

# EDITORIAL: Invest in California's future

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By The Bee Editorial Board



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## FRESNO BEE FILE

Gov. Jerry Brown has been steadfastly consistent in his speeches: California's future and economic prosperity depends on educating and training its diverse young population to compete in a technology-based world economy.

Yet, as the 2014-15 state budget reveals, the governor isn't fully backing his words with tax dollars when it comes to the 23-campus California State University system.

Enrollment growth for this fall has been cut by half, from 20,000 new students to about 10,000, because the CSU allocation was pared by \$100 million from the amount recommended by the Legislature.

This reduction is a clear case of being pennywise and dollar foolish, and slowing California's rebounding economy.

According to the CSU, for every \$1 invested by the state in the campuses, they return \$5.43 for California's economy. All told, CSU-related spending generates more than \$17 billion in economic impact in California and supports 150,000 jobs in the state.

This is precisely the wrong time to restrict the opportunity to attend college, as more and more high school graduates want to further their education so they can grab a piece of the American Dream. The CSU received about 761,000 applications for the fall semester, which was a 2% increase.

Many of these aspiring university students reside here in the central San Joaquin Valley, where there has been a big push to increase participation rates — particularly among students who would be the first in their family to graduate from college.

Our Valley's ability to diversify its agriculture-based economy and make perennial double-digit unemployment numbers a thing of the past is tied to improving educational attainment.

It's worth noting that, after CSU system officials revealed the cut in enrollment growth at Tuesday's Board of Trustees meeting in Long Beach, the Brookings Institution two days later issued a report illuminating the Valley's need for a better educated work force.

According to the Brookings report, about 58% of all health-care workers in the Fresno area lack bachelor's degrees. That is the fifth-highest proportion of workers without bachelor's degrees among the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the United States.

As a consequence, many local health-care workers get stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs, and Valley hospitals and clinics must recruit extensively outside the region to hire people for skilled positions.

But enrolling additional qualified high school students isn't something that should just be happening at Fresno State, CSU Bakersfield and CSU Stanislaus, it applies to the entire system.

We have long supported government investment in education — and future taxpayers — as a wise expenditure of funds.

We shouldn't have to remind the governor that despite reports of California's demise, our state continues to grow in population and in talent.

We need to keep that momentum going by providing more students the opportunity to learn and grow at college, and then flourish in the marketplace.

It's too late to amend the budget for the fall, but Gov. Brown needs to better follow his own formula for elevating California in the next budget go-around.

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