

Graduation Initiative 2025 Goals CSU San Marcos

Metric	2025 Goal	Most Recent Rate
Freshman 6-Year Graduation	61%	51%
Freshman 4-Year Graduation	30%	14%
Transfer 2-Year Graduation	40%	28%
Transfer 4-Year Graduation	77%	67%
Gap - Underrepresented Minority	0	2 % points
Gap – Pell	0	1 % points

CSU San Marcos Graduation Initiative 2025 Goals FAQ

1. How were the goals derived for each campus?

The 2025 goals for your campus take into account multiple sources of data and information, including:

- Pending shortfalls in California college graduates, according to projections by the Public Policy Institute of California, California Competes, and others.
- National averages of graduation rates.
- Comparisons of student success rates on CSU campuses to those of peer institutions.
- Stretch goals provided by the Presidents for their campuses.
- The Chancellor's commitment to bring achievement gaps to zero by 2025.
- Consideration of campus-level goals on the achievement of system level goal ranges

The 2025 Graduation Initiative Advisory Committee reviewed this information and had lengthy discussions prior to providing guidance that led to the establishment of the methodology described below.

Freshman Rates: For each campus, the top five peer comparators were identified using the College Results Online ("[CRO](#)") web tool developed by the Education Trust. A mean graduation rate (4 year and 6 year) was calculated along with an annual mean rate of change for the graduation rates of the top five peers. These rates were then extrapolated to 2025 using the mean annual rate of graduation rate change.

Transfer Rates: Review of community college transfer outcomes data available from The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at the University of Oklahoma ("[CSRDE](#)") revealed that the California State University exceeds the 75th percentile with regards to two- and four-year outcome rates for ninety-seven non- CSU campuses participating in the CSRDE data collection. All goals are computed as current campus rates extrapolated through 2025.

2. What methodology was used for my campus?

The table on the following page includes a "rationale" column, indicating the methodology that was applied to derive each of your goals:

Metric	2025 Goal	Rationale	Most Recent Rate
Freshman 6-Year Graduation	61%	Floor	51%
Freshman 4-Year Graduation	30%	Floor	14%
Transfer 2-Year Graduation	40%	Floor	28%
Transfer 4-Year Graduation	77%	Floor	67%
Gap - Underrepresented Minority	0		2 % points
Gap – Pell	0		1 % points

As you’ll notice, each proposed goal falls into one of three categories (Mean; Floor; Cap). Listed below are details about how these were established.

Six Year Goal Setting (2019 Freshman cohort)

MEAN – the campus goal is assigned at the extrapolated mean value of the top five peers. This mean top five rate exceeds the Floor assumption but does not exceed the Cap.

FLOOR – campus goal is assigned at the current campus six-year rate (2009 freshman cohort) plus 10 percentage points. The Floor is only applied if the Mean goal is less than the Floor.

CAP – the campus goal is assigned at a value reflecting the current campus six-year rate (2009 freshman cohort) plus 20 percentage points. The Cap is only applied if the mean top five rate exceeds the Cap.

Four Year Goal Setting (2021 Freshman cohort)

MEAN – the campus goal is assigned at the extrapolated mean value of the top five peers. This mean top five rate exceeds the Floor assumption but does not exceed the Cap.

FLOOR – the campus goal is assigned at a value reflecting the higher goal of 30% *or* the current campus four-year rate (2011 freshman cohort) plus 15 percentage points. The Floor is only applied if the mean top five goal is less than 30%.

CAP – the campus goal is assigned at a value reflecting the current campus four-year rate (2011 freshman cohort) plus 25 percentage points. The Cap is only applied if the mean top five rate exceeds the Cap.

Two Year Goal Setting (2023 Transfer cohort)

FLOOR – campus goal is assigned at a value reflecting the higher goal of 23% *or* the current campus two-year rate (2013 transfer cohort) plus 12 percentage points.

Four Year Goal Setting (2021 Transfer cohort)

FLOOR – campus goal is assigned at a value reflecting the higher goal of 60% **or** the current campus four-year rate (2011 transfer cohort) plus 10 percentage points.

3. Why were the minimum and maximum floors and caps applied to the goals?

Because of the variety of institutional profiles within the CSU system, we found that no single methodology produced reasonable or realistic targets for all six goals on all 23 campuses. So although the methodology for each set of campus goals was applied the same way, some goals were adjusted to arrive at a reasonable balance of feasibility and aspiration.

