# Compton College’s 2035 Strategic Initiative: Return on Investment and Economic Mobility

## Executive Summary

Compton College is launching the *Return on Investment (ROI) and Economic Mobility Framework Initiative* to strengthen the connection between education, workforce outcomes, and equitable economic advancement. In collaboration with **IAS**, **ESG**, and **The HEA Group**, the College will develop a data-informed framework using student wage data to guide program design and improve student outcomes. The initiative will produce a scalable model for other colleges and host a regional convening. Project completion is planned for ***February 1, 2026*,** through ***October 31, 2026***, with external foundation funding, local and regional Strong Workforce, adult education, the California Workforce Development Board’s Workforce Accelerator Fund (WAF), and other available funding sources.

## Introduction

The push for credentials with clear, measurable return on investment (ROI) data supporting graduates’  economic mobility is a **growing national trend in higher education**. While much of the conversation about credentials, ROI, and economic mobility has focused on four-year institutions and state-level strategies,  community and career colleges must also adapt their policies and programs to this trend. These colleges play a vital role in strengthening local economies, promoting equitable workforce development, and serving as the primary gateway to higher education for Californians.

By developing effective strategies to measure ROI and align labor-market credentials, institutions can ensure their academic programs meet employment-sector demands, increase value for students and stakeholders, optimize enrollment management, and—most importantly—promote student economic mobility.

Compton College is well-positioned to lead the national movement to measure and improve ROI in higher education, guided by its **2035 Comprehensive Master Plan** and a strong commitment to equity and student completion. Approved by the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees in fall 2024, **Compton College 2035** sets a clear goal: to accelerate student completion while advancing equity and success. The plan emphasizes three key areas—mission-centered initiatives, support services, and facilities—each with priority objectives and strategies designed to implement completion-by-design principles. This planning framework and its institutional priorities provide the foundation for the proposed initiative.

## Strategic Initiative: Alignment with Strategic Plans

Moreover, aligned with the **California Community Colleges' Vision 2030**, ***Compton College 2035*** outlines the College's long-term strategic direction. As part of implementation, the College developed a methodology for setting long-term institutional set-goals that aligns with statewide priorities informed by local performance trends, which is based upon three elements:

- Adopting California Community Colleges’ Vision 2030 targets as benchmarks when available.
- For other goals, averaging 2019–2024 outcomes and adding five percentage points;
- If this target falls below the 2023–2024 outcome, set it 5% above 2023–2024 performance to account for the pandemic's impact.

Compton College employs an innovative approach to set program- and division-level student success targets, ensuring alignment across the institution. The College has established **Compton College 2035 Institutional-Set Goals**, including detailed achievement data by age, gender, and race/ethnicity. These outcomes are displayed in a **comprehensive dashboard** that also tracks results for students in support programs and academic divisions.

Recently, Compton College updated its Institutional-Set Goals to reflect the priorities outlined in the **California Community Colleges' Vision 2030 - July 2025 Edition**. Notable additions include:

- A new goal to maximize financial aid (Outcome 5); and
- An expanded goal to increase, with equity, the number of students enrolling in California community college baccalaureate degree programs (Outcome 3b).

These updates were developed with input from the College’s Core Planning Committee and approved by the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees on ***October 13, 2025***.

## Strategic Initiative: ROI and Economic Mobility Initiative Overview

Compton College is also exploring a new Institutional-Set Goal focused on student ROI and economic mobility, recognizing the importance of removing barriers and strengthening post-graduation pathways to ensure students' investment in their education is meaningful. By ***October 31, 2026***, the College will define its ROI and economic mobility goals and apply them to division-level student success targets and industry-specific benchmarks. These efforts will form the foundation for the Compton College 2035 Strategic Initiative on ROI and Economic Mobility Plan, which will be a key component of **Compton College 2035**.

To advance student success, measurable ROI, and economic mobility, Compton College is launching a targeted initiative in partnership with **Integrated Academic Solutions** (IAS), **Education Strategy Group** (ESG), and **The HEA Group**. This initiative will serve as a model for community colleges within Los Angeles County and beyond. The collaborative effort will develop a strategic *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework* based on student-level wage data and program outcomes, with the primary goal of sharing best practices, methodologies, and tools that can be scaled for use by other colleges in the region.

## Strategic Initiative: Development and Data Strategy

Central to this initiative is the creation of a robust, data-informed *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework*. Once developed, this framework will guide institutional strategic planning and academic program improvement, ensuring that all decisions align with improving student economic outcomes. The initiative will also establish risk-mitigation strategies to support critical academic programs, even if they do not immediately demonstrate high ROI and economic mobility, recognizing their importance to the community's prosperity.

Using student-level wage data from CredLens and, potentially, the California Employment Development Department, the College will develop metrics to accurately measure the impact of its credentials on graduates' economic mobility. These insights will inform the design of new programs and the enhancement of existing ones, ensuring alignment with high-demand industries and career paths in the Compton community and across Los Angeles County. Additionally, the initiative will share strategies for incorporating non-degree credentials and career-aligned practices to further maximize program benefits for students and communities.

