrollment and persistence is the prospect of securing a well-paying job in their chosen field.⁴⁹ Students seek assurance that their investment in education will lead to meaningful career opportunities. Given CSCU's diverse student body, this means providing students with more exploratory opportunities and compelling offerings that range from industry recognized credentials through graduate degrees along several professional tracks.

The focus on career pathways and innovation provides a proven framework for addressing these priorities. By strengthening employer partnerships to develop industry-aligned curricula, expanding experiential learning opportunities, creating more stackable credentials, and enhancing advising services, CSCU can better prepare graduates for high-demand fields and help them make informed career decisions.

However, CSCU graduates across both two- and four-year institutions have struggled in the labor market. Even the CT State campus with the highest salary outcomes for associate degree earners ranks below three-quarters of the state's private programs. All four CSUs report median post-graduate incomes below the statewide median for bachelor's degree holders.

For students who do not complete their degrees, the challenges are even greater. These individuals bear the costs of their education without realizing the labor market returns of a credential. Currently, only 17% of CT State students and 54% of CSUs students graduate on time—rates that lag behind regional public institutions. Career pathways programs have been shown to more than double credential attainment rates⁵⁰, offering a critical solution to this issue.

Beyond student success, these improvements are essential to Connecticut's economic future. CSCU produces about a quarter of the state's college graduates each year, making it a key pipeline for Connecticut's workforce. Meanwhile, the number of unfilled job openings has increased by 33% over the past five years, creating a labor shortage that threatens economic growth. Addressing this gap presents an opportunity for CSCU to supply the skilled talent needed in high-growth, high-paying industries.

To meet this challenge, CSCU must implement strategic changes in program offerings, transfer policies, and workforce readiness initiatives.

Program Offerings and Selection

⁴⁹ <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/644939/state-of-higher-education.aspx>

⁵⁰ https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/A%20Meta-Analysis%20of%2046%20Career%20Pathways%20Impact%20Evaluations_final%20report.pdf



Career outcomes vary significantly by field of study. CSCU students in high-demand sectors like manufacturing and healthcare earn substantially more than those in fields with less direct industry alignment, such as general studies and liberal arts (Figures 32 and 33).

Figure 32. Post-grad Wage Outcomes of CT State Completers by Award Type



Source: P20WIN

Figure 33. Post-grad Wage Outcomes of CSUs Completers by Award Type



Source: P20WIN

Despite lower labor market returns, degrees in General Studies and Liberal Arts remain the most common credentials awarded by CSCU:

- 38% of CSUs bachelor's degree recipients graduate in these fields—14 to 16 percentage points higher than at UConn or Connecticut's private universities.
- 34% of CT State associate degree recipients major in these disciplines, nearly double the rate of graduates from Connecticut's private two-year institutions.

Academic and career advising plays a crucial role in student decision-making, yet many students report difficulties accessing advisors or dissatisfaction with the career guidance provided. Advising staff cite large caseloads and limited training in career-aligned academic planning as key barriers to effective support.

Additionally, there is little oversight to ensure that program offerings align with workforce demand. Some state community college systems require prospective technical programs to demonstrate labor market relevance before approval, but CT State currently lacks such a requirement.⁵¹

Transfer Outcomes

Not all students enter the workforce immediately upon graduation. Nationally, 80% of first-year community college students intend to transfer to a four-year institution and earn a bachelor's degree⁵².

⁵¹ <https://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/Academic%20Programming%20Approval%20Policy%205.2021.pdf>

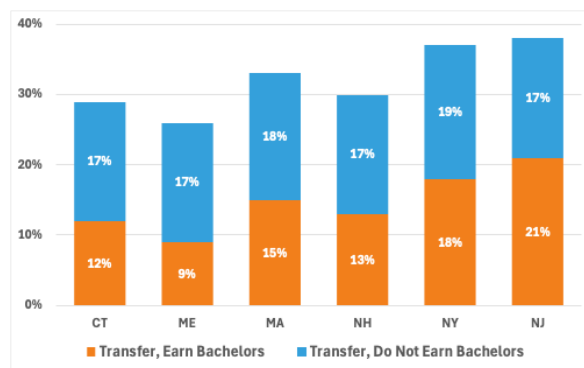
⁵² <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/tracking-transfer-community-college-effectiveness.pdf>



However, only 29% of CT State students successfully transfer, and of those, just 41% complete a bachelor’s degree—a rate lower than most regional peers (Figure 34).

