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Calbright College

It Must Take Immediate Corrective Action to Accomplish Its Mission to Provide Underserved Californians With Access to Higher Education

Background

To increase the educational opportunities for California adults who face barriers to traditional postsecondary education, the Legislature created Calbright College (Calbright). In doing so, the Legislature provided funding for and established a seven-year period—from July 2018 through June 2025—to accomplish the setup of the college, to develop flexible, self-paced educational programs, and to meet specific milestones in its first seven years.

Key Recommendations

- The Legislature should eliminate Calbright as an independent entity if it does not meaningfully implement our recommendations by the end of 2022 to improve its ability to accomplish its mission.
- Calbright must make immediate, substantial progress in setting up the college and in enrolling, graduating, and securing jobs for its target population. By November 2021, it should:
 - » Develop an implementation plan outlining steps, timelines, and costs needed to accomplish its mission.
 - » Develop and implement strategies for creating beneficial educational programs, and for enrolling its target population, ensuring its students receive the support needed to graduate, and working with employers to help its students be prepared for employment and to secure jobs.
 - » Finalize hiring protocols that align with requirements in state law and regulations.

Key Findings

- Calbright’s former executive team mismanaged the college’s setup, resulting in significant planning deficiencies and inadvisable choices related to hiring and contracting.
 - » It does not have an adequate plan for how it will accomplish the setup of the college, including how and when it will spend the \$175 million in funding it expects to receive.
 - » It circumvented sound hiring practices and requirements—nine of 14 hiring decisions we reviewed lacked key components of competitive hiring or showed signs of favoritism, and the team it hired to launch the college did not have needed experience.
- Calbright’s mismanagement impaired its progress in achieving its mission, including selecting effective educational programs and serving its target population—data it currently collects about its students and programs, although limited, shows it is not adequately enrolling key groups.
- Its methods for ensuring that students receive the support they need are inadequate—the majority of its students either dropped out or stopped progressing—and it has been slow to develop a process for helping students secure jobs.
- Although Calbright has recently made certain operational improvements, it has yet to develop a clear, robust strategy to accomplish its mission.

Calbright Needs to Increase Student Success

Out of 904 enrolled students . . .



384
STUDENTS
DROPPED
OUT



87
STUDENTS HAVE
BEEN INACTIVE FOR
AT LEAST 90 DAYS



Only 12
STUDENTS
GRADUATED