4. How did you determine each set of campus peers?

We selected peer institutions for freshman goals using the College Results Online ("[CRO](#)") web tool developed by the Education Trust. The CRO search tool uses an algorithm which takes into account a number of factors, including race/ethnicity, academic preparation, and socioeconomic status, to improve the validity of its comparisons. Definitions and weighted formulas are available at the CRO web site.

Transfer peers at the system level are the ninety seven non-CSU colleges and universities with community college transfer outcome data submitted to The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at the University of Oklahoma ("[CSRDE](#)").

5. These goals seem too ambitious. Why are they so high?

These are indeed very ambitious goals, especially when compared to the ones we set two years ago, before the first phase of the Graduation Initiative had ended. These goals are high for several reasons, including those mentioned in question one. However, there are also intrinsic reasons related to the core mission of the CSU. These include our commitment to our students, our understanding that the short-term sacrifices they make for timely graduation will be more than paid back in the long run, and above all for our system's deeply held belief in opportunity, equity, quality, and student success.

6. Why has there been so much focus on the 4-year graduation rate goal? Should I prioritize this goal above the others?

The 4-year graduation rate goal is a new addition to our Student Success targets. These revised campus goals emphasize dramatic gains in the 4-year graduation rate because, relative to our peers, this rate presents the greatest opportunity for improvement. Although this area may pose the biggest challenge to our campuses, it is important that we include time-to-degree in our thinking about student success. Enabling students to shorten their time-to-degree has many benefits for our students in the long run, including entering the workforce sooner as well as reducing student loan debt. The focus on the 4-year graduation rates does not negate the importance of bringing the achievement gap to zero nor does it overshadow our recognition that there are many students who will take longer than four years to graduate.

7. Have the system goals been finalized?

The system goals have not yet been finalized. At the July 2016 meeting of the CSU Board of Trustees a proposed set of ranges for the system-level goals were presented. We will identify exact numbers for the Board's consideration and approval at their September meeting.

8. How does the \$35 million in one-time funding relate to these goals, and how will these funds be distributed?

SB 830 allocates \$35 million in one-time funding to the CSU upon the system's satisfactory presentation of new graduation rate targets and realistic plans for meeting them. Although the \$35 million is to be used in support of student success (specifically 4-year freshman rates and 2 year transfer rates), the means of distributing the money is left up to the CSU. Discussions are still being held as to how this will occur. We do recognize that this will not be enough to sustain any significant efforts by campuses to impact their ability to reach the ambitious goals for 2025, but this will be a start.

9. How can we be certain not to compromise academic rigor and/or become a more selective institution when pursuing these goals?

As we learned in the Graduation Initiative's first phase, the key is continued vigilance. The CSU dramatically raised its six-year graduation rates for students from all populations and within each range of admission eligibility, meaning the gains are the result of changes in campus culture and not increased selectivity. At the same time, faculty and other campus educators have protected rigor with engaging pedagogies, high-impact practices, and a renewed focus on curricular coherence. As we embark on the next phase of the Graduation Initiative, we will hold ourselves and each other to the same standards.

10. Meeting these goals will require a tremendous amount of additional resources. How will this argument be made?

Meeting the new stretch goals will require campuses to think innovatively about the use of existing resources and the potential for refocusing efforts as needed to improve completion rates and close achievement gaps. In addition, significant additional resources will be needed on a continuing basis to support the campus student success efforts. These arguments are already being made in conversations with the State and the Department of Finance. We are also working internally to derive a hypothetical per-student cost of the additional resources needed to improve retention, equity, and timely graduation, and to identify these expenses as distinct from traditional enrollment and instruction costs.

11. How do we intend to track progress incrementally through 2025?

The CSU Graduation Initiative continues to develop the [Student Success Dashboard](#), which uses leading indicators like persistence, grades, and course completion to anticipate student completion. We will expand the use of these indicators and partner with campuses in their strategic use of data on a periodic basis between now and 2025 to measure our progress against these goals.

12. Will there be another opportunity to set these goals?

Although this is our second attempt at setting goals for 2025, we do not expect to set them again. This time the process was held to considerably more public scrutiny, involved intense work from a broad CSU advisory committee, and resulted in much more ambitious targets for the system and our campuses. We expect these new targets to serve us better and for far longer than the initial set.