While CSCU has recently started to standardize credit transfer requirements, complex and inconsistent transfer policies or implementation practices across CSCU institutions and levels of programs pose a significant barrier to students. Current requirements often lead students to pursue broad majors like General Studies and Liberal Arts because they offer the most efficient pathway to a four-year degree. However, this approach does not necessarily align with labor market demand, contributing to lower career outcomes.

Figure 34: Six-Year Transfer Outcome of Community College Students by State, 2021



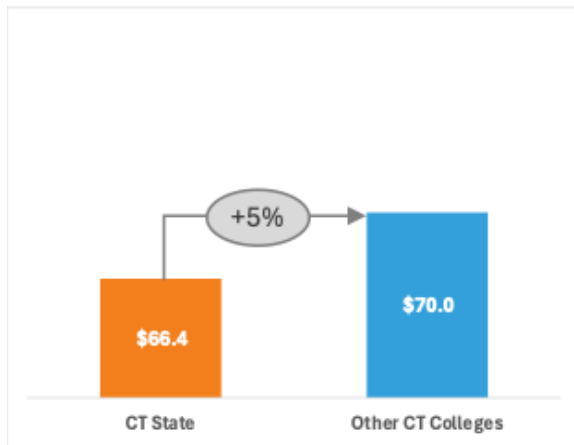
Source: Community College Resource Center

Labor Market Competitiveness

While major selection plays a significant role in career outcomes, data indicate that CSCU graduates face disadvantages even within high-demand fields (Figures 35 and 36). Graduates from CSCU programs generally earn less and secure fewer competitive job opportunities than peers from other Connecticut and regional institutions.

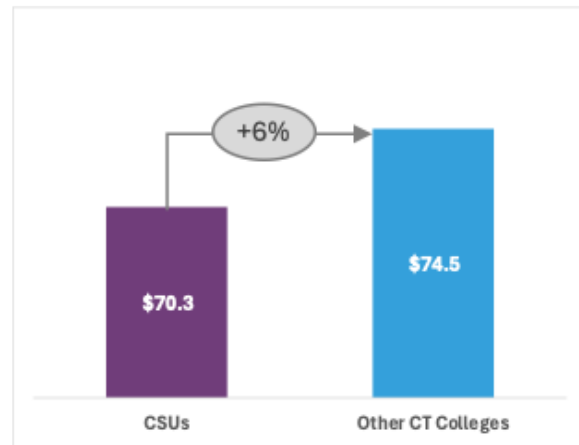


Figure 35. Associates in Healthcare Median Salary Five Years Post-graduation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 36. Bachelors in Business Median Salary Five Years Post-graduation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

A key factor contributing to this disparity is the limited availability of work-based learning experiences. Students report a lack of structured opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and industry partnerships. Faculty members also express frustration over insufficient employer engagement and the difficulty of integrating industry feedback into curricula.

Additionally, many students feel their coursework is overly theoretical, lacking practical skill development and career preparation. Addressing these gaps will be critical in enhancing the employability of CSCU graduates.

Ongoing Initiatives and Next Steps

CSCU has already taken steps to address these challenges, including:

- **Guided Pathways at CT State:** A structured advising system that helps students align their academic and career goals to streamline credential completion, transfer, and workforce entry.
- **Industry-Specific Programs:** Initiatives like CT Health Horizons, the LPN program, and accelerated RN-to-BSN pathways have successfully connected students with high-demand jobs. The ongoing Healthcare Taskforce brings together industry, government, and academic leaders to further strengthen career alignment.
- **Transfer and Articulation Policy Reform:** A new policy is designed to simplify the transfer of general education credits across CSCU institutions, increasing transparency and reducing barriers to four-year degree completion.

