

Dual Enrollment in California

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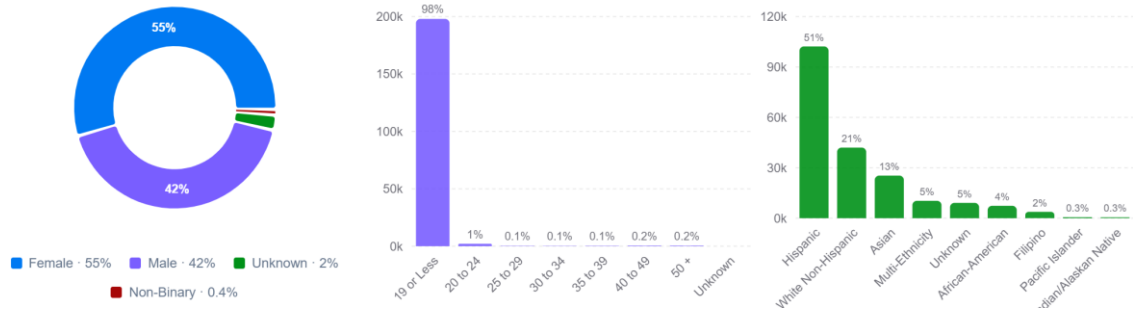
Community college is an opportunity for any individual, especially high school students, throughout the state of California to enroll in and successfully complete college-level courses. By definition, students who successfully pass a course earn college credit that can be applied to a certificate or Associates degree at their 2-year college and/or likely a lower-division Bachelor's degree requirement at their 4-year university.

Dual enrollment (DE) in California is understood as high school students taking college courses at their high school campus, while concurrent enrollment is known as high school students taking college courses at the college campus. Both of these students are known as special admit students in California, which are mostly high school students but can include adult education students as well.

Over the years, special admit students have grown due to the increase in Early College High School, Middle College High School, and College and Career Access Pathways, statutorily defined programs, throughout California. As explained by the Public Policy Institute of California's [report](#) on DE, "Two pieces of legislation—Senate Bill (SB) 379 (2013) and AB 413 (2019)—codified Early College High School (ECHS) and Middle College High School (MCHS) programs, which allow students to earn both a high school diploma and up to two years of college units."

As DE has grown, so has the use of the term "dual enrollment courses." The systemwide California Community College Chancellor's Office mindfully [states](#) "The use of the term 'dual enrollment course' may unintentionally suggest that these courses are less rigorous, which is inaccurate. All courses offered to special admit students are standard college courses that maintain the same academic rigor and expectations as those offered to non-special admit students."

Over the last five academic years, (2021-22 to 2025-26), special admit students have increased from approximately 238,000 in AY21-22 to 329,000 in AY25-26. In fall 2025, over 201,000 were enrolled in at least one California community college course. This fall 2025 cohort of students consisted of 55% identifying as female, 98% being 19 years old or less, and 51% identifying as Hispanic.



DE represents a concerted effort by the state of California, willing K-12 school districts, community college districts, and eager faculty to meet the needs of students where they are, not gate them from college courses with old-age assumptions, explicit and implicit biases, or pay-to-progress external tests. Students want to learn and are marching into college courses now more than ever, with [trends](#) heading in the upward direction. We should welcome them and embrace the opportunity for them to learn and for faculty to teach this dynamic population.

Source: [Dual Enrollment | California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office](#)

Source: [Dual Enrollment in California - Public Policy Institute of California](#) October 2021

Source: [Dual Enrollment in California - Public Policy Institute of California](#) September 2025