

Your Community College

# Hancock is the best path to a bachelor’s degree | Kevin G. Walthers

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Contributed

Each spring, thousands of local students and families find themselves in one of the most stressful moments of the college journey: waiting to hear back from four-year universities.

High school seniors and transfer students across the Central Coast submitted applications to the California State University and University of California systems months ago. Now they wait, knowing that these decisions can shape the rest of their lives.

What many families do not realize is just how well positioned our local students truly are.

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Ninety-eight percent of graduating seniors from the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District and the Lompoc Unified School District who apply to the CSU system receive letters of admission.

That percentage is extraordinary and demonstrates the quality of preparation happening in our public schools. Our students are ready for college-level work, and our educators are doing their jobs well.

But there's an important catch. Despite these impressive admission rates, fewer than one-third of those admitted students actually enroll at a CSU campus.

The reasons are familiar to many local families. Students are often responsible for caring for siblings, contributing to household income, or staying close to home to support loved ones.

The cost of tuition, housing, and relocation can make moving away unrealistic, even when acceptance letters and financial aid offers arrive in the mailbox.

That reality is why Allan Hancock College plays such a critical role in our region — because when those same students come to Hancock and take at least 48 units (including the Hancock classes they take in high school), nearly all of them will transfer to a Cal State or UC campus.

There are many paths to success, and Allan Hancock College is proud to support them all.

More than 45 percent of our enrollment is in career education, and we are the primary provider of first responders on the Central Coast. At the same time, we know that for many students and families, earning a bachelor's degree remains a life-changing goal.

For those students, Hancock is the smartest and most reliable path forward.

Through initiatives like the Hancock Promise, we have worked closely with our K-12 partners to build a true college-going culture. The results are clear. Record numbers of local high school graduates are enrolling at Hancock, persisting, and successfully transferring.

Even more telling is what happens after they leave us.

Hancock transfer students consistently outperform other CSU and UC students and graduate at higher rates. That is not an accident. It reflects careful preparation, dedicated faculty, and an institution focused on student success.

We are also working to expand opportunities closer to home. Partnerships with Cal Poly SLO and CSU Channel Islands are bringing bachelor's degree options directly to northern Santa Barbara County, reducing barriers while maintaining academic quality.

These efforts reflect a simple belief: students should not have to leave their community to access opportunity.

The value of higher education, whether in career fields or at the baccalaureate level, cannot be overstated in today's economy.

At Allan Hancock College, we take that responsibility seriously. We are committed to using our resources wisely, strengthening pathways, and ensuring that local students have every opportunity to succeed.

That commitment is not abstract. It shows up in outcomes, in preparation, and in the long-term benefits our graduates bring back to this community.

Kevin G. Walthers, Ph.D., is the superintendent/president of Allan Hancock College.

## Tags