While these initiatives mark significant progress, more work remains. Expanding and scaling these efforts will be essential to ensuring that more CSCU students successfully transition into well-paying careers and contribute to Connecticut's workforce.



Recommendation

To address these challenges, CSCU should implement a more comprehensive and structured Career Pathways framework that clearly outlines student progression, provides flexible entry and exit points for credential attainment, and optimizes career outcomes.

Unlike traditional career preparation programs, Career Pathways are distinct in their:

1. Alignment with regional labor market needs, ensuring students are equipped for in-demand careers.
2. Comprehensive academic and career counseling, guiding students through education and career decisions (Given CSCU’s accessibility to such a diverse student population, students will benefit from more opportunities to explore different academic and career tracks early in their journey)
3. Strong industry partnerships, which provide curriculum input and hands-on learning opportunities.
4. Flexible, stackable, and accelerated credentialing, allowing students to build upon prior learning efficiently.
5. Expand the transfer policy beyond general education requirements focusing on key majors.

While CSCU has integrated these elements into some programs, there is room for enhancement and expansion. By adopting the reforms outlined below, CSCU can build a more cohesive system that improves employment outcomes for graduates.

Key Program Components

Figure 37 outlines the recommended components of a leading Career Pathways program.

Figure 37. Enhancing Career Pathways in CSCU





1. Expand Labor Market Integration

- Establish data-driven labor market analysis to inform program strategy.
- Direct resources toward high-growth industries and in-demand occupations.

2. Strengthen Employer Partnerships

- Identify key regional and statewide employers to shape curriculum and training programs.
- Expand work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships, mentoring, and job shadowing.

3. Enhance Curriculum and Credentialing

- Develop stackable credentials, allowing students to seamlessly advance from certificates to degrees.
- Expand Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) to award academic credit for industry certifications, work experience, and military training.
- Improve transfer and articulation policies to better align with key pathways.
- Explore core educational requirements such as civics and financial literacy across more career and professional pathways.

4. Improve Student Support Services

- Increase academic and career advising capacity, ensuring counselors are well-trained in policies and pathways.
- Establish fully staffed career centers on each campus, enhancing student access to career resources.
- Improve digital access to career information, including degree requirements, labor market data, and salary outcomes.

(Best practice examples: Charter Oak State College, St. Petersburg College⁵³, Ivy Tech Community College⁵⁴.)

5. Strengthen System-wide Collaboration

- Promote system-wide coordination in key industries, leveraging best practices in curriculum development, credit articulation, and marketing.

⁵³ <https://www.spcollege.edu/future-students/degrees-training>

⁵⁴ <https://www.ivytech.edu/programs/all-academic-programs/>



- Strengthen partnerships with high schools and community organizations to expand awareness and participation in Career Pathways programs.
- Explore opportunities for changing incentive structures such as the budget process and making it more performance/outcomes based to further drive innovation, collaboration and meet student needs.

Implementation and Investment

Over the next two years, CSCU should have a strategic effort focused on career pathways-oriented innovation. This innovation should include in depth looks at current policies and practices, key workforce demands of the state, and opportunities to support student journeys across the entire system.

To augment and support the needed innovation efforts, CSCU should allocate \$25 million to innovate career pathways oriented programs, supports, and execution funding both academic program development and student scholarships.

- A competitive grant process should distribute funding to academic departments and administrative offices for innovative programing focused on high-demand industries: Healthcare, Manufacturing, Business, Information Technology, and Education.
- Grants should be awarded based on alignment with Career Pathways principles and the recommended programmatic enhancements.
- The remaining funds should support scholarships for students enrolling in pilot programs.

Following the pilot phase, CSCU should scale Career Pathways initiatives over four years, with an additional \$7.5 million annually allocated to sustain programming and make field-specific scholarships.



Economic Benefit & Outcomes

A \$25 million investment over two years would drive the expansion of Career Pathways programs and cover tuition costs for 3,000 students.

As shown in Table 19, once fully scaled, the program is projected to yield a substantial Net Economic Benefit, generating increased earnings for graduates and strengthening Connecticut's workforce.

