

CENTRAL VALLEY HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

Background

Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC), a group of 21 public and private, 2 and 4 year colleges spanning an entire region of California, the San Joaquin Valley, is made up of 11 community colleges, 3 state colleges, one campus of the University of California, 3 private colleges and universities, and 1 technical career college, was founded in 2000 to increase higher education attainment in the 10-county area including Fresno, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Kings, Tulare, and Kern, the consortium is led by the Chancellors and Presidents of Central Valley colleges and universities and its mission states: “We unite to increase higher education participation and success in the Central Valley.”

The Central Valley faces major challenges in fulfilling this mission – and in developing a highly skilled and educated workforce to be competitive in an increasingly global and knowledge-based economy. Education is a critical driver of long-term regional economic growth and on a personal level it is a major determinant in an individual’s success. But in the Central Valley, too many students must overcome the many hurdles of less comfortable circumstances to attend college. A recent study indicated that Central Valley students of all ethnicities lag behind their counterparts in the State in college enrollment and completion rates. This is particularly so for Hispanic students who comprise 43% of the graduating high school seniors, and therefore represent a sizeable portion of the future workforce of the Valley.

The Central Valley Higher Education Consortium has established a coalition with the **California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley**, established in 2005 by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to achieve the brightest possible future for the region, economically, environmentally and socially. Bringing elected official and civic leaders to work collaboratively to achieve a prosperous economy, quality environment and social equity, the Partnership has developed six major goals. The first of these: “Grow a Diversified, Globally-Competitive Economy Supported by a Highly-Skilled Workforce” together with its attendant Workgroup Recommendations on Higher Education and Workforce Development, has directly shaped the strategic plan of the Consortium.

Recognizing the region’s need to increase the number of students accessing and completing post-secondary education, as well as to develop a workforce qualified for the jobs in the 21st century’s knowledge-based economy, the consortium’s strategic plan, for 2008-11 sets forth five goals related to these needs:

1. Building and nurturing a college going culture in which higher percentage of Valley residents obtain associates and baccachelors degrees.
2. Enhance cooperation between 2 year and 4 year institutions to increase the student transfer rate
3. Establish an effective regional policy voice and advocacy for higher education in the Central Valley
4. Provide programs meeting the workforce preparation needs of valley employers
5. Support our member institutions through appropriate collaborative initiatives including professional development and data collection and analysis

For more information see:

Central Valley Higher Education Consortium: <http://www.collegenext.org>

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley: <http://www.sjvpartnership.org/>