



FOUR REASONS

Why California's Community Colleges Need Parents/Families as Educational Partners

A solution for increasing community college persistence,
transfer & completion rates

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Abstract

Decades of research affirm that when parents and family influencers are cultivated as educational partners, college students succeed and graduate. Yet, parents and family members are missing from the current student success equation used by most community colleges.

California’s community colleges are employing effective institutional strategies to improve college completion rates for all students. As a result, the number of students completing certificates, degrees and credentials is at an all-time high. However, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office estimates the system will need to increase this number by 20% to meet the state’s future workforce needs.

Moreover, the California Community Colleges will implement the student-centered funding formula which ties the state budget allocation to positive student learning outcomes. The new funding formula rewards colleges that implement new research-based solutions

that improve student success. Even with the system’s success to date, new strategies are needed to improve persistence, transfer and completion rates.

The funding formula rewards colleges that implement new research-based solutions that improve student success.

Positive learning outcomes occur when parents and family members are proactively engaged and given the resources to be educational partners. There is a direct correlation between parent/family engagement and higher GPAs, persistence and graduation rates. ■

California Community College’s New Student-Centered Funding Formula

	2018-19	2019-20*	2020-21*
Base Allocation			
Dollars per Credit FTES	\$3,727	\$3,387	\$3,046
Basic Allocation	See Note	See Note	See Note
Supplemental Allocation - Dollars per Point	\$919	\$919	\$919
Student Success Allocation - Dollars per Point	\$440	\$660	\$880
Student Success Equity Allocation - Dollars per Point	\$111	\$167	\$222

*These totals will also be adjusted by the changes in the cost-of-living in those years. Note: These amounts will be calculated based on the numbers of colleges and comprehensive centers consistent with the current formula.

Source: California Community College Chancellor’s Office, Overview of the Student-Centered Funding Formula, August 27, 2018

The Old Retention & Completion Paradigm

The body of research exploring the positive role parents/family influencers play in impacting college student learning outcomes is a new and growing field.

Outdated model

From the 1970s through the early 1990s, Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure was the predominant framework used by campuses to better understand the factors contributing to student success. The model asserted that students needed to detach from their parents/family to succeed in college. It also emphasized that academic and social integration were essential for persistence and completion.

"Helicopter" parents

As tuition and fees began to soar with decreasing state funding in the mid-1990s, parents became more financially invested in the success of their students. Fearing that parent relations programs would increase "helicopter" parent intrusion, some higher education institutions continued to keep parents at bay.



Parents as donors

Others realized that these enthusiastic parents could be cultivated as donors -- a solution to close the funding gap left by diminishing state investments in public higher education. By the mid-1990s, parent relations programs gained popularity in four-year institutions. Not surprising, 85% of the programs raised funds but were not designed to encourage direct involvement by parents in their student's education.

Eight-five percent of the parent/family programs are housed in Advancement Offices to raise funds and recruit volunteers, not to encourage direct involvement by parents in their student's education.

Academic Integration



Earning good grades, accessibility of faculty and use of academic and student services.

Social Integration



Sense of community, involvement on campus and forming mature adult relationships.

First-generation college students

As greater numbers of first-generation students entered higher education in the late 1990s, researchers began to explore the positive correlation between parent/family engagement and student success.

Students earn higher grades, persist, transfer and graduate when parents/family are engaged proactively and are given the tools to be educational partners.

Many community colleges are not leveraging parent/family engagement as a student success strategy. ■



A New Paradigm

A new paradigm is emerging that recognizes the need to cultivate parents/family members as educational partners.

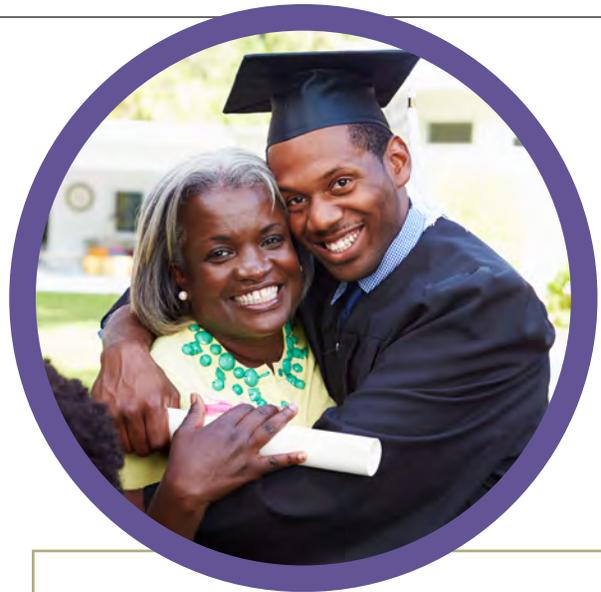
In 2007, Tinto's model was revised to acknowledge the importance of considering family influences on college success. The research attests that parents/families are vital to student success. Regardless of their educational background or socio-economic status, parents/families transfer essential social capital which promote academic and social integration.