Table 19. Career Pathways Estimated Net Economic Benefit

Program Year	Year 1: SFY26	Year 2: SFY27	Year 3: SFY28	Year 4: SFY29	Year 5: SFY30	Year 6: SFY31	Six Year Total
Career Pathways Graduates	-	-	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	6,000
Ten-Year Incremental Economic Benefit per Pathways Graduate	-	-	\$135.5K	\$135.5K	\$135.5K	\$135.5K	n/a
Lifetime Economic Benefit	-	-	\$203.2M	\$203.2M	\$203.2M	\$203.2M	\$812.9M
Program Cost	\$12.5M	\$12.5M	\$7.5M	\$7.5M	\$7.5M	\$7.5M	\$55.M
Net Economic Benefit	-\$12.5M	-\$12.5M	\$195.7M	\$195.7M	\$195.7M	\$195.7M	\$757.9M



6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS



6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

CSCU’s mission—to provide affordable, innovative, and rigorous academic programs that support students’ personal and career goals, drive social and economic mobility, and contribute to Connecticut’s economic growth—remains vital to thousands of residents, whether as current or future students or as part of the state’s broader economic ecosystem (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Overview of Investment Opportunities and Outcomes

	Overview	Pilot Investment	Total Investment	Annual Scaled Net Economic Benefit
Statewide Early College	Build a statewide early college program that has state resources with a goal of serving 25% of the high school students after implementation at scale	\$12M	\$233M	\$478.6M
Increased Student Support	Implement accelerated study track program modeled off CUNY’s ASAP & ACE programs providing comprehensive, scalable services services such as proactive coaching and advising	\$15.8M	\$124M	\$129.4M
Increased Financial Aid	Increase financial aid resources to better match neighboring states’ investments and improve targeting and outreach amongst vulnerable student populations	\$47.8M	\$143.4M	\$58.2M
Workforce Development Coalition	Leverage best practices and funding from philanthropy, employers, and the state to develop a Workforce Development Coalition driving short-term, industry-aligned workforce training	\$5M	\$55M	\$362.4M
Career Pathways	Fund competitive grant process within CSCU to support more career-aligned & experiential learning, stackable credentials, and better employer engagement	\$25M	\$55M	\$195.7M
TOTAL		\$106M	\$609M	\$1.22B

Through this research, SIP recognizes that while system-wide transformation is not required, there are critical operational improvements needed, including addressing cost drivers, communication gaps, and data infrastructure. CSCU leadership must continue driving these day-to-day enhancements to strengthen overall performance.

Beyond these incremental improvements, CSCU has a unique opportunity to dramatically enhance student success through targeted strategic investments based on national best practices:

- **Dual Enrollment Programs** to increase enrollment and completion rates.
- **Targeted Student Support Services** to improve retention and graduation outcomes.
- **Career Pathways & Workforce Development Coalitions** to better align educational programs with industry needs.
- **Competitive Financial Aid Policies** to ensure Connecticut remains a leader in higher education accessibility.



These investments do not need to be implemented all at once. A phased, data-driven approach—prioritizing investments as resources become available—will ensure each initiative is set up for success. Clear pilot programs with key performance indicators will help refine implementation before scaling system-wide.

Ultimately, full-scale implementation of these initiatives could generate over \$4 billion in lifetime net economic benefit annually, benefiting not only students but also the long-term financial health of the State of Connecticut. These aren't just student-focused reforms—they are smart financial investments that will strengthen Connecticut's workforce, economy, and global competitiveness.



7. GLOSSARY



7. GLOSSARY

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) | Accelerate, Complete, Engage (ACE) City University of New York's (CUNY) ASAP program helps students stay on track and graduate by providing financial, academic, and personal support. As students approach graduation, they receive customized support to transfer to their bachelor's degree or transition into the workforce, depending on their goals. ACE, an adaptation of ASAP, supports bachelor's degree students.

Accessibility Removing systemic barriers to enable students from all walks of life, including people of color, people with disabilities, and first-generation college students, access to higher education.

Alliance Districts Comprised of 36 of the lowest-performing school districts in Connecticut with at least 1,000 students (specific criteria outlined in Connecticut General Statute Section 10-262u).

