



Connecting
Data and Insights
to Advance
Equitable Futures

Cradle-to-Career Data and Tools Advisory Board Proposal Form

Instructions:

Per the [Governance Manual](#) proposal forms submitted will address significant gaps regarding whether the data system is providing access to actionable information. Please note there should only be one proposal per form.

Name:

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Proposal Title: *no more than 50 characters*

Parenting Student Data in Higher Education

- ☒ By checking this box, I understand that I will be presenting my recommendation at the Fall Advisory Board meeting.

Type of Proposal¹:

- ☐ Changes to tools such as dashboards or practical tools (*Complete section one*)
- ☒ Adding data points not available through the P20W data set or adjusting (including the removal of) the existing P20W data points (*Complete section two*)
- Please note a proposal form(s) can recommend adding one data point or several clearly related data points to the data system.

¹ The C2C Governance Manual notes that DTAB members can also submit recommendations related to the data request process. As this is not yet live, it has been removed from the version of this form.

Section One: Changes to Practical Tools

1. What is the nature of the gap regarding access to actionable information?

2. What type of tool should be developed?

3. How would a tool address the gap?

4. Who would be the likely user(s) of the tool?

5. How does the tool relate to the [mission and vision](#) of C2C?

Section Two: Adding Data Points Not Available Through the P20W Data Set or Adjusting the Existing P20W Data Points

1. Please state the research question of interest that cannot be fully addressed with the [existing data elements](#) in the P20W Data System.

1. What are the educational and workforce outcomes of parenting students (aka student parents) in California's higher education systems, and how do these outcomes differ from non-parenting students?

Establishing student parent status is a foundational step toward future linkage of educational outcomes across generations, including potential alignment with K–12 data to better understand family-level educational trajectories.

2. How does this research question relate to the [mission and vision](#) of C2C?

This proposal directly supports C2C's mission to provide actionable information

that improves educational and workforce outcomes for all Californians.

Parenting students represent a significant but currently under-identified population within higher education. Among undergraduates, this student subgroup is disproportionately low-income, female, and from underserved racial/ethnic groups. Without consistent identification, the state cannot assess disparities in access, persistence, or completion for parenting students, nor design effective policies and supports.

By adding student parent status as a core data element, the system takes a critical first step toward understanding multigenerational educational mobility, aligning with C2C's vision of connecting data across the education-to-workforce pipeline and improving outcomes across populations experiencing inequities.

3. Please propose additional data element(s) needed in order to successfully address the research question of interest.

1. Student Parent Status (binary indicator: has dependent child(ren) or not).
2. Number of dependent children (if available).
3. Age of youngest dependent child (if available).

These elements are currently collected across all three public segments (UCs, CSUs, and CC), though implementation is not yet uniform across segments.

4. Please verify that the proposed data element(s) do not already exist in the P20W Data System.

Student parent status is not currently collected as a standardized, systemwide data element across all higher education segments within the P20W data system.

While some campuses or programs (e.g., CalWORKs, EOPS, Financial Aid, CARES) may capture parenting status on subsets of parenting students, this information is not consistently defined, collected, or integrated into statewide

longitudinal data systems. Starting in 2024-25, financial aid data no longer capture parenting status for all financial aid applicants.*

*“The revised FAFSA relies more heavily on data from income tax returns and asks fewer questions...These changes compromised the way student parents are identified in several ways: 1) Students who are married or over 23 years old (i.e., considered independent) are no longer asked about their dependents...2) Applicants are now asked about any dependents, with no distinction between child dependents and others. 3) Income tax return data are from two years prior, and applicants are asked only about changes in household size—and not about changes in composition—since the tax return was filed.” (Catanzarite and the California Alliance for Student Parent Success, 2026 forthcoming).

5. If the P20W Data System does not currently include the proposed data element(s), can the proposed data element(s) be derived from the existing data element(s) in the P20W Data System?

No. Student parent status cannot be reliably derived from existing P20W data elements.

While proxy indicators may exist (e.g., household size by marital status), they are insufficient and imprecise measures of whether a student is actively parenting dependent children.

6. If the P20W Data System does not currently include the proposed data element(s), are there existing data element(s) closely related to the proposed data element(s)? If so, please list them and why they are not sufficient to answer the proposed research question.

Related elements may include:

- Financial aid data--partial (parenting status for a subset of students, household size combined with marital status)

- Participation in specific support programs (e.g., CalWORKs)

However, these are not sufficient because:

- Financial aid data no longer capture all student parents among applicants (starting in 2024-25)
- Not all student parents participate in support programs
- Definitions are inconsistent across institutions
- These proxies do not allow for comprehensive or equitable identification of the student parent population

7. C2C keeps a [repository](#) of previous data elements that were either a) considered during the planning process or b) proposed through the mechanisms as outlined in the Governance Manual, but were ultimately not included in the P20W, along with related feasibility studies. Do any of the data element(s) being proposed overlap with the data elements in this repository? (New proposals can build on or duplicate prior proposals. It is helpful for proposers to share that context, including prior related feasibility studies.)

