

# COMMUNITY COLLEGES

SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES

## CAREER EDUCATION

Impact Report | 2025



# TRANSFORMING CALIFORNIA'S WORKFORCE WITH INVESTMENTS IN CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Impacts of the Strong Workforce Program in San Diego & Imperial Counties

**Empowering Students.  
Strengthening Communities.  
Driving Economic Growth.**

[sdiregionalconsortium.org](http://sdiregionalconsortium.org)



## REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS: BY THE NUMBERS

Since the inception of the Strong Workforce Program (SWP)—a California initiative that invests annually in career technical education (CTE) throughout the state—the San Diego & Imperial Regional Consortium has strategically leveraged SWP funds to expand and improve CTE in California’s southern border region. Focusing on data-driven outcomes, the Regional Consortium collaborates with educators, industry partners, economic/workforce developers, and community organizations to respond to employers’ workforce needs and enhance student access, support, and success.



**\$80M+**

invested in CTE-related initiatives  
and programs

**551**

CTE programs developed in response to  
industry feedback and labor market data

**4,937**

employers served

**315+**

entrepreneurs developed

**23,000+**

work-based learning opportunities  
created annually

**95,212**

CTE students served annually  
(average)

**649**

faculty trained in data-driven,  
inclusive teaching and counseling

**200+**

courses approved for  
Credit-for-Prior Learning

With the support of SWP and regional investments in CTE, the 10 San Diego & Imperial Community Colleges have been able to...

- **CONNECT** employers and students in meaningful experiences
- **PILOT** innovative training programs
- **DEVELOP** entrepreneurs from diverse communities
- **OPTIMIZE** the student experience
- **DISMANTLE** silos and scale data-driven, inclusive practices
- **RECOGNIZE** prior learning to reduce costs and completion time

# INVESTING IN CTE IS INVESTING IN CALIFORNIA'S EMPLOYERS

The Regional Consortium and San Diego & Imperial Community Colleges have fostered meaningful connections between employers and students through Career Technical Education (CTE) investments such as the Strong Workforce Program (SWP). At San Diego Mesa College and MiraCosta College alone, over **23,000 students participate annually in work-based learning (WBL) activities**, ranging from internships and job shadowing to mock interviews and classroom projects with industry professionals. San Diego College of Continuing Education, Cuyamaca College, Grossmont College, and San Diego City College embedded WBL into curriculum design by integrating career services into courses. Similar efforts at Southwestern College **doubled job applications submitted by students, increasing from 6,000 to 12,000 in a single year.** Imperial Valley College and Palomar College co-located career services and WBL teams within a centralized career center, offering students seamless access to career counseling, internships, and work experiences.

San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) also developed the first SG21 Reporting Framework in the state, enabling colleges to track students' WBL activities and evaluate their impact: **WBL eliminates equity gaps, with students from all demographics who have WBL experiences achieving similar success rates.** Offering WBL to students would not have been possible without **partnerships with nearly 5,000 employers.** To name a few:

AALL CARE In-Home Services  
Able-Disabled Advocacy  
Aerotek  
Alpine Special Treatment Center, Inc.  
American Lithium Energy  
Aquillius

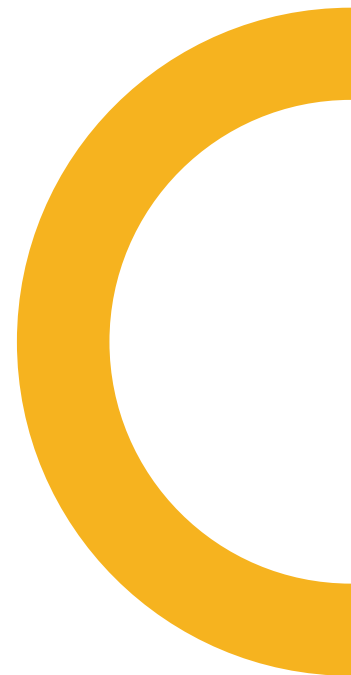
Aveanna Healthcare  
Biocom California Institute  
Brain Balance  
BrightStar Care  
Burnham Center for Community Advancement  
California State University San Marcos

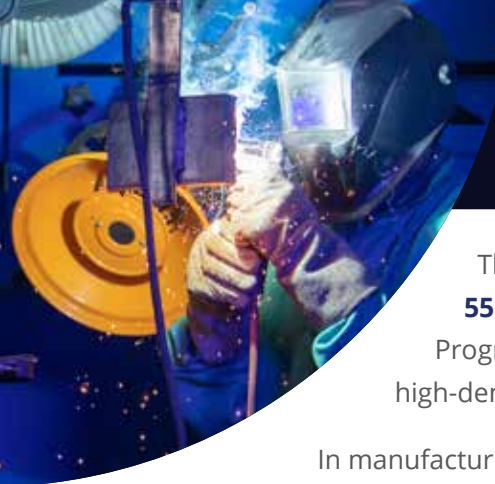
Care Choice Health Systems, Inc.  
Chicano Federation of San Diego County  
City of San Diego  
CMTC Manufacturing Resource Network  
Coastal Farms  
County of San Diego

