



# Public Colleges and Universities

The terms “college,” “university,” and “higher education” all refer to formal schooling beyond high school. In California, students may continue their education after high school in three different public education systems: the University of California (10 campuses), the California State University (23 campuses), and the California Community Colleges (115 campuses). These public institutions are supported with funds supplied by the state legislature, student fees, and private donations.

The framers of the 1849 State Constitution dreamed of creating a university that would “contribute even more than California’s gold to the glory and happiness of advancing generations.” Their thinking led to the creation of the University of California in Berkeley, which first accepted students in 1869. San Jose State, however, is actually the oldest public university in California. It was founded in 1857 to train teachers for the expanding frontier. The University of California and California State University systems have grown into two of the largest and most distinguished systems of higher education in the world. In 1907 the state legislature started a third set of schools to create opportunities for more students and training to support many different industries. The California Community College system became the largest system of higher education in the nation, serving 2.1 million students per year.

These public institutions, as well as many private colleges and universities not shown on the map, are open to all who want to learn. They do have entrance requirements and application processes, so study hard and find the place that is right for you.

**Image below:** San Diego State University received over 94,000 applications for admission in 2019, the most of any university in the state. SDSU is also the home of the California Geographic Alliance.

