

Cradle-to-Career Data Governing Board Staff Report

Date Report Issued: February 17, 2026
Attention: Members of Cradle-to-Career Data Governing Board
Subject: **Update from the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data
(Agenda Item Three)**
Staff Contact: Mary Ann Bates, Executive Director, Shannon Serrato,
Director of Engagement, and Ryan Estrellado, Director
of Data Programs

At this meeting, the Governing Board (Board) will receive an update from the Office of California Cradle-to-Career Data System (Office) on progress toward the California Cradle-to-Career Data System (C2C) Fiscal Year (FY) 25-26 annual work plan, with a particular focus on the Student Experience Report and planned engagement efforts. The update will also highlight the key takeaways from the Office's 2025 accomplishments and highlights the Office's priorities that will feed into C2C's organization-wide goals and asks of data partners as the Office looks ahead to 2026. This staff report is broken down into three main parts: section one, Student Experience Report, section two, training and outreach engagement efforts, and section three, key takeaways from the Office.

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), 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 the Board 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: Training and Outreach Engagement Efforts

An important focus of the Office's work is planned engagement, including training, outreach, and accessibility efforts designed to strengthen participation and ensure meaningful engagement opportunities for all stakeholders. This section provides an update on C2C's engagement efforts outlined in C2C's annual work plan.

Section Two, Part A: Update on Planned Outreach and Training Efforts

At the November 14, 2025 Board Meeting, the Board received an [update on the Engagement vertical's planned outreach and training efforts](#) as part of the Office's [annual workplan](#) for FY 25-26. The Office is prioritizing community engagement to ensure that information from the data system is both trusted and useful.

C2C will facilitate Data Walks, both virtual and in-person, across California this year. Over the last quarter, the Office has developed and is finalizing tailored programming and communications, and is working with partners and C2C's Advisory Boards to identify opportunities for regional collaboration. C2C plans to conduct its first Data Walk in early spring.

The Office is also strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders, including the Association of California School Administrators and the K-16 Collaboratives, to provide targeted information about the data system to their members.

Section Three: Key Takeaways from the Office

At the February 25, 2026 Board 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 identifies specific asks for data partners.

Section Three, 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 Students 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 Three, 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 Three, Part C: Asks of Members

All Board members are being asked to help deliver the message that in order for C2C to be able to develop more products for all Californians and secure the growth of the Office, there is a critical need for additional resources and bandwidth.

Additionally, the Office's asks of data partners will help advance the work of C2C and will contribute to meeting ambitious timelines. In particular, data partners legal teams will be crucial in ensuring legal agreements for the research request process are achieved smoothly. In addition, please be sure that all points of contact for reviewing and approving data requests for the agency are updated. The default point of contact will be your administrative point of contact. If a data provider's administrative point of contact changes, the Board member should contact the [Office](#) to ensure timely, proactive updates for future correspondence.

Additionally, the Office's collaboration with the higher education segments will be key in completing overarching goals, such as NSC data pulls, Data Walks, and in-person engagement across California.