American Job Center (AJC) A collaboration of state, regional, and local organizations that helps prepare and train workers and offers services that help business and industry find talent.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) A \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by Congress to help the country recover from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

Bridge Program Designed to help students ease their transition from high school to college and adapt to academic challenges.

Career Pathways A structured program of education and training that helps students develop skills and credentials for a specific career. Career pathways are designed to align with industry needs and can lead to certificates, degrees, or other credentials.

CBIA A nonprofit organization based in Hartford works with member companies to foster a vibrant business climate and to unlock the state's economic potential.

Cohort-Based Approach/Learning A group of students banded together or treated as a group in a degree program or course of study. Students progress through the curriculum together, essentially acting as a single unit where they learn and collaborate with each other throughout the entire duration of their studies, fostering a strong community and peer support system.

Completion Finishing a set of degree requirements or program requirements by earning a degree, certificate, or license from a college or university.



Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Protects Connecticut’s workers from labor law violations and promotes global economic competitiveness through strengthening the state’s workforce.

Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) Is a system of six public colleges and universities: four state universities, CT State Community College, and Charter Oak State College.

Connecticut State Universities (CSUs) Consists of the four state universities (Central, Southern, Eastern, and Western) along with Charter Oak College.

Connecticut State Community College (CT State) Launched in 2023 as the result of the state’s 12 community colleges consolidating. CT State, the largest community college in New England, has 12 campuses along with satellite locations in every corner of Connecticut.

Credit for Prior Learning Students can earn college credit for prior learning by demonstrating knowledge they gained outside the classroom/traditional academic environment.

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) Is the state's lead agency responsible for strengthening Connecticut’s competitive position in the rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy.

Early College An umbrella term for courses that allow high school students to take college classes online, on campuses or even at their own high school. Credits earned count towards both a high school diploma and college degree.

Economic Mobility The ability to improve one’s economic status over the course of a lifetime.

Enrollment Officially registering and actively attending classes at a college or university. **Part-time** enrollment is less than 12 credit hours per semester and **Full-time** enrollment is 12 or more credits per semester.

Equity A commitment to ensuring access, opportunities, and fair treatment for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or personal circumstances.

Flexible Scheduling Students choose when and how they complete their coursework. This can include class times, learning formats, and enrollment options. This type of scheduling can help students balance work, family, and school commitments.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Employee Is a unit of measurement that represents the number of full-time positions in an organization.



Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Student Is a calculation that combines the number of full-time and part-time students into a single value and is used to measure enrollment and to compare a student's course load to a normal course load.

General Education Credits Required courses that cover a range of subjects and serve as the foundation of an undergraduate degree.

Guided Pathways Advising (GPA) Part of a reform movement that aims to improve college completion rates, GPA helps students make decisions about their academic and career paths and is intended to help students save time and money by not taking extra courses.

High Demand Industries Sectors of the economy with many job openings and a high need for employees such as healthcare, manufacturing, IT, construction and clean energy.

High-Touch Advisory Support A method of engagement that involves building relationships with students and providing proactive support (inclusive of interventions) with regular outreach tailored to the preferences, needs and preferred communication method of each learner.

Incumbent Workers Someone who currently holds a job position or someone who is being trained to keep their current job.

Lifetime Economic Benefit The additional earnings a participant stands to gain over their entire career due to their participation in a program or intervention.

Manufacturing Innovation Fund A Connecticut state program that supports the growth of the advanced manufacturing sector. The fund provides grants and loans to help companies become more competitive, productive, and efficient.

Mary Ann Handley Award (formerly PACT) A program at Connecticut State Community College that helps students pay for tuition and fees. It's also known as the free tuition program at CT State.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) The federal statistical agency responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data on the condition of U.S. education—from early childhood to adult education—to help improve student outcomes.

Non-credit programs Non-credit programs tend to be focused on specific workforce skills and are short term, with very few lasting longer than a year. They include classroom instruction, but often also include lab, shop or clinical hours. Students in these programs may attain a non-credit-bearing certificate or the contact hours needed to take a professional licensure exam.