## Strategic Initiative: Community Engagement and Student Support Services

This initiative will strengthen collaboration with local employers and community partners, ensuring that communication strategies reflect both workforce needs and community values. The initiative has a dual focus: first, to increase awareness—among current and prospective students, their families, adult learners seeking career changes, and community stakeholders—of the College's ROI and potential for economic mobility; and second, to measure these outcomes through our programs, emphasizing how credentials open doors to greater career opportunities, financial stability, and long-term success. Communication efforts will emphasize how credentials open doors to greater career opportunities, financial stability, and long-term success for diverse audiences served by Compton College, including Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, first-generation, and adult learners. To support and scale this effort, the initiative will develop shareable resources and a practical playbook tailored for students, parents, adult learners, and community leaders, further communicating the tangible benefits of earning college credentials.

The *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework* will also guide strategic enrollment management and student support services, using ROI and economic mobility data to attract and retain students. In addition, the strategic initiative will develop targeted student support strategies to improve retention and completion rates, particularly for underrepresented groups. Offering programs such as financial literacy workshops and enhanced transfer and career services, Compton College aims to help students achieve lasting economic success after graduation.

### Key Objectives for Community Engagement and Student Support Services

This initiative will focus on five key areas:

1. **Advancing ROI and Economic Mobility**
    - Develop a definition for ROI and economic mobility at Compton College grounded in both quantitative and qualitative data.
    - Create a guiding framework for ROI and economic mobility to inform program design and enhancements.

- Establish risk-mitigation strategies to ensure academic programs critical to the collective prosperity of Los Angeles communities remain available to students and learners.
- Integrate the *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework* within the existing comprehensive plan to define measurable goals that promote improved return on investment and increased economic mobility for students.

2. **Academic Program Design and Improvement**
   - Collaborate to identify metrics that accurately measure the ROI and economic mobility of academic programs, with a focus on community college credentials.
   - Utilize CredLens and, potentially, data from a partnership with the California Employment Development Department to conduct post-graduation student-level wage analysis that compares pre-enrollment wages to post-completion wages, providing insights for program development and curricular improvements.
   - Develop a framework for aligning academic offerings with high-demand industries and career paths in the Los Angeles economic region.
   - Share strategies for incorporating non-degree credentials and courses, high-impact practices, and career-aligned strategies that improve ROI and economic mobility.

3. **External Communications**
   - Create shareable resources and tools that effectively communicate to prospective students, families, and employers in the local community the measurable ROI and economic mobility that credentials provide.
   - Develop a playbook for successful adoption by the community colleges within Los Angeles County with the intention that this framework may also be replicated by community colleges across California and throughout the country.
   - Foster collaboration with local employers, external stakeholders, and students to ensure communications are aligned with community values.

4. **Enrollment Management**
   - Utilize ROI and economic mobility data to inform enrollment management strategies and processes.
   - Build upon the College's established enrollment management and student support strategies by incorporating ROI- and economic mobility–focused approaches that enhance equitable retention, success, and timely goal completion, particularly for underrepresented student populations.
   - Identify and implement strategies that enhance students' ROI and economic outcomes post-graduation, including financial literacy programs, career services, internships and apprenticeships, professional networking initiatives, and entrepreneurship training and support.

5. **Integrated Academic Advising and Student Support Services**
   - Closely examine academic advising and student support services policies, procedures, and practices that could unintentionally hinder Compton College students' return on investment (ROI) and economic mobility. In particular, the analysis will focus on improving a consistent, holistic, and integrated advising system. It will consider other factors, such as the minimum number of units students must complete at Compton College and the efficiency with which incoming student transcripts are processed. These operational practices can affect students' ability to receive financial aid, transfer credits, and complete their degrees on time—directly impacting their career advancement and earning potential.

- Review and develop a process to verify federal reporting for the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and student cost of attendance.
- Incorporate the recommendations for the Los Angeles County 2nd District Community Colleges Career Ready Overview into the *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework*.
- Incorporate Compton College's New Regional 50-Mile Radius Transfer Strategy into the *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework* and develop partnerships with those colleges and universities for Compton College students.

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## Strategic Initiative: ROI and Economic Mobility Framework Structure

This initiative is a collaborative effort led by Compton College to develop a guiding framework for ROI and economic mobility. Partner organizations contribute specialized expertise to support the initiative's objectives:

- **ESG:** Provides strategic advising in higher education and student success.
- **The HEA Group:** Develops  the core methodology for measuring ROI and economic mobility.;
- **CredLens:** Supplies essential student-level wage and outcome data to ground the framework in real-world results.
- **California Employment Development Department (potential partner):** Enhance wage and employment data to strengthen the framework.

IAS will help Compton College define ROI and economic mobility, analyze instructional program data, examine academic advising and student support services policies, procedures, and practices, and create an ROI plan aligned with the **Compton College 2035** strategic goals. IAS will work closely with college leadership, faculty, staff, local workforce entities, K–12 partners, and community agencies to ensure that educational strategies align with regional economic priorities and support clear pathways to employment for students.

