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State drops in latest education rankings

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LOS ANGELES — California ranks next to last in states where the adult population has at least a high school education, according to a report released by the California Faculty Association at Cal State Los Angeles.

Ranking 49th out of 50 states is an indication of the state's deteriorating educational status in recent decades, according to "California at the Edge of a Cliff," by Thomas G. Mortenson.

Mortenson is an independent analyst living in Iowa and a senior scholar at the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education in Washington, D.C.

As of 2007, California ranked 14th in the nation in terms of college educated members of the workforce over 25 years of age, a drop from eighth place in 1981, according to the report.

"Other states have made greater gains in building a college educated workforce and moved past California," Mortenson stated. "California is slipping toward educational and economic mediocrity among states on this critical measure of state competitiveness, prosperity and success."

State tax fund investment in higher education has declined by 40 percent since 1980, according to the report.

California Faculty Association members used the report's findings to blast Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed funding cuts to education.

"It is hypocritical for the governor to utter the words 'we need job creation' out of one side of his mouth while he cuts higher education funding from the other side of his mouth because you can't create jobs when you are cutting the very institution that educates people to do those jobs," said Lillian Taiz, president of the faculty association.

Grappling with a \$14.8 billion budget deficit, Schwarzenegger has proposed a combination of sales tax increases, borrowing and major budget cuts, including billions of dollars cut from the state's education budget. His latest budget proposal would cut the school year by five class days.