Darlington Marketing  
Dr. Bronner's Soap  
East County EDC  
Encinitas Chamber of Commerce  
EnergySource Minerals  
Foot Solutions Encinitas  
Franklin Energy  
Gafcon  
Genentech  
General Dynamics NASSCO  
Grossmont Union High School District  
Hidalgo Consulting  
Hudson Ranch Power  
Hyatt Hotels Corporation  
Imperial County Office of Education  
Imperial County Workforce Development Board  
Imperial Regional Alliance  
Imperial Valley EDC  
Intesa Communications Group  
MAAC  
Maxim Healthcare Services  
MilliporeSigma  
Mor Furniture for Less, Inc.  
National University

North County EDC  
North San Diego Business Chamber  
Northrop Grumman  
Northrop Grumman Aeronautics Systems  
Ormat Nevada, Inc.  
PKL Services, Inc.  
Port of San Diego  
Positive Behavior Supports Corp.  
Proficio  
ResMed  
RICK Engineering Company  
Sage Business & Education, LLC  
San Diego County Office of Education  
San Diego Equality Business Association  
San Diego Gas & Electric  
SD Regional East County Chamber of Commerce  
San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation  
San Diego State University  
San Diego Workforce Partnership  
Scripps Research Translational Institute  
Silverado Hospice San Diego

Smith Group  
Society of Women Engineers, San Diego  
Solar Turbines, A Caterpillar Company  
South County EDC  
Subaru  
Sun Valley Research Center, Inc.  
SWF Partners, LLC  
Taylor Guitars  
The Westin, San Diego Bayview  
ThermoFisher  
Toyota  
Turner Construction Company  
USS Midway Museum  
Viejas Casino & Resort  
WorkforceConnect





## PILOT INNOVATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The San Diego & Imperial region has developed **551 CTE programs** since the Strong Workforce Program's inception, creating talent pipelines for high-demand industries.

In manufacturing, MiraCosta College used SWP funds to help launch the nation's first community college biomanufacturing bachelor's degree program. **The program graduates 20 students annually, with nearly 100 alumni placed at 60 biotechnology companies.**

These achievements attracted additional investments, doubling program capacity and enabling the construction of a state-of-the-art biotech facility with chemistry and biochemistry labs. Similarly, Imperial Valley College (IVC) leveraged SWP funds to support its Lithium Industry Force Training (LIFT) program with advanced manufacturing equipment. These investments secured partnerships with major companies such as Berkshire Hathaway Energy Renewables, positioning IVC as the primary training hub for Lithium Valley.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the Regional Consortium helped San Diego College of Continuing Education secure a \$1.175 million U.S. Navy grant to expand its welding program, further supporting workforce development efforts.

In transportation, Cuyamaca College and San Diego Miramar College modernized their automotive programs by acquiring electric vehicles (EVs) and upgrading equipment such as EV-compatible lifts. These enhancements attracted partnerships with dealerships eager to hire skilled EV technicians, including General Motors, Honda, Subaru, and Volvo. Updating equipment to industry standards also revitalized San Diego City College's HVAC<sup>2</sup> and electricity programs, **boosting enrollment from 15 to 75 students per semester.** Similarly, Southwestern College's revamped logistics program saw a **72% increase in completions** after transitioning to stackable certificates in supply chain management.

These innovations have enabled colleges to secure additional resources, such as **\$3.1 million in California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) grants**, ensuring sustainability and growth.

<sup>1</sup> [lithiumvalley.imperialcounty.org](http://lithiumvalley.imperialcounty.org)

<sup>2</sup> Heating, ventilation and air conditioning



## DEVELOP ENTREPRENEURS FROM DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

SWP empowered the regional colleges to support aspiring entrepreneurs by establishing entrepreneurship centers and startup incubators. At San Diego Miramar College, the **Regional Entrepreneurship Center (REC) Innovation Lab** has become a hub for entrepreneurial development, especially for underserved communities. REC participants receive one-on-one mentoring, seed funding, and access to pro bono legal, technical, and marketing support from employers who donate their time, equipment, and expertise. Similarly, the **Small Business Virtual Incubator (SBVI)** at San Diego Mesa College enables students to pursue their entrepreneurial goals from anywhere, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity. Together, these two programs supported more than **315 students** in launching ventures across diverse industries, from agriculture to high-tech startups. Participants also have the opportunity to showcase their ideas in a pitch competition judged by industry leaders and investors.

