

EDUCATION EQUITY

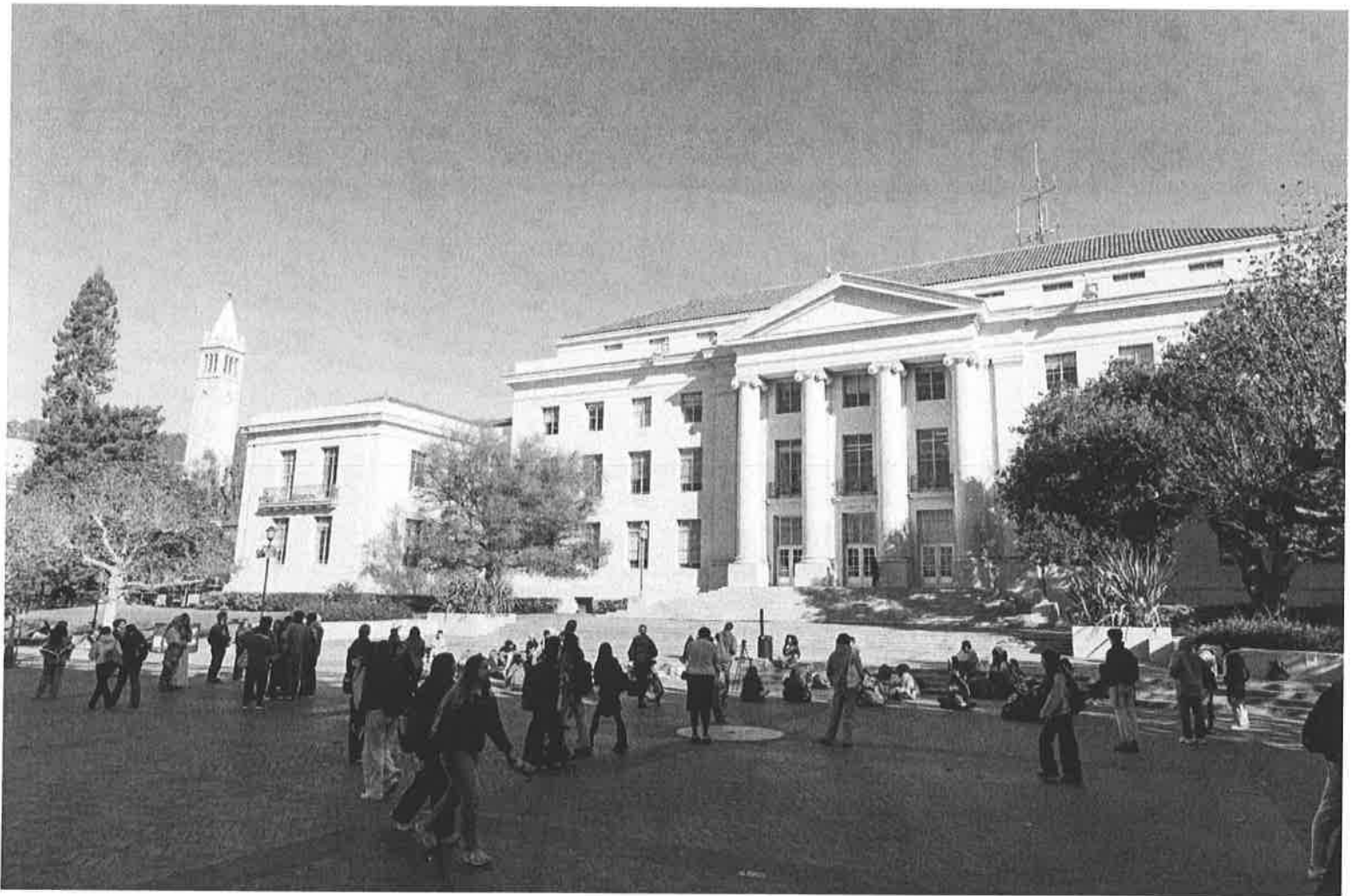
University of California's most selective campuses have increased in-state enrollment