Better academic & social integration

Numerous studies have now explored the correlation between proactive parent/family engagement and student success. Parent/family engagement is not only desirable but necessary for students to succeed in higher education. (Hamilton, 2016).

Parent/family engagement correlates to positive academic outcomes, student engagement and psycho-social adjustment. Family emotional support is an important predictor of student success, including grades, credit accumulation and persistence, especially for first-generation and low-income students.

In addition, when parents/families are cultivated as educational partners, they can help institutions to determine when to intervene to keep students on track for graduation. "Since students communicate with their families frequently, and often turn to them for support, parents may be more likely to detect academic, social and emotional challenges." (Roksa & Kinsley, 2018).



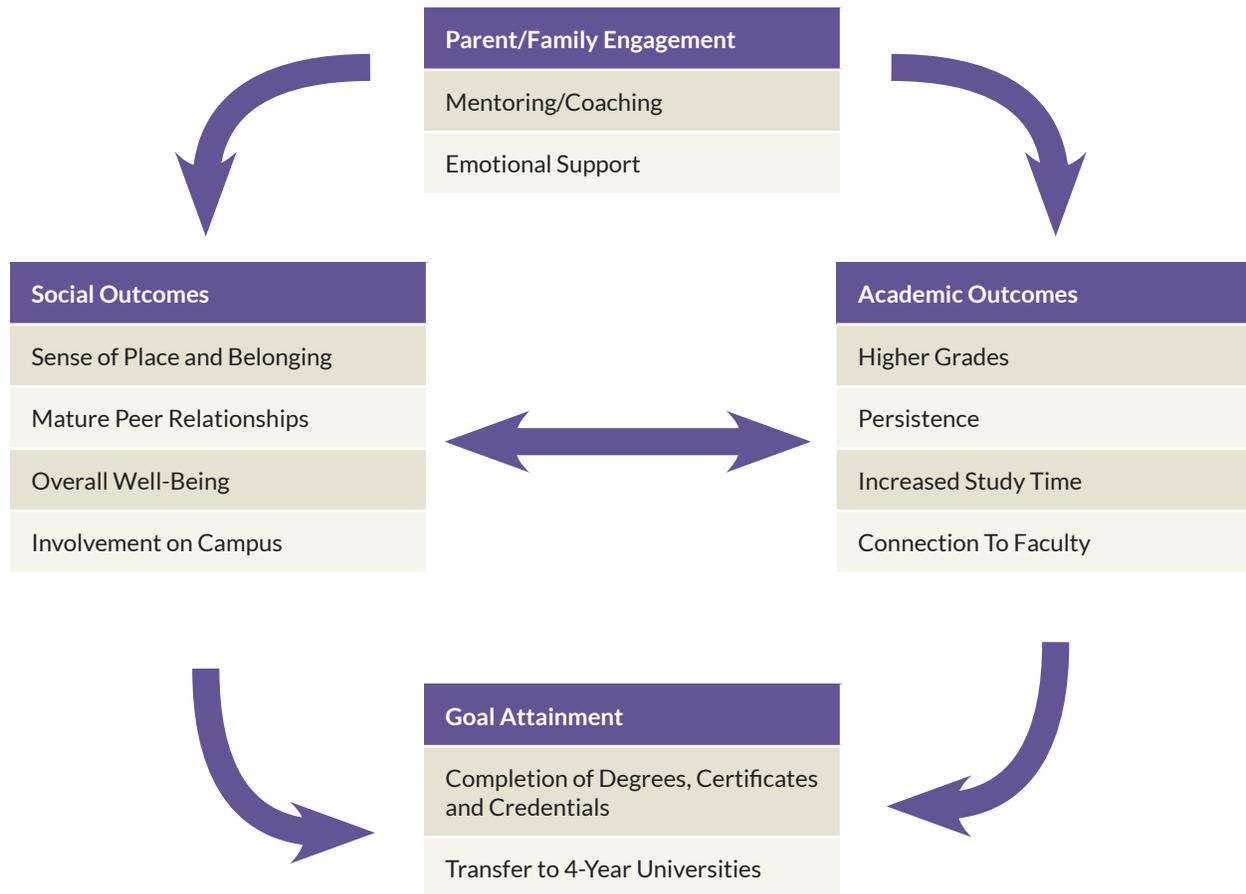
The research attests that parents/families are vital to student success.

