State spending per student at CSU and UC lags far behind pre-recession levels. In the years during and following the Great Recession, policymakers significantly cut direct General Fund investments in the state’s public universities. Despite recent increases, inflation-adjusted per student spending is down by 18% at CSU and by 34% at UC, compared to 2005-06.

These spending cuts shifted higher education costs from the state to students and families. Faced with funding shortfalls, the universities increased tuition and fees. From 2005-06 to 2016-17, tuition and fees for California residents have increased by 74% at CSU and by 59% at UC.

Tuition and fee increases, combined with rising housing costs, put college out of reach for many low-income students. While many students receive state and federal financial aid, this assistance has not kept pace with the rising costs of attending college.

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