Office of Workforce Strategy An executive branch that serves as the administrative staff to the Governor's Workforce Council. Their mission is to build the systems, teams, and approaches that will make Connecticut a talent environment that attracts and motivates students, career builders, and companies alike.

Pell-Grant Recipients Are students with exceptional financial need, who have not earned their first bachelor's degree, or who are enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs, through participating institutions.

Private College/University Often operate as an educational nonprofit organization. It does not receive its primary funding from a state government. Private schools generally are smaller than public schools and have smaller class sizes than public schools.

Public College/University Is primarily funded by a state government. It is generally larger than private schools and have larger class sizes.

Remediation Developmental courses in reading, writing, and mathematics that prepare students to complete standard degree requirements.

Regional Sector Partnerships Are a collaboration of employers within a specific industry sector or cluster, working with government, education, workforce development, and other organizations in a shared regional labor market to address workforce needs and improve industry competitiveness.

Retention Sometimes referred to as persistence, is the percentage of students who are still attending their courses once they are enrolled. It is often measured in return rates from one year to another.

Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program This need-based scholarship is awarded to Connecticut residents who file a FAFSA and meet a certain expected family contribution (EFC) threshold that is determined annually.

Stackable Credentials A series of short-term credentials that build on each other to help people advance in their careers. They can include certificates, technical certifications, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. They create opportunities to advance in one's career path and exit into the workforce at any point.

Student Supports A range of services designed to overcome both academic and nonacademic barriers to students' educational and life success.

Systemic Barriers Structural obstacles within society (policies, practices, or attitudes) that prevent individuals or groups, particularly marginalized communities, from accessing opportunities and resources.



Traditional Student Population Typically a full-time undergraduate between the ages of 18 and 24 who enrolls in college directly after high school.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services *to* succeed in the labor market.

Work Based Learning (WBL) Is a structured program that connects classroom learning to real-world workplace experiences.

Workforce Development Boards Connecticut's (WDBs) are regional boards that help improve employment, training, and earnings in the state. They work with local organizations, the state Department of Labor, and other state agencies.



8. ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT PARTNERS



8. ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT PARTNERS

Social Impact Partners is committed to changing inequitable systems and catalyzing positive social change by amplifying the impact of Connecticut leaders across nonprofit, government, education, and business organizations.

Our volunteer partners and staff leverage their time, expertise, resources and networks to provide pro bono thought partnership and capacity-building services in education and workforce development.

Our Vision

A thriving Connecticut where every person has equitable access to a high-quality education and a sustainable livelihood.

Core Project Team



Chris Rivers
Director
Team Lead



Alycia Angus
Director
Career Pathways



Tricia Hyacinth
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Daniel Curtis
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Governor's Fellow



Robert Jones
Strategy and Finance
Advisor



Appendix A. Net Economic Benefit Calculation Assumptions

Table 19. Drivers of Economic Benefit

Investment Area	Drivers of Economic Benefit
Dual Enrollment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased lifetime earnings (compared to High School grads) from incremental college grads who would not otherwise have attended and graduated from college - blended between Associates and Bachelors graduates 2. Reduced need for state/federal support of college grads vs high school grads (Social Services Savings)
Student Success - ACT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased lifetime earnings (compared to High School grads) from incremental college grads who would not otherwise have attended and graduated from college - Associates for ACT-A and Bachelors for ACT-B 2. Reduced need for state/federal support of college grads vs high school grads (Social Services Savings)
Financial Aid	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased lifetime earnings (compared to High School grads) from incremental college grads who would not otherwise have attended and graduated from college 2. Reduced need for state/federal support of college grads vs high school grads (Social Services Savings) 3. Focus on 4-years
Workforce Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased lifetime earnings (compared to high school grads) from workers who go through these programs and/or each certificate
Career Pathways	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased lifetime earnings (compared to non-career pathways majors) from workers who go through these programs and/or each certificate

Table 20. Increase in Annual Earnings Over Connecticut High School Graduates

	2022	Inflation-Adjusted
Associate's Degree	\$8,099	\$9,091
Bachelor's Degree	\$33,987	\$38,152

Source: The CT Conference of Independent Colleges

Inflation-adjustment via https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm



Table 21. Social Services Savings Multiplier Calculation
(economic value of savings realized as a percent increase on earnings)

Annual Amounts Per Graduate (Colorado Baseline)	
Total Increased Earnings	\$23,978
Medicaid Savings	\$667
Corrections Savings	\$253
Medicare Savings	\$310
Welfare Savings	\$56
Food Stamp Savings	\$308
Disability Savings	\$41
Total	\$25,613
Savings % increased on Earnings (Social Services Multiplier)	7%

Source: APA Consulting, Colorado Concurrent Enrollment Return on Investment and Cost Model, September 29, 2020
(<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED608037.pdf>)

1. Early College

Table 22. Postsecondary Matriculation and Completion Expected

Group	Population	Matriculation Rates	Enrollees	Addl. Enrollees	Completion Rates	Completions	Addl. Degrees	Addl. Degree Rate
Without EC	16,965	52%	8,822		38%	3,352		
With EC	16,965	77%	13,063	4,241	57%	7,446	4,094	24%

Source: APA Consulting, Colorado Concurrent Enrollment Return on Investment and Cost Model, September 29, 2020
(<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED608037.pdf>)



Table 23. Weighted Average Salary Increase – Early College Incremental Graduates

	Enrollments 2022-2023	Increased Annual Earnings / grad
CT State	50,788	\$9,091
CSU	31,135	\$38,152
Weighted Average		\$20,136

Source: CSCU

Assuming early college incremental graduates CT State/CSU enrollment split mirror overall CSCU enrollments

2. Student Supports

Table 24. Share of ACT Graduates Attributable to Program

	Share Attributable to Program	Rationale
ACT-A Associate's	50%	Historically, CUNY ASAP achieved a three-year graduation rate of 53%, more than double the 25% rate, meaning that 50% of forecasted ACT-A graduates would not have graduated if not for the program
ACT-B Bachelor's	30%	The two earliest cohorts at John Jay College show that ACE increased four-year graduation rates to 59.0% from 41.5%, meaning that approximately 30% of forecasted ACT-B graduates would not have graduated if not for the program

Source: MDRC Analysis (<https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/increasing-community-college-graduation-rates-proven-model>)

3. Increased Financial Aid

Table 25. Increase in CSU Graduates Due to Increased Financial Aid

	Value	Rationale
Annual CSU Graduates	5,028	CSU 2023 Enrollment Figures; assume as baseline and do not forecast any changes



Increase in CSU Graduates	4%	“Students who receive even modest grants are more likely to enroll and persist in college. Specifically, rigorous research evidence finds that an additional \$1,000 of grant aid may increase college enrollment by 4 percentage points.” Ramped up from 0% over four years
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*Source: Education Northwest, <https://educationnorthwest.org/insights/expanding-college-access-promising-strategies-boost-students-financial-aid-completion>

4. Workforce Development Coalition

Table 26. Increase in Annual Earnings Over Connecticut High School Graduates from Short-Term Certificate Programs

Variable	Value
Median CT High School Grad. Salary – 2023	\$41,610
Inflation-adjusted	\$46,719
Increase Due to Certificate (%)**	10%
Earnings Increase Due to Certificate	\$4,672

Source: *The CT Conference of Independent Colleges

Inflation-adjustment via https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

**Urban Institute, https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103370/should-the-federal-government-fund-short-term-postsecondary-certificate-programs_0_0.pdf

US Career Institute: <https://www.uscareerinstitute.edu/blog/how-much-more-high-school-graduates-earn-than-non-graduates>

5. Career Pathways

Table 27. Increase in Annual Earnings For Career Pathways Participants

Variable	Value
Median CT High School Grad. Salary – 2022*	\$41,610
Inflation-adjusted	\$46,719
Average Earnings Increase**	29%
Earnings Increase Due Career Pathways Programming	\$13,548

Source: * The CT Conference of Independent Colleges



Inflation-adjustment via https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

Source: ** <https://www.ppic.org/publication/career-pathways-and-economic-mobility-at-californias-community-colleges/>
(excluding short-term trainings)