Developing this framework will be an interactive process that includes workshops and training sessions with the Compton College Academic Senate. Through this partnership, ESG, The HEA Group, and IAS will work with the College to pilot and refine the framework, ensuring it is practical, effective, and ready for broader implementation.

**Key Deliverables:**

- Create a scalable model that extends beyond Compton College.
- Produce tools, resources, and summary reports for community colleges throughout Los Angeles County.
- Host a regional convening to bring together project leaders, Compton College, and peer institutions to:
    - Share the final framework
    - Discuss progress
    - Promote broader adoption across the region.

**Key Activities:**

- **Workshops and Training:** Conduct a series of virtual and in-person sessions with Compton College faculty, classified professionals, administrative leadership, and the College's external partners, to share insights, present data findings, and develop strategies.

- **Collaborative Framework Development:** ESG, IAS, and The HEA Group will work directly with Compton College to develop and pilot the ROI and Economic Mobility Framework, ensuring it is practical and scalable.
- **Resource Creation and Sharing:** Create a shared repository of resources, including data tools and best practices, for use by other community colleges within Los Angeles County.
- **Regional Convening:** Organize a convening to share the project progress, successes, and the final framework with a broader audience of community colleges in Los Angeles County.

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## Strategic Initiative: ROI and Economic Mobility Framework Implementation

This initiative follows a systematic, data-informed approach to develop a college-specific framework for ROI and economic mobility. The process begins with faculty engagement and a review of outcomes across Los Angeles County to identify high-performing programs and opportunities for improvement. Data analysis is paired with an assessment of internal and external factors affecting student success, which shapes the definition of ROI and economic mobility and guides the development of the framework.

The framework is refined using detailed student-level data from CredLens and, potentially, the California Employment Development Department, enabling comprehensive program analysis and targeted action steps. Special attention is given to the needs of diverse student populations, including first-generation students, students of color, and adult learners.

The final stage includes producing a comprehensive report and replication guide, supporting other institutions in implementing a similar framework and integrating it into their strategic plans.

**Key Steps:**

- **Engage Stakeholder:** Collaborate with faculty, institutional standing committees, and key partners to draft the *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework*.
- **Conduct an Environmental Scan:** Analyze quantitative and qualitative data to define ROI and economic mobility, while identifying barriers, opportunities, and best practices.
- **Validate and Refine Framework:** Review findings with stakeholders to ensure the framework reflects equity, inclusivity, and relevance for diverse student populations.
- **Assess Outcomes and Develop Action Plans:** Collect and analyze student-level outcomes to compare program performance, identify gaps, and design targeted improvement strategies.
- **Disseminate and Scale:** Finalize deliverables, host a regional convening to share the results, and provide a replication framework guide for other colleges and external partners.

**Project Phase**

**Phase 1: Foundational Development & Faculty Engagement (Months 1-4)**
The initiative will begin with gathering internal and external data and securing buy-in from the Compton College Academic Senate. Faculty and stakeholders will review the project's goals and approach, drawing on insights from the **College Futures Foundation's Golden Returns Report** and the **California Competes Degrees of Value: Exploring How College ROI in California Differs by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex Report**. The HEA Group will present aggregate program outcomes, while IAS will conduct an environmental scan to identify high-performing programs, workforce connections, and barriers to student success. Initial findings will be presented to the Academic Senate and Student Success Committee to draft a preliminary *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework*.

**Phase 2: Data-Informed Refinement & Action Planning (Months 4-7)**
Building on the preliminary framework, this phase focuses on refinement through deeper data analysis. ESG, IAS, and The HEA Group will ensure the framework reflects the needs and experiences of diverse student populations. Student-level outcomes will be collected through CredLens and, potentially, the California Employment Development Department. These data will inform program-level comparisons and the development of targeted action plans, culminating in a finalized *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework*.

**Phase 3: Reporting & Dissemination (Months 7-9)**
The final phase will focus on documentation, reporting, and knowledge sharing. Activities include hosting a regional convening and producing a comprehensive Final Report featuring the completed *ROI and Economic Mobility Framework*, a replication guide for other community colleges, and strategic recommendations for integration with industry partnerships and institutional strategic planning. The report will serve as a roadmap for sustainable implementation and broader adoption.

**Expected Outcomes**
By implementing this framework, Compton College aims to meaningfully enhance students' ROI, economic mobility, and post-graduation outcomes. The model will be designed to be replicated by other community colleges across Los Angeles County.

**Key Deliverables:**
- A guiding framework for ROI and economic mobility that can be adapted across the region.
- Actionable strategies and tools to track and advance student ROI and economic mobility outcomes for those earning credentials.
- Enhance academic program design and curriculum aligned with evolving labor market demands.
- Measurable improvements in student ROI, economic mobility, and long-term success outcomes after graduation.

Compton College is seeking funding from external foundations and utilizing existing funding from the local and regional Strong Workforce and Adult Education programs. The Strategic Initiative ROI and Economic Mobility Framework Initiative is scheduled for completion from ***February 1, 2026***, through ***October 31, 2026***.

Approved by the Compton College Academic Senate on ***Thursday, November 20, 2025***.
Approved by the Compton College Consultative Council on ***Monday, November 24, 2025***.