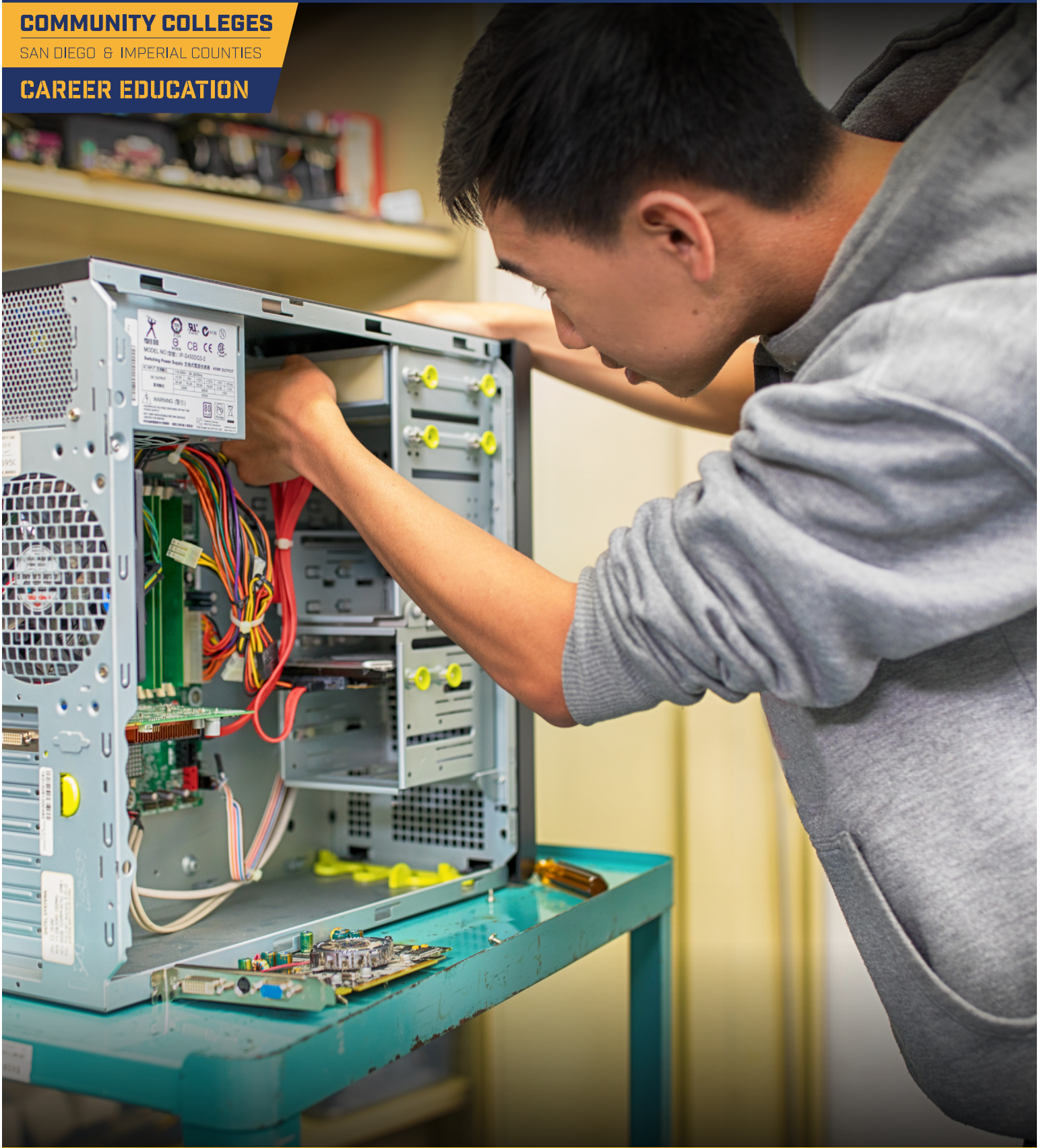


COMMUNITY COLLEGES

SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES

CAREER EDUCATION



STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM IMPACT REPORT

CHANGING LIVES AND TRAINING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

JANUARY 2021

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

WELCOME TO THE SECOND ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT OF THE SAN DIEGO AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION. THIS REPORT CELEBRATES ALL THAT OUR COLLEGES HAVE ACCOMPLISHED WITH STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM FUNDING AND THE REMARKABLE STUDENT OUTCOMES THAT KEEP US GOING DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF 2020.

As San Diego and Imperial Counties continue to struggle through an unprecedented health and economic crisis, I am proud to share some of what our faculty, staff, and students in the region have accomplished this year. In the face of tremendous obstacles, our colleges have shifted to an online environment, continued supporting student achievement, provided employers with much-needed well-trained workers, and helped the region's students secure good-paying careers.

Community colleges in our region have taken extraordinary steps to address the needs of our students and the community during this challenging time. Our graduates are fighting the pandemic in a myriad of ways on the front lines in hospitals; in designing and implementing COVID-19 testing; and as architectural designers using AutoCAD skills to redesign pandemic-proof respirators. As you will read in this report, our instructors have competed with the best in their industries; our K-12 counselors are starting career planning as early as middle school; and San Diego Continuing Education's partnership with the San Diego Rescue Mission helped a formerly homeless man become a full-time plumber.

