

Cradle-to-Career Data and Tools Advisory Board Staff Report

Date Report Issued: March 11, 2026
Attention: Members of Data and Tools Advisory Board
Subject: **Update on the Office of California Cradle-to-Career Data System (Agenda Item Three)**
Staff Contact: Mary Ann Bates, Executive Director and Marykate Cruz Jones, Chief of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships

At this meeting, the Data and Tools Advisory Board (DTAB) will receive an update from the Office of California Cradle-to-Career Data System (Office). This staff report has three main sections: one, Student Experience Report, two, key takeaways from the Office, and three, updates from February 25th Governing Board Meeting.

Requested Action:

There is no requested action for this item. This is an informational item only.

Section One: Student Experience Report

The [2025 Student Experience Report](#) was released on February 4, 2025. In partnership with the [California Education Lab at the University of California, Davis](#) (California Education Lab) and the [California Student Aid Commission](#) (CSAC), California Cradle-to-Career Data System (C2C) surveyed nearly 7,000 students about their experiences applying for college and financial aid, transfer intentions, where they found support during the process, and their expectations for next steps. This section will provide DTAB with a high-level overview of the background of the Student Experience Report, the evolution of the Student Experience Reports from inception through 2025, and lessons learned from the Student Experience Report.

Section One, Part A: Background

Per [Education Code Section 10867\(b\)\(5\)\(A\)](#), C2C is responsible for conducting an annual student experience audit related to navigating the transition from secondary education to higher education. This work supports the scaling,

expanding, operating and maintaining of C2C's operational tools and data system. This work is reflected in the Office's annual [work plan](#) for FY 25-26.

Section One, Part B: The Evolution of the Student Experience Report

The Student Experience Report has always centered community stories. However, the method C2C has used to examine the stories of students transitioning from high school to college has evolved over time. The first [Student Experience Report in 2022](#), examined the transitional period from high school to college through the perspective of ten stakeholders that represented a broad selection of California's diverse student populations and experiences. The second [Student Experience Report in 2023](#) shifted the focus to hear directly from student voices. During that year, C2C surveyed over 100 students who shared their challenges and experiences navigating the transitional period between high school and college.

In 2024, the [Student Experience Report](#) continued to center student experiences and expanded the reach of the survey through C2C's collaboration with researchers at the California Education Lab and CSAC. Over 11,000 responses were received from students who completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application (CADAA). The [2025 Student Experience Report](#) is a continuation of the collaboration with California Education Lab and CSAC that continues to center student voices and provides insights into student experiences and expectations as they transition from high school to college. This year, in addition to the survey, C2C interviewed students to delve deeper into their experiences.

Section One, Part C: Lessons Learned

Through the years, the Student Experience Report has given the Office an opportunity to learn about the challenges students face today. Stakeholders highlighted concerns about financial aid application and transcript delivery processes in the transitional period. Students shared about fulfilling A-G requirements, transfer processes, and how they sought help in applying for college and financial aid.

Through sharing the Student Experience Report at Community Conversations, Board and Advisory Board meetings, C2C received valuable feedback that has helped structure the survey going forward. C2C will continue listening to the community while developing the next version of the Student Experience Report. Insights learned from every Student Experience Report will continue to influence how C2C builds tools for Californians.

Section Two: Key Takeaways from the Office

At the March 25, 2026 DTAB meeting, members will have the opportunity to hear about C2C's key accomplishments in 2025 and the Office's priorities on the horizon. This section provides an overview of key accomplishments in the past year, highlights future opportunities and connections to C2C's organization-wide goals, and asks of members.

Section Two, Part A: Key Accomplishments

There are many accomplishments to highlight over the past year.

- ❖ Began the year with a series of Workforce Data Expansion task force meetings
- ❖ Launched the Student Pathways Data Story
- ❖ Initiated the largest data expansion with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency to date
- ❖ Released Version 1 of the Query Builder in response to community engagement, making available the underlying data behind the Student Pathways Dashboard
- ❖ Rebuilt the underlying structure of the data system to proactively prepare for future growth
- ❖ Authored the fourth annual Student Experience report that encompasses over 7,000 student survey responses and 16 student interviews
- ❖ Launched the Lesson Plan Challenge to expand the impact of the Student Pathways Dashboard
- ❖ Sent a CalKIDS data report to California Community Colleges
- ❖ Secured a procurement with NORC to build out our Secure Data Enclave to have a functional research request process at scale

Section Two, Part B: What C2C is Thinking About

There are many exciting things that C2C is working toward. All the work happening at C2C will feed into the progress of C2C's organization-wide goals. C2C's projects include building C2C Secure Data Enclave, research data request process, advance data literacy with Data Walks, update the Student Pathways Dashboard with one year of new data, integrate National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data, and provide the CSAC Data Report. In addition, C2C plans to pilot data reports that answer relevant workforce questions, and continue secure and technological enhancements.

Section Two, Part C: Asks of Members

All DTAB members are being asked to continue to share partnering events for C2C collaboration to co-host Data Walks throughout California with the [Office](#).

