Understanding How Workforce Pathways Shape College Outcomes and Earnings Gains

Policymakers play a critical role in shaping funding streams and accountability requirements that affect higher education priorities. Conversations on how to best measure college success and ensure California has a strong workforce would benefit from understanding gaps in existing metrics for workforce training.

This guide is designed to be used with two short videos posted on the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy website. The first, “Building More Comprehensive Measures of Workforce Training Success” (four minutes), describes why success metrics for CTE programs need to be more comprehensive than completion of community college credentials or transfer to a four-year college. The second, an “How Workforce Pathways Shape College Outcomes and Earnings Gains” (eight minutes), examines the multiple types of workforce training offered by community colleges and their associated earnings gains, as a means of documenting the value of both short-term and long-term educational pathways. Below are a number of possible discussions that policymakers could undertake after viewing the videos.

Measuring Success
Both videos make a case that CTE programs should be assessed by looking at the following metrics:

- Completion of community college degrees and certificates
- Transfer to four-year universities
- Earnings gains
Employment and employment retention
Third-party certifications

**Discussion Points:**

In discussions about the success of community colleges, how could outcomes such as employment, earnings, and third-party credentials be incorporated?

How could the state support more comprehensive access to information on student outcomes after they leave college, such as automatically sharing information from state licensing agencies or expanding access to wage data from other states?

**Workforce Training Pathways**

The longer video points out that colleges may be addressing diverse goals through their workforce training programs. For example, some programs require a long sequence of courses to ensure that students master complex skill-sets, while others only need to offer a class or two to fill discrete skills gaps. Short-term programs may be just as effective as longer programs at helping students reach sizable wage gains, depending on the industry and the experience level of the student.

**Discussion Points:**

Should the state provide additional incentives or support for community colleges to provide training opportunities to skills-builders—people who are already in the workforce and need to upgrade skills—such as focused efforts to address discrete skills gaps or to prepare workers for state licensure exams?

Should earnings gains for participants in short-term programs be taken into account, when determining whether these programs should be eligible for recognition by the Chancellor’s Office or included in college success metrics, rather than using unit thresholds as the primary criteria?

**Find Out More**

Below are links to resources listed in this document. You can also get your questions answered by emailing launchboard@cccco.edu.

- Chancellor’ Office resource website on Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy, which describes how workforce training is being strengthened among California Community Colleges: [http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/Home.aspx](http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/Home.aspx)
- Four-minute video on why success metrics for career and technical education (CTE) programs need to be more comprehensive: [http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/CollegeLeadershipResources/InformingPolicy.aspx#video1](http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/CollegeLeadershipResources/InformingPolicy.aspx#video1)
- Eight-minute video on the multiple types of workforce training offered by community colleges and their associated earnings gains: [http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/CollegeLeadershipResources/InformingPolicy.aspx#video2](http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/CollegeLeadershipResources/InformingPolicy.aspx#video2)