This year, we utilized our Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funding to create essential lifelines. SWP funding was used to get technology and food into the hands of students, expand access to hands-on labs and learning tools, enable access to tutors and counseling, and support student health and well-being. SWP funding also supported the launch of the inaugural Faculty Institute that paired instructional faculty with research staff to analyze student data trends and develop plans to increase retention and completion rates. Several faculty members came out of the event with "aha" moments that changed their classroom approach. We plan to evolve the Faculty Institute in the future with opportunities for more instructional faculty and counselors to participate.

As the region's workforce continues to struggle with the economic impacts of the pandemic, and unemployment hitting an all-time high of 25% in May, we knew we had to do more to provide hope and direction to the region's displaced workers. To that end, we partnered with the San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research on a *Resilient Jobs* report that shines a light on middle-skill occupations trainable at our colleges that offer a fast, more affordable path back to stable employment.

In December, we launched an integrated Back2Work outreach campaign directing displaced workers to pandemic-resilient occupations and the campuses that train for these growth-oriented careers. These programs provide a training pathway to thriving jobs with growing salaries.

I am pleased to share this second annual *Impact Report* and hope all will be encouraged by the life-changing effects of education on our students' lives, the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the service we provide for regional employers, all in the face of a global pandemic. I'm immensely proud of what we've accomplished in 2020, and look forward to what we can do together in 2021.

- Dr. Lynn Neault, Ed.D.

Chair, San Diego and Imperial Counties Community College Association

THE FACULTY INSTITUTE A CHANCE FOR FACULTY AND RESEARCHERS TO PARTNER TO SUPPORT STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS

Analyzing accurate student data is key when looking to improve student experiences as well as retention and success metrics. To that end, the newly designed Faculty Institute kicked off on February 28, 2020 bringing together 244 faculty members and 61 researchers, deans, and staff from 10 institutions to identify specific classroom practices that positively impact students, and develop plans to learn and share best practices with the wider region. This innovative event was conceived from collaboration between the San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE) and the San Diego-Imperial Counties Community Colleges' Data & Research Workgroup.

The kick-off event encompassed an inspirational day out of the classroom in which instructional faculty was paired with research staff to conduct investigative research on former students, build plans to increase completion rates, and expand the number of graduating students getting into the living-wage career of their choice.

Throughout the event, each faculty member had an opportunity to examine course enrollment, completion, and success data for one of their courses. This data was disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and age group, allowing faculty to specifically highlight gaps between their individual performance and campus averages. Additionally, faculty reviewed timelines of when in the term their students were withdrawing and whether students were members of particular student populations such as veterans, first-generation college attendees, or foster youth. Analyzing the data revealed enrollment patterns and achievement gaps that allowed faculty to make substantial changes to their syllabus, course materials, and communication methods to address these disparities.

Through analyses of the data, many faculty were able to draw connections between withdrawal timing and assignment scheduling. As a result, modifications were made to syllabi language to support a more inclusive and encouraging tone, as well as to the number and type of required assignments, and assignment timelines. Faculty also created mid-term surveys, added icebreaker exercises to online instruction to build connections, and began reaching out directly to students more often to ensure they are aware of the support and resources available.

To keep the learnings in the forefront and continue building momentum, the Faculty Institute held a follow-up event on September 25, 2020 giving all participating faculty an opportunity to share and reflect on how they have applied the data from the trainings over the past six months and update plans for the next semester. An event keynote also highlighted methods to support students during the pandemic and how to connect with students as individuals.

The Faculty Institute continues to evolve, with a goal of increasing faculty engagement, keeping participants connected, and further improving instructional practices based on classroom, labor market, and student outcome data. Capitalizing on the success of the inaugural event, Faculty Institute 2.0 will launch in spring 2021. The next Faculty Institute will include counseling faculty and will provide participants with labor market information and student employment data from COE and LaunchBoard, with the goal of guiding students in career and course planning. There will be an opportunity for participants from the first Institute to contribute to Faculty Institute 2.0 as data coaches.

BACK2WORK CENTER OF EXCELLENCE RESEARCH REVEALS PANDEMIC-RESILIENT CAREER TRAINING PROGRAMS

Along with the rest of the country, San Diego and Imperial Counties have experienced an unprecedented health and economic crisis during the pandemic. Required quarantines have led to significant layoffs and while many workers struggle to find employment, businesses are having trouble finding qualified candidates to fill critical middle-skill positions.

With an understanding that recovery depends on effectively pairing trained workers with essential jobs, the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community College Association partnered with the San Diego-Imperial Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research research to identify middle-skill occupations that remain in high demand despite the current economic downturn.

The resulting *Resilient Jobs* report analyzed occupations that experienced employment growth or stability during the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009. These recession-resilient jobs were then compared to data from more than 150,000 job openings posted online between March 2020 and June 2020 to determine which occupations were also proving to be pandemic-resilient.

The report was used as the basis for a Back2Work campaign aimed at educating the region's workforce on where to find information on the fastest, most affordable path to a new career. The outreach program focused on 27 pandemic-resilient middle-skill careers that pay more than the living wage and average at least 275 annual posted job openings.

That list also included a Top 15 list focused on growth-oriented programs, that have available spots for spring enrollment.

The Top 15 Pandemic-Resilient Occupations in the Region are:

- Accounting Specialist
- Computer Support Specialist
- Computer Systems Analyst
- Computer Game Designer
- Construction Manager
- Cybersecurity Specialist
- Database Administrator
- Food Service Manager
- Medical Assistant
- Network Administrator
- Office Manager
- Property, Real Estate & Community Assoc. Manager
- Retail Sales Manager
- Software Application Developer
- Web Developer



This list represents hope for the community and critical assistance for regional employers. As California continues to grapple with pandemic-related unemployment, this research provides actionable information to help workers get back to work or change careers, aid employers to find qualified candidates for open positions, and support regional economic recovery.