**"I followed the presentation directions quite literally and created a pitch deck with an investment ask at the end. I made a joke ... and said, 'If anyone has some money burning a hole in their pocket, come see me.' ...However, after the presentation, I had 2 people approach me asking if I was serious about looking for investors, as they are interested in investing in Foot Kinetics."**

*Sammie Bradley, Foot Kinetics*

## OPTIMIZE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



The region launched [careered.org](https://careered.org), a program finder featuring 1,494 CTE programs across K12, adult education, and community colleges. San Diego College of Continuing Education, San Diego City College, and San Diego Mesa College complemented this initiative with culturally relevant videos, brochures, and targeted marketing campaigns aimed at communities previously unaware of CTE

programs aligned with labor market demand. Imperial Valley College experienced **double-digit enrollment growth** as a result of these efforts.

At MiraCosta College, the concierge model revolutionized the matriculation process, **connecting over 1,000 prospective students to pathway programs**. Integrated with a customer relationship management (CRM) system, the concierge service

simplifies complex processes such as registration and onboarding, ensuring students receive timely support to overcome challenges. To support students in balancing work, life, and school, Cuyamaca College conducted student surveys and **adjusted course offerings to better align with students' schedules**.

## DISMANTLE SILOS AND SCALE DATA-DRIVEN, INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Since 2020, 649 instructors and counselors have completed SWP-funded professional development programs such as the Strong Workforce Faculty Institute and Counselor Institute. These programs empower instructors, counselors, and researchers to collaborate and use data to close equity gaps and improve student outcomes. CTE research experts create dashboards, help faculty interpret data, and guide them in identifying disproportionate outcomes in courses and support services. For the first time, counselors examined how student support services impact enrollment, retention, and completion. San Diego Miramar College and Palomar College amplified the Institutes' impact by empowering program completers to serve as data coaches. These coaches play a key role in campus-wide initiatives such as Guided Pathways, embedding data-driven, inclusive practices through a sustainable train-the-trainer model.

**"The regional funds helped break down silos at our institution. The natural state of affairs is to be in silos and these funds make us do things differently. We start thinking differently... about who we should have at the table. The Regional Consortium has been really good over the past few years of driving collaboration across campuses."**

*Jennifer Lewis, Dean, School of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Southwestern College*

## RECOGNIZE PRIOR LEARNING TO REDUCE COSTS AND COMPLETION TIME

SWP funds established Palomar College as the state leader in Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), with **over 200 courses eligible for CPL**. By enabling students to earn academic credit for prior professional, military, or life experiences, CPL reduces both the time and cost of degree completion. Palomar College also developed CPL training resources, now hosted in the Chancellor's Office Vision Resource Center for statewide implementation.

MiraCosta College, Southwestern College, and Grossmont College used SWP funds to build CPL infrastructure, raise awareness, and provide professional development for faculty and staff. At San Diego City College, CPL usage has grown exponentially, particularly among veterans and adult learners. These regional efforts validate students' existing skills, remove barriers to completion, and create affordable, equitable pathways for nontraditional learners to achieve their educational and career goals.

**"We couldn't have done this without regional SWP investments in CTE."**

*Representatives from each of the 10 San Diego & Imperial Community Colleges*

# A CALL TO ACTION:

## WHY CONTINUED FUNDING MATTERS

**“As stewards of the Strong Workforce Program on behalf of the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, we are aligned with the Vision 2030 roadmap to prioritize data-driven practices that advance equity in access, support, and success for every learner. By removing barriers, tailoring support to students’ needs, and strengthening academic and career pathways, we help learners achieve meaningful workforce outcomes while fostering social and economic mobility. SWP funding and CTE programs play pivotal roles in preparing students for successful careers and lifetime socio-economic success. CTE programs address critical labor market needs, create pathways to prosperity, and drive economic growth across California. By bridging education and industry, SWP and CTE initiatives are vital to building a more equitable future for all. Sustained SWP funding empowers students, strengthens the regional workforce, and fuels community economic progress. Together, we can create a stronger, more inclusive California.”**

*Danene Brown, Regional Chair  
San Diego & Imperial Regional Consortium*



# ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES REGIONAL CONSORTIUM

With our equity-center mission, the San Diego and Imperial Regional Consortium is committed to advancing the social and economic mobility of individuals and their families. By supporting innovative, high-quality career education or career technical education (CE/CTE) programs, we empower adults to access “more and better” economic opportunities in our region. These efforts are driven by strong partnerships within a robust workforce ecosystem, including educators, workforce development agencies, industry leaders, and community-based organizations. Together, we prepare, sustain, and strengthen a highly skilled workforce while building the capacity of the region’s community colleges to meet the evolving demands of our local economy.

The San Diego & Imperial Regional Consortium represents 10 community colleges serving California’s southern border region: Cuyamaca College, Grossmont College, Imperial Valley College, MiraCosta College, Palomar College, San Diego City College, San Diego College of Continuing Education, San Diego Mesa College, San Diego Miramar College, and Southwestern College. Our collective efforts reflect the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Vision 2030 roadmap to advance equity via success, access, and support for every learner. Our goals include building college capacity to create systemic change and close equity gaps; unifying the workforce ecosystem; and advocating for equitable changes to policy, processes, and practices.

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