The cost of attending UC includes more than tuition and fees. Students pursuing a college degree also face student-related living costs such as books and supplies, food, housing, and transportation. The total cost of attendance can exceed $33,000 per year.

Most financial aid is linked primarily to tuition and falls short in addressing student-related living costs. Federal, state, and campus-based aid covers roughly 65% of the annual cost of attendance, leaving low-income students to cover over $11,000 in expenses.

Addressing students’ unmet financial need is essential to their college success. Policymakers could focus financial aid on the total cost of attendance – not just tuition – to ensure higher education remains affordable and accessible for all Californians.

* Assumes student earns $11 per hour and works 15 hours per week during school year and 40 hours per week during summer. Reflects deductions for taxes and some summer expenses.  
Note: Living costs reflect annual estimates for resident undergraduates living off campus. Institutional Aid reflects the average UC Grant award. “Other” reflects transportation and personal/miscellaneous expenses. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2018-19 dollars as needed, rounded to the nearest hundred, and may not sum.  
Source: California Employment Development Department, California Student Aid Commission, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, and University of California