

California is Failing Adult Learners; Harming Today's and Future Workforce



Affordable and Flexible 100% Online College Programs Are Key to Opening the Door to Higher Education for Californians with Disabilities

California is last in the nation for adults in need of education... We Can Do Better

- California ranks last in the nation with over half of adults (57%) needing more adult education according to a 2018-2019 Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey of adults 18-65 with less than an associate degree and who were not currently enrolled in college courses.
- California faces a shortfall of over two million degrees and certificates to meet employers' needs and promote economic mobility for its residents. [Source](#)
- 64% of California adult learners have some college, but no degree – while over a third of California adult learners wanted to pursue adult education, but never got the chance.

Increased access to flexible online courses is key to helping more students with disabilities return or enroll in a college program.

- The single most common reason cited for having stopped pursuing higher education was difficulty balancing studies and work at the same time for adults ages 25 to 64 with some college background but no degree. [Source](#)
- “In the online format, we can make things more accessible to students . . . and the more that we do that proactively, it’s not only benefiting students with disabilities, but all students.” ~Nicholas Gelbar Ph.D., an associate research professor with the Neag School of Education, co-author of a study published in the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, disabled students reported that online education provided an opportunity to learn on their own schedule such as replaying classes, taking notes, and learning materials at their own pace, and improving their classroom experience. [Source](#)
- “The increased use of Zoom and other video conferencing platforms has improved access for students whose disabilities or sensory needs make it difficult to consistently attend class in person.” [Source](#)
- “Now that we’re in this entire Zoom-topia I haven’t been asked to have a buddy Zoom me in at all,” Nate Tilton, a master’s student at University of California, Berkeley, told Inside Higher Ed. Tilton, who uses a power-chair, is a disabled veteran, and often has difficulty maneuvering through campus spaces, recalls the piecemeal way he struggled to have classmates record or stream lectures for him before the pandemic. “When we go back to school am I going to be asked to go back to that?,” he wonders. [Source](#)
- “Another Berkeley student said the consistent online access has proven beneficial when her medical condition worsens and she needs to stay home. Before the pandemic, she would simply miss out on material if professors wouldn’t offer asynchronous or recorded options. “I can’t demonstrate a mastery of material that I was never allowed to learn,” she said, adding that with the flexibility afforded by the pandemic, she “[has] actually never done so well in [her] classes before.” [Source](#)
- Only one-third of enrolled disabled students graduate from a four-year institution within eight years of the first enrollment ([Source](#)) and only 41% of disabled students who are enrolled in two-year schools graduate within eight years. [Source](#)

Join CAL Network: Support Creating New Higher Educational Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

CAL Network (California Adult Learners Network) is a coalition advocating for a new state grant program for California adult learners who need financial support and the flexibility of online courses to attain higher education for more lucrative and rewarding careers while strengthening California’s skilled workforce. For more information, go to www.CAL-Network.org.