We are not aware of a formally adopted data element within the C2C system that captures student parent status. However, this proposal aligns with broader state and legislative efforts (e.g., AB 2458 and AB2881) to improve data collection on student parents and may build on related feasibility discussions.

8. Are the proposed data element(s) already collected by a state-level entity? For data element(s) already collected, please answer question nine. For data element(s) not collected, please answer question ten.

Partially.

Two public higher education segments (the CSU and CCC) either currently collect or will collect systemwide student parent data through their applications. In some instances, student parent status is also collected at the institutional or program level, but there is not yet a uniform metric or consistent statewide collection across all public higher education systems.

Both the CSU and CCC will collect information at the time of application on whether students have dependent children. However, the CCC application captures the number of dependent children but not their precise ages, while the CSU application captures the age of the youngest dependent child but not the total number of dependent children. The UC does not currently include a question about student parent status in its application.

Current and planned data collection would support a consistent measure of the number of CSU and CCC students who have dependent children at the time of application. Further alignment between these two systems could also produce standardized measures of the number of dependent children a student has and the age of the student's youngest child. Further adoption of an aligned approach by UC would make these measures consistent across California's public higher education systems.

Additional touchpoints to collect and update this data throughout students' academic careers, for instance, via student service portals would further support accuracy.

9. [For proposed data element(s) already collected] To the extent possible, please share details pertaining to the proposed data element(s). Relevant details may include but are not limited to: a) corresponding entity that collects and houses the data element(s); b) specific variable name(s) used in the originating data system; and c) timeframe available.

Recent legislation is moving California toward a student parent metric.

AB 2881 requires California Community Colleges (CCCs) and California State Universities (CSUs)—and requests the University of California (UC)—to provide priority registration and virtual resource hubs for students with dependent children. While this legislation did not mandate data collection on student parents, IHEs began moving toward identification in order to provide priority registration.

AB 2458 goes further, mandating that the CCC and CSU—and requesting the UC—create dedicated student-parent data fields and report student parent data for inclusion in the Cradle-to-Career Data System.

California Community Colleges (CCC):

CCC currently asks parenting status at the application stage via CCCApply and the CC Promise Grant Application. CCC maintains a [student parent data element](#) in its Management Information System derived from this [application question](#): Do you have children or dependents who receive more than half of their support from you? Students who indicate yes are prompted to enter the number of minor and non-minor dependents. Application data on student parent status can be supplemented by self-certification at registration, financial aid data, and program-specific rosters (e.g. CalWORKs, EOPS/CARE, childcare programs).

California State University (CSU):

CSU Apply currently asks for this [data element](#) at the application stage for prospective students.

“Student Parent Status” data element will be part of the CSU data system starting in the fall of 2026. This data element will be derived from the following application question: “Do you currently have a child or children under the age of 18 who receive(s) more than half of their support from you?” Students who indicate yes are prompted to enter the youngest child’s date of birth.

Additionally, individual campuses have additional mechanisms for parenting students to self-certify and update this status once enrolled. Currently, students self-certify having a dependent under 18 to receive priority registration, producing a systemwide parenting flag that is complemented by data from basic needs, childcare, and family housing programs.

University of California (UC):

Data collection on parenting status varies by campus, with no systemwide standardized variable currently in place. The UCs currently infer parenting

status from dependency and household information in the application and supplement it with campus-level data from financial aid and other sources, such as childcare intake forms. Partial data on a nonrandom subset of students is gathered through University of California [Undergraduate Experience Survey \(UCUES\)](#) and the [UC Graduate Student Experience Survey \(UCGSES\)](#).

Financial Aid (California Student Aid Commission):

Asks about the student's dependents only among unmarried, under-24-year-olds and does not distinguish between child dependents and others. Includes household-related variables (e.g., household size combined with marital status), but does not directly capture parenting status of the student population, and cannot produce a reliable proxy.

10. [For proposed data element(s) not collected] Please propose institution(s) that would be most suited for the new data collection effort.

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

California State University Chancellor's Office

University of California Office of the President

These entities are best positioned to implement standardized definitions and reporting requirements across their respective segments.

11. Please explain the desired level(s) of grain size for each data element proposed. (i.e., individual-level, institution-level, or other aggregated levels)? Multiple grain sizes may be requested for each proposed data element.

Individual-level data (primary) for research and analysis

Aggregated levels (institutional, segmental, regional, statewide) for dashboards and public reporting

12. Please explain the intended use case(s) for the proposed data elements (i.e., dashboards, query builder, or the research request tool)? Multiple use cases may be requested for each proposed data element.

Dashboards:

To display enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes for student parents by race and gender and compare them with non-parenting students.

Query builder:

To allow users to disaggregate outcomes by parenting status.

Research request tool:

To enable deeper analysis of educational and workforce outcomes, and to support future multigenerational research linking student parents to their children's educational trajectories.