In addition, the 2026 DTAB Proposal Process is officially underway. The Office is asking all DTAB members to help share that the public proposal submission window is now open through May 1, 2026, and should be submitted directly to the [Office](#). DTAB members will have the opportunity to discuss all public proposals received at the July 15, 2026 Data and Tools and Community Engagement Joint Advisory Boards Meeting.

Section Three: February 25 Board Meeting

The Board met on [February 25, 2026](#) and approved revisions to the [Governance Manual](#) that were proposed and discussed by the Governance Manual Review Committee at its December 10, 2025 meeting. This section provides an overview of the approved Governance Manual updates, with a focus on changes to Advisory Board recruitment, term limits, and the proposal process.

Section Three, Part A: Advisory Board Three-Year Recruitment Model

As part of the approved Governance Manual updates, the Advisory Board annual recruitment process has transitioned to a three-year cohort model. Under this approach, all 32 Advisory Board positions will be recruited simultaneously every three years, with subsequent cohorts appointed at the conclusion of each three-year term. This shift would necessitate a longer and

more comprehensive recruitment and selection timeline to ensure adequate time to recruit a qualified candidate pool and accommodate a comprehensive onboarding process to prepare Advisory Board members for their first public meeting. The following chart provides a comparison between the previous annual recruitment Selection for Advisory Boards process to the three-year recruitment model¹.

Event	Annual Recruitment	Three-Year Recruitment
Board Meeting Approval to Convene the Selection for Advisory Boards Committee	February	May
Selection for Advisory Boards Committee Meeting One	April	June
Application Open	May	August
Selection for Advisory Boards Committee Meeting Two	June	October
Board Approval	August	November
Onboarding	September	January - February
First Advisory Board Meeting	October	March

The final cohort of Advisory Board members appointed by the Board that applied via the annual selection process will conclude their terms in August 2028. As a result, 2028 is when the Office and the Board would initiate the proposed three-year cohort model. Given this timeline, the 32 newly appointed Advisory Board members would serve a full term from 2028 through 2031. The chart below provides an overview of the current Advisory Board term end dates and outlines what the Advisory Boards will look like through 2028.

¹ The Governance Manual is not prescriptive about the Selection for Advisory Boards timelines and milestones or timing in order to keep the process agile.

	2026	2027	2028
Number of Advisory Board Members Completing their Term			
Data and Tools Advisory Board	5	5	6
Community Engagement Advisory Board	6	4	6
Advisory Board Member Composition			
Data and Tools Advisory Board	11	6	Recruitment
Community Engagement Advisory Board	10	6	Recruitment

This new approach would allow the Office to build out a cohort model. The Office envisions that the benefits of this change would allow for: stronger professional bonds and connections; increased motivation and accountability amongst Advisory Board members; and a deepened sense of peer support and teamwork.

Additionally, the Office intends to implement a curriculum for Advisory Board members. For example, in year one, new members could focus on learning and understanding the work of the Office and C2C. With a deepened understanding and with at least half a years' experience with C2C, Advisory Board members will be able to submit and evaluate proposals in years one and two of their terms. These changes provide space for the new cohort to transition into their role, allow more time for onboarding and training, and feel more prepared when submitting a proposal.

The following chart outlines how the Advisory Board proposal process will transition from the annual model and operate under the new three-year cohort

model. The green check mark indicates practices that will remain in place from the former model and the red x denotes when the action will no longer take place; the reason for these changes is that there will be no traditional Advisory Board member proposals submitted in 2028 or 2031, however, in these years, members can submit via the public proposal submission process.

Quarter	Advisory Board Proposal Process Milestones ²	2028	2029	2030	2031
Spring	The public submits proposal forms.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Summer	Question and answer session with data provider subject matter experts.	✗	✓	✓	✗
Fall	Advisory Board members may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit their own proposal form; - Submit a joint proposal form with no more than five Advisory Board members; - Sponsor a proposal form submitted by members of the public with no more than two Advisory Board members; - Further refine a proposal form submitted by member(s) of the public or an Advisory Board member from a previous year. 	✗	✓	✓	✗
Fall	Advisory Board members present their proposals and Advisory Board members discuss how proposals complement and contrast and which proposals are most promising for advancing C2C's ability to provide actionable information.	✗	✓	✓	✗
Fall -	The Office will conduct light-touch	✗	✓	✓	✗

² The milestones identified in the chart are indicative of the annual Advisory Board proposal process and therefore will run over the course of a year.

Spring	<p>feasibility studies of Advisory Board member proposals.</p> <p>Two Advisory Board members will work with the Governing Board Liaison to create the draft proposal report that will summarize the discussion of the Fall Advisory Board meeting, link all member proposals, and include the Office's light-touch feasibility studies.</p>				
Spring	Advisory Board members will discuss the draft proposal report.	✗	✓	✓	✗
Summer	The Advisory Board proposal report will be presented to the Governing Board.	✗	✓	✓	✗