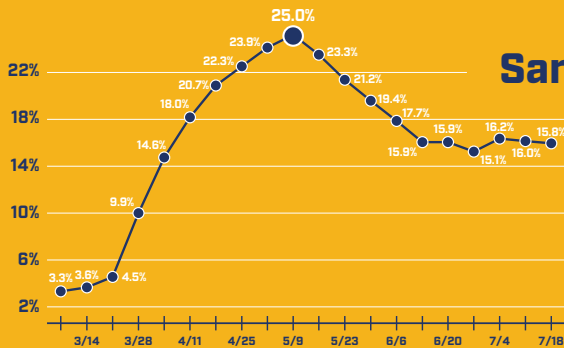
The *Resilient Jobs* report, an infographic, student resources, and campus-specific enrollment information can be found online at www.careered.org/back-2-work.

San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges

WE CAN HELP YOU TRAIN FOR PANDEMIC-RESILIENT CAREERS

New research reveals the most high-demand, high-wage jobs in the region; laid-off or displaced workers can **retrain or upgrade job skills in as little as two years for just \$46 per credit.**

UNEMPLOYMENT SKYROCKETED DURING THE PANDEMIC



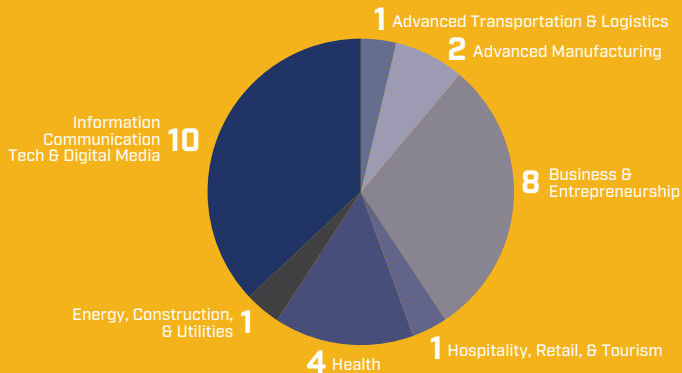
San Diego County Unemployment Rate

25%

Regional unemployment hit an **all-time high in May** of this year

Source: Biweekly data from Applied Geographic Solutions, Inc., Thousand Oaks, California, Weekly Release June 23, 2020 (for data until June 13) and Weekly Release July 27, 2020 (after June 13)

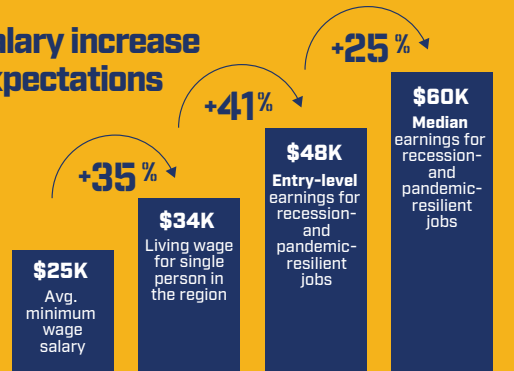
27 PANDEMIC-RESILIENT CAREERS ACROSS 7 JOB SECTORS



THRIVING JOBS AND SALARY GROWTH

Career Education provides training for displaced or minimum wage workers.

Salary increase expectations



Data based on jobs that experienced stability or growth during 2007-2009 recession and have been pandemic resilient

PANDEMIC-RESILIENT TRAINING PROGRAMS ENROLLING NOW

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Accounting Specialist | Food Service Manager | Network Administrator | Retail Sales Manager |
| Computer Systems Analyst | Medical Assistant | Software Application Developer | Office Manager |
| Computer Support Specialist | Construction Manager | Property, Real Estate, and | Web Developer |
| Cybersecurity Specialist | Computer Game Designer | Community Association Manager | Database Administrator |

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For information on Pandemic-Resilient Careers and Career Education opportunities near you, please visit careered.org/back-2-work.

All information based on San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research Oct. 2020

CareerEd.org

IMPERIAL VALLEY COLLEGE PREPARES NURSING STUDENTS FOR COVID-19

The role of instructional programs is to not only provide excellent education to diverse student populations, but to also aid and empower the growth of individuals to value scholarship, lifelong learning, and leadership in an ever-evolving healthcare environment.

Imperial Valley College (IVC) has proven to meet this mission and vision of success not by the sole efforts of the dynamic caliber of faculty and staff, but through the strong collaboration, commitment, and support by the community, industry partners, academic partners, and the impact that Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funding has brought to the greater community and students of IVC.

As the spring 2020 semester began, the impact of the SWP funds was priceless. Students were able to access an expanded computer lab that increased the number of computers available to nursing students and, as a result, increased the maximum number of students eligible for entry into a very competitive program. The funds supported the relocation of an expanded Nursing Learning Center that allowed for tutoring of more students and upgrades to the fidelity and level of simulation equipment available to students.

By securing these funds, the SWP activities prepared students graduating in the 2019-2020 academic calendar to care for patients in a medically underserved region with limited resources. The students that graduated from IVC's nursing programs experienced 100% pass rates of the California Licensing Exam (NCLEX), well above the state and national average, positioning these new nurses for promising careers.

"I am very grateful for all of the equipment and study areas, such as our Nursing Learning Center provided to us in our nursing building," said Stephanie Ramirez, a student of the program. "I can't imagine passing nursing school without the equipment available to us that helped strengthen our knowledge and skills."

