

California's Financially Safer Colleges

What is a "financially safer" college?

A college that supports its students better than other similar colleges in terms of **cost, graduation rate, debt burden, and mobility**, based on our analysis of College Scorecard data. [Click here for a detailed explanation of the data](#) we use and how we analyze it.



Families with low to moderate income pay less out of pocket



Low-income and students of color graduate at similar rates as their counterparts



Low-income students leave with less debt and are better able to repay their loans



Low-income students recoup the costs of their degree faster

Should I only apply to financially safer colleges?

uAspire strongly recommends that every student apply to at least *one* financially safer college. We also encourage you to include a variety of different types of colleges on your list.

What's the difference between community colleges and the other colleges & universities on this list?

Community colleges are sometimes referred to as "2-year colleges". They offer Associates degrees ("2-year degree") along with certificates. Public and private colleges & universities are often referred to as "4-year schools". They offer Bachelor's degrees ("4-year degree") and also advanced degrees. Students pursuing a Bachelor's degree often begin at community college and then transfer to another college/university to complete their program.

What's the difference between public and private colleges & universities?

Public and private colleges & universities differ in many ways, but most notably in cost of attendance. Among private colleges, those that meet full financial need are more likely to be affordable, but more difficult to get into.

Public financially safer community colleges

Bay Area			
Canada College	Skyline College	City College of San Francisco	Los Medanos College
College of San Mateo	Contra Costa College	Santa Rosa Junior College	Diablo Valley College



Scan or [click](#) to view all financially safer colleges in the West on a map, along with their average net prices

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Public financially safer community colleges

Northern Coast & Inland	Feather River Community College
Shasta Community College	College of the Redwoods

Greater Sacramento & Gold Country	Solano Community College
Napa Valley College	Butte College
Sacramento City College	Folsom Lake College
Woodland Community College	Cosumnes River College
Sierra College	Yuba College

South Central Coast	
Ventura College	College of the Canyons
Moorpark College	Oxnard College

San Joaquin Valley	
Clovis Community College	Merced College
College of the Sequoias	Porterville College
Fresno City College	Reedley College

San Diego & Imperial Valley	
San Diego Miramar College	San Diego Mesa College
Grossmont College	Imperial Valley College

Central Coast	Chabot College
De Anza College	Las Positas College
Hartnell College	Gavilan College
Foothill College	West Valley College

Los Angeles	
Glendale Community College	West Los Angeles College
El Camino Community College District	Los Angeles Southwest College
Santa Monica College	Pasadena City College

Orange County	Citrus College
Santiago Canyon College	Mt San Antonio College
Irvine Valley College	Cerritos College
Golden West College	Santa Ana College

Inland Empire	Riverside City College
Mt. San Jacinto Community College	Victor Valley College
Norco College	Moreno Valley College



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Public financially safer colleges & universities

University of California	UC Berkeley^	California State University		
UC Davis	UC Irvine^	CSU San Bernardino	Cal State Fullerton	Fresno State
UC Riverside	UC Santa Barbara	Cal State LA	CSU Bakersfield	CSU Northridge
UCLA ^	UC San Diego^	CSU Long Beach	CSU Monterey Bay	Stanislaus State

Private financially safer colleges & universities

College	City	College	City
California Institute of Technology**^	Pasadena	Scripps College*	Claremont
California Lutheran University	Thousand Oaks	Soka University of America	Aliso Viejo
Claremont McKenna College**^	Claremont	Stanford University**^	Stanford
Harvey Mudd College**^	Claremont	Thomas Aquinas College	Santa Paula
La Sierra University	Riverside	University of Redlands	Redlands
Menlo College	Atherton	University of San Diego	San Diego
Occidental College*	LA	University of San Francisco	SF
Pacific Union College	Angwin	University of Southern California**^	Los Angeles
Pitzer College**^	Claremont	University of the Pacific	Stockton
Pomona College**^	Claremont	Westmont College	Santa Barbara
Saint Mary's College of California	Moraga	Whittier College	Whittier

What does it mean if a college has an asterisk (*) or a carat (^) next to it?

Asterisks indicate financially safer colleges that meet students' full financial need, which means they guarantee to provide the full amount of financial aid they determine a student needs. Carats indicate financially safer colleges that have an acceptance rate less than 25% and are highly selective.

Recommendations are current only for 2025-2026 academic year

Source: Based on uAspire's analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard data from Spring 2025 and Third Way's economic mobility index.