

CSU Student Success Network

Middle Leadership Academy Primer

California State University (CSU) makes a daily effort at ensuring the timely completion of a rigorous, quality degree in preparation for a lifetime of achievements.

The CSU defines **student success** as:

- Improving graduation rates and ensuring more students get a degree sooner.
- Reducing the number of students who drop out of college before graduating.
- Making college more affordable to more Californians.
- Helping more prospective students understand what it takes to earn their degree.

Resource: [California State University, Student Success](#)

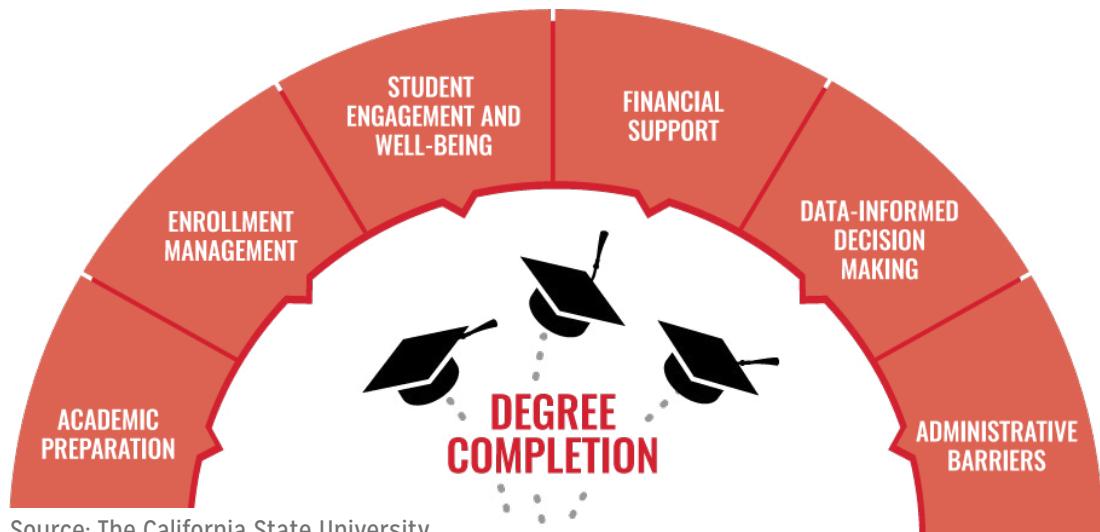
CSU Student Success Priority Initiatives

Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025)

Goal 1: Increase Graduation Rates

Goal 2: Eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps.

To accomplish these goals the CSU is focused on improving student success through innovation, removing barriers, and strategic thinking. The CSU has identified [six operational priorities](#) for effective implementation.



Source: The California State University

Academic Preparation: Creating a new approach to academic preparation through a series of academic and student support programs.

Enrollment Management: Enhancing the quality of the student experience and the alignment of course availability with student need.

Student Engagement and Well-being: Support for CSU Campuses in the development of wrap-around services to address students' comprehensive care needs.

Financial Support: Investing in the expansion of financial support structures beyond traditional financial aid to ensure economic status does not stall students' success.

Data-Informed Decision Making: Using data at both the system and campus level to inform the development and advancement of effective student support programs.

Administrative Barriers: Modernizing administrative processes by discontinuing policies and procedures identified as impediments to student success.

Close the Equity Gap

With the COVID-19 pandemic and inequitable impacts across communities of color and moderate-income families, the CSU seeks to urgently close the gaps that exist between underserved students and their peers across the system. Therefore, in addition to the initial goals of GI 2025, the CSU has identified [five equity goals and priorities](#) to address the gap.

Re-engage and Re-enroll Underserved Students: Efforts focusing on re-engaging with students of color, Pell-grant recipients, and first-generation students to support their re-enrollment to the CSU and meet their academic goals.

Expand Credit Opportunities: Funding to support students falling behind in academic credits and help facilitate timely degree completion (i.e., summer session and intersession).

Access to a Digital Degree Planner: Digital degree planner is accessible and available to all students.

Eliminate Barriers to Graduation: Campus review of practices to eliminate barriers to timely graduation.

Promote Equitable Learning and Reduce DFW Rates: Addressing equitable learning practices for classes with persistent high failure rates (D, F, or Withdrawal) and providing opportunities for additional learning when needed.

Resource: [California State University, Graduation Initiative 2025](#)

The CSU Student Success Network (Network)

In support of the various student success efforts at every level within the CSU, the CSU Student Success Network (Network) serves as a complement to the many ongoing efforts, offering forums for sustained, cross-campus, cross-role, evidence-based, professional learning opportunities. Additionally, the Network strives to support meaningful connections across and within campuses that help bridge professional roles and responsibilities.

The Network, under the support and direction of its Advisory Board and the [Education Insights Center \(EdInsights\)](#), provides oversight and direction for all Network activities and program strands for Applied Research, Convenings, Student Success Conference, Middle Leadership Academy, and the Equity in Action Grant Program.

The Network's mission is to support faculty, staff, and administrators as they embrace their power to imagine, plan for, and implement systems and practices that center equitable student learning, engagement, progression, and completion. This is accomplished through the Networks efforts at **prioritizing equity and supporting middle leaders**.

The Network defines **middle leaders** as colleagues in educational settings that are central to change management. Middle leaders serve as key stakeholders for change, who are or have the potential to be well-informed about and engaged in the change process; and can encourage colleagues to join efforts to improve equitable student learning and success.

In the CSU, these middle leader positions can include faculty, department chairs, deans and associate/assistant deans, directors and associate/assistant directors, student services staff, and institutional researchers, among others.

Resource: [CSU Student Success Network](#)

Middle Leadership Academy (Academy)

The Academy is an academic year long professional development opportunity that creates space for evidence-based, collaborative learning, and leadership development. While in the past the Academy has asked teams to come in with a project that they would like to pursue, we are shifting our approach for the foreseeable future. We still will support campus-based teams consisting of CSU students, staff, faculty, researchers, and administrators in a collaborative and supportive environment to work on common equity issues related to student learning, engagement, progression, and completion for new majority students. We are asking teams to identify challenges the institution is having meeting the needs of new majority students and to use the time in the Academy to explore possible solutions/approaches and to develop a project that will leverage different members of the campus community and develop



their leadership skills. The Academy serves to motivate participants to “lead from the middle” as they explore and apply new strategies that focus on closing equity gaps.

Academy Core Values

- Equity
- Knowledge
- Assessment
- Relationships
- Leadership

This program offers a professional development opportunity that was created by middle leaders, for middle leaders. The Academy’s core values and pedagogical approach guide our learning outcomes and objectives.

The Academy’s pedagogical approach to participant learning, engagement, and development is grounded in **Problem-based Learning (PBL)**. Problem-based learning uses a participant-centered approach where participants learn skills, practices, and strategies for working in groups to problem solve divisional, campus, or system-based problems. The Academy utilizes a problem-based learning project that involves participants pitching ideas and creating a plan to solve a common equity issue.

Overall, the **Middle Leadership Academy** is a program developed by leaders for leaders acquiring the **knowledge** to operationalize and **assess** change for the advancement of **equity** through campus **engagement** efforts and collaborative **relationships**.

Resources: [CSU Student Success Network](#), [Middle Leadership Academy](#) and [National Library of Medicine](#)



California State University, Sacramento
Education Insights Center/CSU Student Success Network
6000 J Street, MS 6147
Sacramento, CA 95819
studentsuccessnetwork@edinsightscenter.org
<http://csustudentsuccess.net>