As graduates face the unknowns of COVID-19, IVC is incredibly grateful for the SWP and the community for the evidence-based practices and education taught and reinforced by industry and academic partners to suitably train their students.



SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE SEES SPARKED INTEREST IN CYBERSECURITY

With the help of Strong Workforce Program (SWP) funding, the Cybersecurity program at San Diego City College has flourished within the last year and has proven itself as a resilient program. David Kennemer, assistant professor of Computer and Information Systems, says without the additional funding the program would not be growing as quickly.

“From my perspective, without the SWP funding, we would not have been able to launch our Cybersecurity program. SWP allowed us to reach more students by funding small advertising efforts and courses in both an on-campus and online format,” said Kennemer. “We were also able to purchase new lab equipment, textbooks, and some high-demand professional certification exam vouchers for students to help further support career prospects and goals. The professional exam vouchers, which we do not require for course completion, would normally cost students between \$350 and \$1,000 per exam.”

David Kennemer says word of mouth has also really made a difference for the program.

“Our students are telling their friends and family about the program,” said Kennemer. “And when cybersecurity is in the news, their interest is piqued.”

Sharing today's real-world examples in their classes, the Information Technology department is always on top of the latest trends like cloud computing, ransomware, and more. Since the Cybersecurity program launched in 2018, the department has been tweaking their curriculum to make sure all the classes are as efficient and up-to-date as possible for their students.

“The cybersecurity field is for avid learners,” said Kennemer. “If you have a life-long love of learning, this is the field for you – there will always be something to learn.”

The program also prides itself on bringing in speakers who address their experience in the field and how they've navigated their career. Former students have also been able to join classes and share their experiences as well.

“What we've heard from the IT industry is that they're looking for students who want to go into STEM fields who work and live in San Diego,” said Kennemer.

For locally-based Naval Information Warfare Systems, they are seeing a critical shortage of qualified cybersecurity professionals. According to a 2018 Information Systems Audit and Control Association State of Cybersecurity report, the industry is facing a shortage of nearly three million cybersecurity professionals worldwide.

“The ever-growing cybersecurity talent demand requires a continuum of skill sets and experience from recent graduates to transitioning service members to seasoned Ph.D.s,” said Lisa Easterly, chief operating officer at the San Diego Cyber Center of Excellence. “Hands-on, certificate, and two-year degree programs are critical for bridging the gap, and partnerships between academia and industry are key to ensuring the cyber workforce is prepared for the evolving cyber threat landscape.”

In addition to filling a shortage, Kennemer says the industry is also changing.

“There are opportunities for everyone including women and minorities in this field,” said Kennemer. “The IT industry is looking for diversity and we hope that anyone looking for a new job or career change considers cybersecurity.”

MIRACOSTA COLLEGE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDENT BUILDS COVID-19 RESISTANT RESPIRATOR

Born and raised in Oceanside, Ricardo Gomez Lopez enrolled at MiraCosta College in fall 2015 to complete his general education courses before going to a university. However, once he had his liberal arts degree, he decided to hold off on transferring and instead earn a second associate degree in architectural design taking additional classes in 3D modeling and prototyping, and computer-aided drafting and design.

Little did Gomez Lopez know; this decision would have crucial ramifications.

When COVID-19 hit, MiraCosta design students began taking on more urgent, real-world challenges needed in fighting the virus. Early on, the campus Maker Lab was instrumental in crafting face masks, face shields and vent splitters which allow a single ventilator to be used for two separate patients at the same time.

Next, scientists from a local business asked the MiraCosta design students for volunteers to take on a respirator adaptor project. NeurTex Brain Research needed a prototype to show how a 3M respirator could be adapted as personal protective equipment (PPE). Gomez Lopez volunteered, eager to help and knowing the AutoCAD skills he learned in his architectural design courses had given him the proficiency to succeed with similar projects.

Working closely with the scientists and general counsel at NeurTex, Gomez Lopez helped design three successful prototypes employing various types of strategically placed cloth to create low-cost, reusable and pathogen-free PPE that could be safely used in a COVID-19 environment.

The experience reinforced Gomez Lopez's conviction that he made the right decision in staying at MiraCosta College. He still plans to transfer to a four-year college or university in a year for his bachelor's degree as he works towards becoming an architect.

"This is all attributable to MiraCosta College. Everything I know about design comes from what I learned at MiraCosta," said Gomez Lopez.



SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM GETS CREATIVE WITH ONLINE LEARNING

As a professional chef and instructor at Southwestern College, Professor Laura Gershuni understands the importance of hands-on learning, especially for Culinary Arts students learning to apply technical skills.

“Before the pandemic, I would have never thought it was possible to teach Culinary Arts online,” said Gershuni. “The pandemic has challenged us to be creative and innovative in finding ways to allow students to learn and practice their skills.”

COVID-19 has forced Culinary Arts and other practical skill programs to be highly resourceful in finding creative ways to incorporate the necessary labs into online course work.

“Luckily, through Strong Workforce Program career education funding, we were given permission to redistribute funds to purchase loaner equipment for students to take home and hire an instructor to pre-package and distribute ingredients for at-home lab activities,” said Gershuni.

With the new program in place, Southwestern Culinary Arts faculty have been able to provide hands-on learning care packages to students that include the fresh fruits, vegetables, flour, and various cooking apparatus necessary for their class.