Since the university system agreed in 2022 to a compact with Gov. Newsom, enrollment by Californians is up at Berkeley, UCLA and San Diego.



by **Michael Burke**

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UC Berkeley's Sproul Hall, Dec. 11, 2025. Credit: Estefany Gonzalez for Berkeleyside

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More Californians are attending the University of California than ever before, and it's partly because campuses with the lowest acceptance rates — UC Berkeley, UCLA and UC San Diego — have enrolled thousands of additional in-state students in recent years.

The University of California's nine undergraduate campuses have sought to enroll more California students as part of an agreement with Gov. Gavin Newsom reached in 2022. Under what Newsom called a multiyear compact, he pledged annual increases of 5% in state funding if the university system worked toward meeting a series of goals, including increasing undergraduate enrollment of California residents.

The 2026-27 academic year will be the final year of the compact with Newsom, whose term as governor ends in January.

The deal also called for increased graduation rates, improved affordability and a reduction in the gaps in graduation rates between underrepresented groups, including Black, Latino and Native American students, and their peers.

The University of California is not on track to meet every goal of the compact. For example, the four-year graduation rate for students from underrepresented groups has stayed flat and wide equity gaps still exist.

But The University of California has successfully increased enrollment of California residents, which, in addition to satisfying the compact deal, has also appeased state lawmakers who have long pushed the system to enroll more in-state students.

California resident full-time equivalent enrollment in the University of California

Full-time equivalent (FTE) is the number of units taken by students divided by a full-time course load, which is 45 quarter units or 30 semester units annually.

Source: UC Campuses and UCOP Institutional Research and Academic Planning • Chart by Yuxuan Xie/EdSource

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The University of California estimates that it enrolled 214,732 Californian undergraduates in 2025-2026, up from 195,861 students in 2021-2022, the year before the compact took effect and already above the target the state asked UC to reach by 2026-2027.

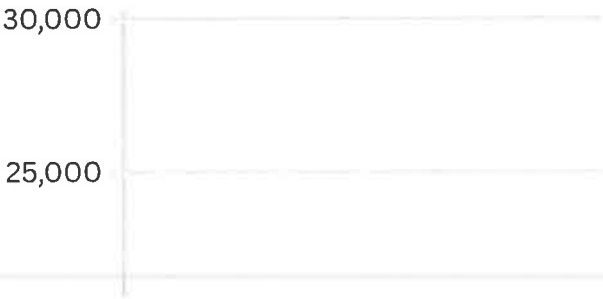
Several campuses contributed to the increase. UC Berkeley, UCLA and UC San Diego each added more than 2,600 California undergraduates between fall 2021 and fall 2025. UC San Diego saw the biggest increase, upping enrollment of Californians by more than 2,800.

At all three campuses, the growth came as California students made up a larger share of incoming freshmen. At UC Berkeley, for example, an average of more than 5,100 first-year Californians enrolled each year from fall 2022 through fall 2025, up from about 4,600 between fall 2018 and fall 2021.

At the same time, the three campuses enrolled fewer students from other states and countries. Overall undergraduate enrollment increased by about 1,300 students at Berkeley, about 1,400 at UCLA and about 2,100 at San Diego.

California resident undergraduate enrollment by University of California campus

Select a UC campus: All



Source: University of California • Chart by Yuxuan Xie/EdSource

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At some campuses, enrollment has flattened, including at UC Merced. In fall 2025, Merced enrolled 129 fewer in-state residents than it did in fall 2021. Merced officials, however, are hopeful that this fall will bring an increase in students.

It’s unclear whether the systemwide growth in California enrollment will continue during the 2026-27 academic year. UC admitted slightly more Californians for fall 2026, but some campuses admitted fewer of them, including Berkeley, Davis and San Diego.

Fall classes begin this week at UC Berkeley and UC Merced and in September at the rest of the campuses.