

Moorpark College has the highest completion rate in the state

Alexa D'Angelo, Ventura Published 9:00 a.m. PT Sept. 3, 2018



(Photo: CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR)

Moorpark College leads the pack among the 114 community colleges in California with the highest six-year completion rate in the state.

The state average is 48.2 percent for six-year completion, while Moorpark has 64 percent, according to new data from the California Community Colleges Board of Governors called the [Student Success Scorecard](https://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecard.aspx). (<https://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecard.aspx>) Much like K-12 districts are measured on the California School Dashboard, community colleges in the state are tracked by student success.

"We are blessed with a large number of students intent on completing their degree or certificate," said Luis Sanchez, president of Moorpark College. "They are invested in their education in more ways than one."

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Ventura College also has a rate above the state average at 49.6 percent. Oxnard College falls just behind that average at 44.5 percent.

The metric is six years because the state is looking at how many students completed their associate degree or certificate within six years. Measuring it at two, three or even four would dramatically lower the completion rate statewide, since many of the students in community college attend part-time.

"Our objective is really to get students to complete in two to three years, but the reality is with community college students, you have a number of them who can only go a quarter of the time or half the time," said Ventura County Community College District Chancellor Greg Gillespie. "And that is going to take them up to that six years, which is why they'll use that six-year cohort."

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Six-year completion rate (<https://infogram.com/cb85ff44-e787-4c4e-8705-b1dd6aa61130>)
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Completion isn't the only metric used to measure the success of the community college institutions statewide. The state also looks at completion rates in math and English, three-term persistence rates, which tracks the number of students who are enrolled for three consecutive semesters, and how student ethnicity and median income may play into those figures.

Moorpark College leads the way

Moorpark College has the highest numbers in Ventura County on what's called the Student Success Scorecard.

The college also has the highest three-term persistence rate, at 81.2 percent — exceeding the state average of 76.5 percent. Ventura College has a three-term persistence rate of 73.8 percent and Oxnard College falls just behind at 71.7 percent.

Although the college is performing well, Sanchez said there is room to improve. He warns employees against complacency.

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"Being No. 1 in the state is gratifying, but 64 percent is atrocious; it just happens to be less atrocious than the rest of the state," he said. "We want to focus on that 36 percent that didn't complete and see how we can better serve those students."

Sanchez said a big part of increasing the completion rate is making sure students are accessing the support services available to them. Students have access to academic counselors to help them achieve their educational goals.

There's some healthy competition between the three colleges when it comes to completion rates.

"We're going to give them a run for their money," said [Damon Bell, interim president at Ventura College. \(/story/news/education/2018/06/19/ventura-college-damon-bell-interim-president/695256002/\)](https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/education/2018/06/19/ventura-college-damon-bell-interim-president/695256002/)

Bell said it's important to note that completion of a degree or certificate may not be the goal for every student who enrolls in community college classes.

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. "It may be some of them didn't have completion as a goal. They may have come that 50 percent that unaccounted for."

All three colleges hope that by engaging with students more, making sure they have access to support and encouraging them to form educational plans the completion rates will increase across the board.

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Cynthia Azari, president of Oxnard College, said "embedded tutoring" has been launched this semester, through which tutors will go to classes and then be available to help students understand what was said in class.

"We are all very concerned about the completion rate," Azari said. "We are inching up."

Azari said in addition to offering extra support, like tutoring, there are incentives to completing, like scholarships, financial aid opportunities and more.

"Every year, we are improving, and improving is important for the college," Azari said. "But what's really important is that our students are being successful."

Working to close the gap

Gillespie said the district hopes to close the equity gap at the colleges, although he said that's a big hurdle to jump. He said the median income in the ZIP code where the college is located is directly correlated with the completion rate; the higher the median income, the higher the completion rate.

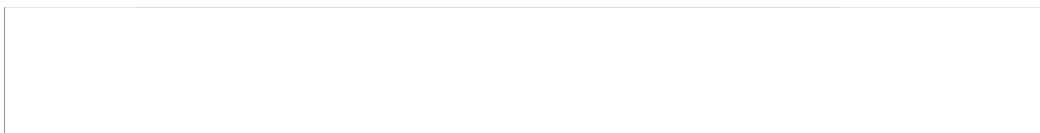
"As families have more disposable income, they are able to provide more educational opportunities and experiences for their child at younger ages, so they end up working through the system being better prepared for college," Gillespie said. "When disposable income is limited, sometimes it's difficult to have those experiences. That's why a lot of the work we'll do with the middle school level, even high school level, is how to close those gaps that occur so that the students are going to be ready for college level right away."

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The district has agreements with many school districts across the county, and the hope is to offer dual-enrollment courses at many of the high schools to increase access to college-level material. Another key, Gillespie said, is not letting a median income number stop a student from achieving their dreams.

"It's not at all related to the skill level or ability, but more to do with the exposures they've had to learning activities that allow college to then be more accessible for them," Gillespie said. "So we want to be able to offer some of that learning enrichment in communities where students might not be getting that exposure."

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