“Another positive change is that recordings of online instruction give students the opportunity to watch their instructors prepare a recipe as many times as they need,” said Gershuni. “Students can create a dish and fail, and then rewatch and try again. In person, we usually only have time for them to experiment once.”

Gershuni also adds, “The current online and in-person hybrid model also reduces inequities within our student body. Through these care packages and funding, we’re able to provide tools and supplies to students who may not have previously had the same access and opportunity as others.”



PALOMAR COLLEGE MEDIA STUDIES PROFESSORS INSPIRED BY STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM FUNDED FACULTY INSTITUTE

Four members of the Media Studies department at Palomar College recently had the opportunity to participate in the student retention and intervention sessions at the Strong Workforce Program funded Faculty Institute where the team was able to dig into classroom data, uncover promising practices for student retention, and design innovative intervention strategies.

Wendy Nelson, associate professor and Media Studies department chair and Scott Richison, assistant professor, both had “aha” moments in reviewing the analysis of their classroom data. Richison, who is in his first year teaching at Palomar, was struck between the dramatic difference between student enrollment and completion of his courses for specific populations. He also found that Latinx women had a 20% likelihood of dropping his class within the first two weeks but if they stuck it out to the third week, they had a 96% completion rate.

“I have always known women were among my best students but I didn’t know the rate at which I was losing them,” said Richison. “Looking at hard data made a huge difference and motivated me to change my strategy.”

Richison is now offering more online video conferencing and face time earlier in the semester to check in with students about their goals, and provide encouragement and support.

As women and minorities are often underrepresented in the working media, Nelson recognized the correlation in the Media Studies department data right away. She and her colleagues realized if they wanted to see more women and people of color in media, they needed to do more to recruit and help those students succeed in their courses.

“One thing we all recognized is that we did not have a good representation of student populations in our courses,” explained Nelson. “We sat together and asked ourselves what we can do about it.”

In response, the Media Studies department created a “Changing the Narrative” campaign focused on recruiting more diverse students through social media outreach and promotion.

“We want to educate students, change the way we’re represented on the screen and the only way to do that is to get more diversity in the industry,” said Nelson.

The campaign will launch in spring 2021, and Nelson and Richison are grateful to have had the Faculty Institute experience and are motivated to use the data and key learnings to transform their department.



SAN DIEGO MIRAMAR COLLEGE REC INNOVATION LAB OFFERS ENTREPRENEURS EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITIES

The Regional Entrepreneurship Center (REC) Innovation Lab at San Diego Miramar College is offering opportunities for underrepresented portions of the population to launch startups and create their own paycheck, thereby disrupting cycles of poverty and wealth inequality.

Led by Tanya Hertz, assistant professor of entrepreneurship, the REC Innovation Lab leverages Strong Workforce Program funding to provide mentorship and resources to entrepreneurs from all backgrounds enabling them to follow their passion and find innovative ideas to solve the world's biggest problems.

The REC Innovation Lab provides aspiring business owners with cutting-edge technology, the latest tools like a virtual reality lab, and access to a network of industry experts. The organization also connects students with mentors to guide them as they start businesses, providing valuable information and confidence.

"We have so many amazing resources for students and they're actually open to anyone who's starting a new company or interested in learning a little bit more about entrepreneurship," said Hertz.

This year, the REC Lab has seen the launch of several different companies including: Bridge Networking, a way to connect virtually; VIBESUIT, a personal system that translates audio waves into vibrations; and Virturoad, which helps student drivers feel more comfortable on the road; along with many more.

"The REC has put me in a better position than if I would have done it myself," said Jakobi Dye, REC Innovation Lab participant and chief executive officer of VIBESUIT. "Learning from guest speakers and the people around you, there's so much more you learn being around this community than trying to find people yourself."

"Hopefully we see a lot of big companies start because of this and I think we will," said Hertz.



SAN DIEGO CONTINUING EDUCATION GRADUATE STARTS CAREER AS A PLUMBER WHILE HOMELESS

Manuel Cortez, 43, turned his life around when he became a certified plumber, a career path accomplished through free workforce training at San Diego Continuing Education (SDCE).

Just three years ago, Cortez was rehabilitating at the San Diego Rescue Mission overcoming a drug and alcohol addiction. While at the Mission he learned of a two-year old partnership between the Mission and SDCE focused on transitioning homeless adults into the workforce and out of poverty. The project helps students like Cortez through free job training for in-demand careers in fields such as welding, automotive, office skills, and healthcare.

Groups of up to 12 residents from the Mission are able to complete certificate programs at SDCE's Educational Cultural Complex with industry-specific classrooms that provide real-world experience. The complex includes a welding facility, an automotive garage, and an under-construction home for student plumbers. Cortez chose to specialize in plumbing and in preparation for apprenticeships, he learned how to inspect, troubleshoot, and repair water systems.

"I was the first one out of my cohort to get hired. Everybody at the Rescue Mission was so excited for me," said Cortez. His employment status permitted a longer stay at the shelter, allowing him to save money and find stable housing.

After completing his second plumbing certificate, SDCE's plumbing instructor, Rene Lopez offered him a full-time position. Cortez is now a plumbers apprentice for RXR Plumbing, Inc. installing and repairing piping fixtures and systems, and managing the company's service and repair van.

"SDCE has opened the doors for me in so many ways, all of our lives have changed," said Cortez.

In addition to the Mission programs, all Career Training Education students from SDCE now have access to a job development and employer engagement team to assist in connecting them to jobs, which is funded in part by Strong Workforce Program funding.



SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE RADIOLOGY PROGRAM REMAINS IN HIGH DEMAND DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Radiologic Technology (RADT) program at San Diego Mesa College prepares and qualifies graduates to become certified and registered by American Registry of Radiologic Technologists. The program takes 24 months to complete and continues to be in high demand, even during the global pandemic. Each year an average of 200 students apply and only 62 are accepted based on the availability of clinic sites.

“Our program has a 100% job placement rate with a completion rate of 80-90%,” explained program director Kimberly Mills. “Students usually end up locally in a high-earning job that are always in demand.”

This year the RADT program relied on Strong Workforce Program funds to support student success and alternative teaching methods for the online environment. The department used the funds to: purchase take-home-size skeletons students used to practice positioning skills and learn bony landmarks; provide access to *Complete Anatomy* and online learning support platforms; and buy a series of DVD lab experiments that allowed students to continue hands-on learning at their own pace.

“Without Strong Workforce Program funds, student success would have suffered and faculty would have struggled to find alternative teaching tools,” said Mills.

Recently awarded with an 8-year accreditation, the program is working on expanding capabilities and locations. Mills would like to add more clinical sites as well as computed tomography (CT) and mammography certification programs, management education, and more.

“We want to make professional progressions easier for our students,” said Mills. “If our students want to move up in their careers, whether to become a manager or more, we’d like to help them see the benefits and provide the right education to get into management if they’d like.”

And through the pandemic, the RADT program has been fortunate to have the space and essential status to continue some in-person instruction.

“We are fortunate to have a big space with three X-ray rooms and a portable machine, so we’ve been able to divide students into smaller groups to safely get them back in class,” explained Mills. “They have been able to watch videos online and then come in to get more hands-on time in the labs.”

Even with 2020’s numerous roadblocks, the RADT program doesn’t seem to be slowing down anytime soon.



CUYAMACA COLLEGE WATER STUDIES STUDENT CALLED TO PUBLIC SERVICE

Born and raised in Tijuana, Mexico, Natalia Blake moved to San Diego in 2017 and quickly found her calling – helping others by protecting our water. Blake has a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the State University of Baja California, and is currently working toward an Associate Degree in Water and Wastewater Treatment at Cuyamaca College.

With one-third of existing water and wastewater professionals reaching retirement age in the next decade, water utilities are currently facing challenges recruiting and training employees the next generation of water leaders. Students like Blake are key to the industry's future according to water professionals.

The Center for Water Studies at Cuyamaca College provides students with training and practical industry experience and, given the importance of the job, they have taken steps to keep coursework moving forward and retain engagement while students are learning from home.



“Professor Young teaches with a camera to record calculations in water and Professor Uhrhammer has had multiple real-world water professionals giving presentations through Zoom,” Blake said.

The college has provided laptops and WiFi, and keeps students informed about available emergency funds. All these efforts have helped Blake succeed and maintain her 4.0 grade point average.

Blake was also recently awarded the Otay Water District's Watton Scholarship, a \$500 award for top students in the Water Studies program. She plans to use the money to pay for books and to apply for industry certifications from the California Water Environment Association.

Blake's hardworking parents are her inspiration and motivation toward public service.

“As a chemist, there are many fields that I can contribute to in society, but none makes more sense than helping my community by working in the water industry,” she said. “I finally found the branch of chemistry where I believe I am going to thrive and do what I love, which is helping others.”

GROSSMONT COLLEGE CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM SET UP FOR SUCCESS

With help from the Strong Workforce Program funding, the Culinary Arts program at Grossmont College was able to add two new benefits for students: a completely redesigned and renovated kitchen and the facilitation of apprenticeships with local casinos.

In addition to these enhancements, students of the Culinary Arts program are able to learn from high-quality, experienced and award-winning faculty and staff. Chef James Foran, a veteran pastry instructor and head of the Culinary Arts program, recently won the March 24, 2020 season premiere of “Chopped,” the popular TV cooking competition on the Food Network.

Foran said he went on the show to represent fellow teachers and credits his students for keeping him passionate about his work as a chef.

“They pushed me to get here and I proved I could win,” he said. “Teaching makes me a better pastry chef and a better person.”

The show is notorious for presenting chefs with mystery baskets, typically filled with random combinations of lesser-known ingredients. Foran said “Chopped” was the most pressure-filled experience he has ever had, facing each half-hour round with no idea what he had to work with.

“Really, the show is intentionally designed to make chefs fail with an impossibly short period of time to cook,” Foran said. “It’s about thinking on your feet and not cracking under pressure.”

In the end, Foran earned bragging rights as a winner of TV’s toughest cooking competition and \$10,000, which he used to remodel his Tierrasanta kitchen.

Foran’s venture into celebrity inspired two of his former students and adjunct Culinary Arts pastry instructors, Chefs Marianne Daquino and Hollyanne Sims to compete on Netflix’s “Sugar Rush” series this year as well. The duo ended up stealing the show, showing off their skills with a zombie-themed cake.

With an updated kitchen, exclusive apprenticeship opportunities and “famous” faculty, the Culinary Arts program at Grossmont is preparing students for exciting and rewarding careers in the industry.



IMPERIAL COUNTY SHAPING THE FUTURE'S WORKFORCE TOGETHER

When the opportunity presented itself to seek a K-12 Strong Workforce Program grant, Imperial County knew they wanted to do it together. All of Imperial County's 17 school districts partnered together with Imperial Valley College, Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program, the Imperial County Office of Education and various local industry partners to form the Imperial County's Strong Workforce Program Consortium (ICSWPC).