"When students reported receiving more emotional support from their families, they were more likely to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher, accumulate at least 24 credits, and persist through the second year of college."

(Roksa & Kinsley, 2018).

Parent/Family Engagement Conceptual Model

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Interdependence vs. detachment

The latest research debunks the detachment theory. Students with strong parent/family attachments have increased academic and social self-sufficiency. For Latino, Asian and Asian Pacific Islanders, family and college are inexplicably linked.

Parents and family members are in the perfect position to serve as mentor/coaches, guiding students toward campus resources and learning opportunities that enable them to identify their strengths and select a major that will lead to a rewarding career.

More outreach

With each passing year, more four-year universities are embracing the value of parent/family engagement. Some have full-time staff dedicated to working with parents and families. A growing number email the campus newsletter or have added parent/family pages to the campus website. However, these communications tools do not generally contain the information parents and family need to help their student succeed.

Many community colleges have not embraced the value of parent/family engagement on this scale. ■

Community College Solutions

State and federal categorical funds are available to fund strategic parent/family education and engagement programs for first-generation students and those from under-represented communities. Yet, despite the availability of funding and the body of research supporting the value of engaging parents and family members as educational partners, community colleges have been slow to include parent/family engagement as a student success strategy.

Many community colleges are not cultivating parents and family influencers as educational partners even though they are uniquely suited to guide and mentor their students.

Focus on access and readiness

Many community colleges offer training programs, seminars and events that focus on access, readiness and financial aid awareness for the parents/family of the children attending local K-12 school districts. Campuses also host open houses and tours to introduce parents/family to the campus community.

Limited or no support after enrollment

In most cases, once students are admitted, the old paradigm prevails. Parents/family are not cultivated as educational partners even though they are uniquely suited to mentor their student.

A small number of campuses offer educational programs or engagement opportunities for targeted populations, such as the parents of students participating in EOPS. These programs are rarely scaled to serve the broader campus community. ■



Four Benefits To Cultivating Parents and Families as Educational Partners

1

All students earn better grades, persist, transfer and graduate when parents/family are educational partners.

California Community Colleges offer best-practice programs and services to support persistence, transfer and completion. These strategies are making a difference for many students. But for some, on-campus supports are not enough, especially for first-generation college students who benefit most from strong parent and family attachment.

Parents and families are the missing ingredient in the community college student success equation. To meet the state's workforce needs and increase degree, certificate and credential completion rates by 20% over the next seven years, campuses should engage parents/families now and enlist their help to support their student's success.

- “Family emotional support plays an important role in fostering positive academic outcomes.” (Roksa & Kinsley, 2018).
- “Parents’ support can affect student’s college success regardless of whether the parent attended college.” (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017).
- “Family emotional support was related to the amount of time students spent studying and to the extent of their engagement with faculty. In addition, family emotional support related to students’ psychological well-being and sense of belonging.” (Roksa & Kinsley, 2018).

On-campus supports are not enough, especially for first-generation college students who benefit most from strong parent and family attachment.



“Family emotional support plays an important role in fostering positive academic outcomes.”

(Roksa & Kinsley, 2018).

2

Non-college educated parents/family can help their student succeed with the right social capital.

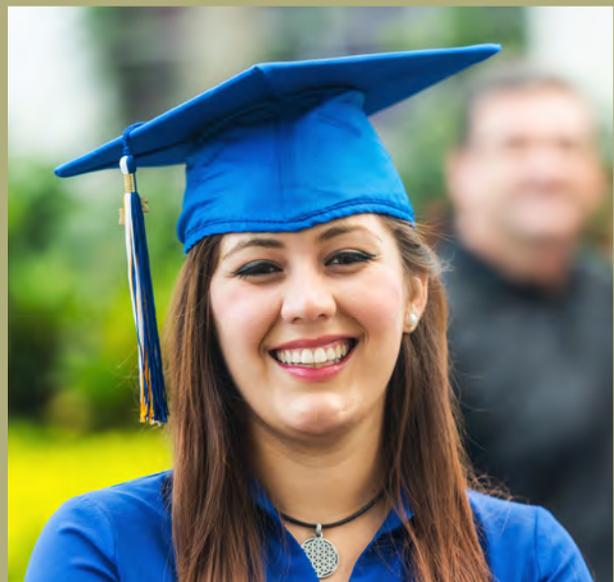
The research overwhelmingly demonstrates that while the parents/family members of first-generation students provide invaluable emotional support and encouragement (which is vital to social integration and confidence), they lack the knowledge and tools to help their students navigate college and make academic decisions that lead to rewarding careers.

