

Engaging Employers to Align Curriculum to Industry through Program Advisories

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Strong partnerships between education and industry are the backbone of successful Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. One of the most effective ways this partnership comes to life is through program advisories, where colleges and employers work together to ensure programs truly prepare students for today's workforce needs. Advisory boards represent a true collaboration between education and industry.

That's why the San Diego & Imperial Counties Regional Consortium's (SDI RC) Employer Engagement team has made industry recruitment for advisories a top priority, bringing more than 480 industry representatives to these convenings over the past three years.

Why Advisory Boards Matter

Both the California Education Code and Perkins V require every CTE program to maintain an active advisory committee. But these boards serve a much higher purpose beyond compliance, keeping education connected to the real world.

Advisory boards provide critical input on curriculum, facilities and emerging industry trends. Their expertise helps colleges ensure that what's being taught in classrooms and labs aligns with the current and future workforce, equipping students with relevant skills and ensuring businesses receive qualified, job-ready talent once they graduate.

Employers' firsthand knowledge of workforce demands, technologies and industry standards is vital to advisory committees to ensure programs stay current and competitive. By sharing insights on skill gaps, certifications and new tools, employers can directly shape curriculum updates that strengthen student success. Employers who serve on these committees can make a tangible difference not only by shaping the quality of programs but also by empowering students to build meaningful, sustainable careers. Below are just a few success stories from faculty throughout the region:

Cuyamaca College's Ornamental Horticulture Professor and Department Chair, Amy Huie:

"Collaborating with our Employer Relations Liaison, Monica Rosas, to organize Employer Advisory Board (EAB) meetings for Ornamental Horticulture has been an exceptional experience. She facilitates personalized, thoughtful interactions with our EAB members, ensuring that every discussion is purposeful and engaging. She is very intentional with our time, keeping our meetings efficient and focused while ensuring no important details are overlooked. By the end of each session, the pathway forward for our curriculum is well-defined, allowing me to take confident action that aligns with industry needs and ensures our students are well-prepared for the workforce once they complete their certificates or degrees."

Imperial Valley College's LIFT the Valley Initiative Program Manager, Dr. April Mazón:

“Working with our Employer Relations Liaison, Miguel Gutierrez, has been instrumental in planning and strengthening our LIFT program advisory meetings to align with actual workforce needs as we continue aligning our programs with the region’s growing clean-energy and advanced manufacturing industries. Miguel brings intentionality to every stage of the process – from outreach to employers to preparing the structure of our discussions – which helps ensure our meetings remain focused and productive. His ability to build relationships with local industry partners, including helping establish our partnership with Earthrise Nutritionals, has expanded meaningful opportunities for student internships and increased employer engagement in our advisory boards. Our department truly values the support he brings to this work.”

San Diego Mesa College's School of Health Sciences and Public Services' Medical Assisting Program Director, Valerie O. Seng:

“Rachel Sanchez, Health Employer Relations Liaison, has been an invaluable asset to our advisory board meetings. Her proactive approach and strong networking skills have significantly enhanced collaboration between Mesa’s Medical Assisting program and the local healthcare community. By connecting medical providers, clinics and hiring managers with our students, Rachel has helped create meaningful pathways for internships, employment and professional development. Her insight into industry needs ensures our program remains relevant and responsive to current healthcare trends. Rachel’s professionalism, enthusiasm and dedication have contributed to the ongoing success of our students and the advisory board.”

SDI RC resources can be found [here](#), and resources from San Diego Community College District can be found [here](#).