Focusing on a county-wide approach, high schools worked collaboratively to enhance, expand, and scale Career Technical Education programs in industry sectors like Health Sciences and Medical Technology and Public Services, that have strong local labor market demands. Additionally, all high schools have been expanding their career development opportunities for all students.

One exciting component of the ICSWPC is the work with middle schools. Every one of Imperial County's middle schools have adopted the "Building a Bridge to your Future" campaign to ensure all students begin thinking about and developing their individualized ten-year plan at an early age.

With a commitment to increasing the number of students enrolled in programs leading to high demand, high wage jobs and completion of postsecondary programs that lead to steady employment, the ICSWPC is moving forward with vision and confidence, excited about the possibilities that lie ahead.



CORONADO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CAREER COUNSELOR BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES TO THE FOREFRONT

When the Coronado Unified School District (CUSD) was awarded Round 1 K-12 Strong Workforce Program funds, they focused on career development and pathway improvement within the following sectors: Arts, Media and Entertainment; Building and Construction Trades; and Health Science and Medical Technology.

To make this a reality, CUSD hired Kristen Ereno in August as Strong Workforce Coordinator and Career Counselor.

Within three months, Ereno has made a substantial impact. She began with a comprehensive audit of over 60 Career Technical Education (CTE) courses and pathways and developed a plan to better align course offerings along with pathway improvement.

In the middle school, Ereno implemented a career exploration tool and started conducting career lessons with students. At the high school level, she developed and created a career development presentation that focuses on career exploration, how to gain work-based learning experience, and how to research labor market needs. So far, Ereno has presented to a handful of 11th and 12th grade students and will continue to do so throughout the year.

Behind the scenes, Ereno has created CTE pathway sequencing documents for students and parents to educate the community on opportunities at Coronado High School. In addition, she is working with Southwestern College to potentially articulate 16 CTE courses so students can earn early college credit, and is proposing to offer CTE dual enrollment courses through College and Career Access Pathway agreements. Finally, she is working with teachers and administrators to increase A-G approved courses within CTE pathways as well.

Ereno also has big plans for the spring semester, beginning with scheduling guest speakers for the CTE classes to expose students to a variety of careers within the priority sector industries.

"It has been wonderful to be a part of the CUSD community over the past few months. There are many amazing established programs that are offered to students at both Coronado High School and Coronado Middle School," said Ereno. "It has been exciting to plan how to enhance, expand, and develop new CTE pathways and career development experiences. To begin to increase opportunities for students in high school and help them transition more smoothly to post-secondary education has been very rewarding."



NC3 RECOGNIZES ORANGE GLEN HIGH SCHOOL AUTOMOTIVE PROGRAM

Supplementing a school's existing curriculum with theory and hands-on practice, the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) certification utilizes world-class equipment and tools. For the Escondido Union High School District, the necessary initial equipment and training for teachers for NC3 was provided by the Strong Workforce Program funding.

Marco Gomez, an NC3 Campus Administrator and automotive technology teacher at Orange Glen High School, was recognized by NC3 for student certification levels that jumped more than 200% in the course of three years, demonstrating his uncompromising dedication to his students and the success of the Career Technical Education (CTE) program.

A NC3 Certification Center since 2017, Orange Glen High School has been able to significantly increase the number of issued certifications by putting all aspects of education and career readiness at the forefront.

"Through our advisories, we get to talk to people from Ford, Chevy, and Toyota as well as other people in the industry," said Gomez. "One of the questions we ask them is what they're looking for in terms of hiring. They always have three answers: (1) someone that will show up on time, dress correctly, and won't be on their cell phone (2) someone who wants to be in that industry, and (3) someone who has knowledge of the tools."

Gomez has seen that NC3 Certifications are the best way to prepare his students for the automotive industry.

"We've always given students CTE certifications indicating that they know how to do oil changes and change brakes but with NC3 Certifications, students are able to prove they have the same abilities as front-line mechanics," explains Gomez. "The industry recognizes that."

Orange Glen High School also offers students the chance to earn NC3 Certifications on a secondary level to expose them to different career paths at a younger age so they can make informed career decisions based on their interests.

"Offering NC3 Certifications to secondary students gives them the opportunity to apply for jobs right out of high school if they choose not to attend college," said Gomez. "They also show students what else is out there. At such a young age, many students don't know exactly what career path to choose."

If students do choose to attend college, Orange Glen High School has partnered with Palomar College to offer students introductory automotive courses that apply towards college credits.

In addition, Orange Glen High School offers students a unique opportunity to teach their peers through the Student Leadership Program. Orange Glen's third year automotive students are able to lead small groups in peer education and share videos of how to operate specific machinery.

"Through our Student Leadership Program, our first-year students are able to learn from student leaders in a way that allows them to absorb the material in a different way. Our students get invested into the program and are excited about taking on a leadership role," shares Gomez. "They can take the skills they've learned from our leadership program and apply it to a potential career."

Looking to the future, Gomez is planning to grow Orange Glen High School's certification program.

"We hope to get our students through as many certifications that are within their interests as possible. I have a lot of students that may not choose to be in the automotive field, so I'm hoping to expand our certifications to apply to other industries as well," hoped Gomez.

For the district, NC3 certifications are just the beginning as industry advisors have already identified other areas that are pivotal to regional needs.

Orange Glen High School was awarded the designation of NC3's August School on the Rise in 2020.