A proactive, strategic parent/family education and engagement effort will equip parents/family with the information they need to be effective educational partners.

Community colleges have tried to address this social capital gap by providing workshops and support to incoming students/families. But, most colleges stop there. A proactive, strategic parent/family education and engagement effort will equip these parents/family members with the information they need to be effective educational partners.

- “Some of their (first-generation students) difficulties in both college choice and college persistence may be related to their levels of social capital. Social capital consists of the formal and informal networks of people and information that can be used to improve one’s socio-economic status.” (Duggan, 2004-05).

- “The parents of first-generation college students may be at a disadvantage in their ability to advise their student about college processes because they have a different set of social capital than the parents of second-generation college students.” (Duggan, 2004-05).
- “Students whose parents attended college begin college with more understanding of higher education than do first-generation students. Parents pass on knowledge along with advice and emotional support that help their children when they encounter new challenges.” (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017).



3

Students want their parents and family members as educational partners. Parents and family want to help.

College is a time of transition for students and families. Many parents and family members want to be more involved. But, they don't know how to help.

Moreover, today's traditional full-time community college student shares common characteristics with other millennials. As a group, millennials have closer emotional bonds to their parents/family. Community colleges can help students and their families navigate this time of change and opportunity.

- “Students reported that their parents play an important part in supporting their college education. They reported that their parents are most helpful, not by mandating particular academic or career choices, but by helping to guide students’ decision-making process.” (Palbusa & Gauvain, 2017).
- “Parents are genuinely interested in their college student’s development and are seeking knowledge on the appropriate ways to encourage and guide their child when navigating the college experience.” (Wartman & Savage, 2008).
- “Students yearn for close contact with their parents during college for reasons of receiving support and reassurance not necessarily out of a dire need to have their parents make decisions for them or resolve academic challenges on their behalf.” (Weintraub, 2016).

“Students describe their parents as ‘reliable advisors’ ... students describe their parents as guiding their decision-making process, rather than meddling or intervening, thereby suggesting an interdependent relationship dynamic as opposed to overreliance.”

(Weintraub, 2016).



4

Parent/family engagement advances the social mission and workforce goals of the California Community Colleges.

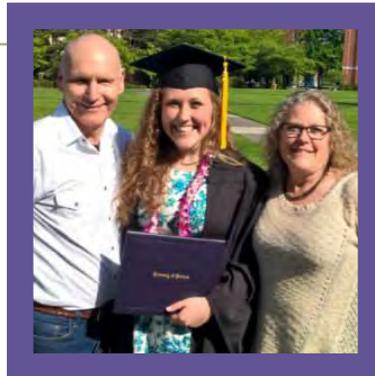
When parents/family members are given the resources to be effective mentors/coaches, they help guide students to opportunities that lead to jobs after graduation.

- “Continued parental involvement and investments through college and beyond, may play a crucial role in helping graduates translate their degrees into desirable employment and in producing economic security in the future.” (Hamilton, Roksa & Nielsen, 2018).

- Regarding the employability of graduates after college ... “Their success was partly a function of access to university resources – for example, special career placement services and social ties formed in college – as well as crucial parent guidance throughout college.” (Hamilton, Roksa & Nielsen, 2018).
- “Parents who had previous college experiences directed their children toward academic and on-campus activities, played a role in the selection of the student’s major, and guided the student toward career-related learning opportunities to increase employability.” (Hamilton, Roksa & Nielsen, 2018). ■

“Continued parental involvement and investments through college and beyond, may play a crucial role in helping graduates translate their degrees into desirable employment and in producing economic security in the future.”

(Hamilton, Roksa & Nielsen, 2018).



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Parent Education Partners, LLC, teams with community colleges to improve persistence, transfer and completion rates through proactive parent/family education and engagement. We create customized culturally-relevant research-based solutions to help close achievement and completion gaps for first-generation college students and those from under-represented communities. We also endeavor to strengthen your relationship with parents/families to support your campus' advocacy, marketing and philanthropy goals.

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