DEVELOPING CAREER PATHWAYS OPENS UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS

Poway Unified School District (PUSD) has been focusing on making their students college-ready for decades, but recently they posed a question to a wide range of stakeholders:

“What experiences do we want to provide to make sure our students are college and career-ready?” asked Kathleen Porter, executive director for Career Technical, Adult and Alternative Education at PUSD.



Using district-wide data, PUSD identified gaps in their Career Technical Education (CTE) programs and applied those findings to build a foundational plan for their first round of Strong Workforce Program funds. Throughout the district, staff, students, and industry partners from the elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, met to focus on increasing awareness, alignment, and information pathway development. School leadership also focused on solutions for closing opportunity gaps and addressing the needs of underserved students.

After data exploration and district-wide discussions, PUSD began offering earlier explorations of CTE, better informed pathways creation and offering more work-based learning opportunities with the help of additional CTE counselors. These counselors are supporting students while also sharing information with the public on the value of CTE.

“A lot of time kids don’t know what is available to them,” said Lynn McConville, assistant principal supporting Career Technical and Adult Education. “The Strong Workforce Program funding has been a game-changer. It’s allowed us to do much more parent-student education on these opportunities.”

So far, PUSD has seen a completion of undeveloped career pathways, an increase in number of early college credits earned by high school students, more meaningful work-based learning opportunities tied to student interest, aptitude, and values and finally, the implementation of a Pathway Completion Recognition Program for students.

“We’re grateful for the opportunity to move this work forward and increase opportunities for young people in our region,” expressed McConville. “Like everyone, we just want the best for our young people and to help them make good, strong decisions about their future.”

GROSSMONT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT HOSTS EDUCATION WEBINAR ON IN-DEMAND CAREERS

More than 170 parents and students participated in the Grossmont Union High School District's (GUHSD) Virtual Career Education Night on October 21, 2020. This was a collaborative effort between GUHSD, the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges, the San Diego-Imperial Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE), and the East County Economic Development Council to help students and parents learn about in-demand careers as well as high school and post-secondary options for students.

Eileen Bagg-Rizzo, director of College & Career Readiness, kicked off the webinar with details on GUHSD Career Technical Education Pathways and was followed by research analyst, John Edwards, from COE, who shared a presentation on labor market statistics along with some time for questions.

For the remainder of the webinar, Jo Marie Diamond, president of the East County Economic Development Council, moderated an industry panel representing four priority sectors: Anderson Plumbing, Heating & Air (Business), Sharp Grossmont Hospital (Health), Directions Training Center, Inc. (ICT & Digital Media), and Taylor Guitars (Advanced Manufacturing).

Each business representative spoke to their career journey and advised students that where you start isn't always where you end up and to follow their passion to find a career that makes every day enjoyable for them.

The moderator also asked each representative what they expect to change in their industry and career in the future. Most responses were directed towards technology becoming more and more a part of their day to day while also reassuring students that for all their industries, the human element is essential for the job they do.

The panelists advised attendees to research the field they're interested in to see if they can shadow someone or stop by an office to get a feel for the real-world experience to see if it's truly something they would enjoy.

As students look to apply for jobs in their field of choice, all panelists recommended students be aware of what they're posting on social media, how that can affect their chance of getting hired and to be cautious because what's posted online is accessible to everyone and cannot be erased.

Finally, each panelist addressed the soft skills for an ideal candidate. The panelists said they are looking for strong communicators, positive attitude, good listeners, and individuals who are attentive and enthusiastic.

With digital learning coaches and translation services covered by Strong Workforce Program funding, this webinar was a terrific resource for students and parents looking to learn more about in-demand careers as well as high school and post-secondary options.

Industry Panelists

- Mary Jean Anderson**, President, Anderson Plumbing, Heating & Air
- Jennifer Didier**, President, Directions Training Center
- Paul Neves**, Director of Ambulatory Services, SHARP
- Jo Ann Peterson**, Director of Training and Development, Taylor Guitars

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SEES GROWING PROGRAMS AND CERTIFICATIONS IN 2020

Many programs, educators, and countless students in the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) have been impacted by the K-12 Strong Workforce Program (SWP), which has sparked a growth in several certifications and in the EMT, Transportation, and Cybersecurity programs.

SDUSD has focused on increasing certifications for students in several pathway areas, including Biotechnology, Transportation, Health, and Cybersecurity. Funding has been used to support collaboration with San Diego Miramar College, professional development for teachers and access to supplies to support students in Biotechnology. Students are able to earn early college credit through an articulation agreement for their HS Medical Interventions course, which is the first in a sequence of courses to earn the Certificate of Achievement in Biotechnology through San Diego Miramar College. In addition, students can take an additional two courses through concurrent enrollment to earn the Certificate of Achievement in Biotechnology. So far, several students have completed this certification and are planning to participate in San Diego Miramar's graduation ceremony.

Another area of focus has been the development of EMT certification program for students. Through a formal partnership with San Diego Miramar College, K-12 SWP funds have supported Kearny High School students as they've enrolled in EMT courses at San Diego Miramar College. Several students completed the program and successfully passed the EMT certification exam.

Another popular pathway, the Cybersecurity course, launched at Hoover High School and Crawford High School. Instructors are collaborating to offer certifications in A+, Network+ and/or Security+, with an added bonus that these certifications can also be utilized to establish articulation agreements with San Diego City College.

And finally, in the transportation sector, students have been provided with access to software and curriculum to allow them to earn certifications. Students are utilizing National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3), SP2, and iCar curriculum allowing for hands-on learning utilizing world-class equipment and tools.



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