COMMUNITY REPORT: Doing What Matters Initiative In Action

Inland Empire Region

2013-2015
ABOUT THE INLAND EMPIRE

The Inland Empire, comprised of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, is a large and diverse region with desert and metropolitan areas, and access to major cities and freeways. The population of the region mirrors its geography in size and diversity, counting almost 4.5 million residents who represent ethnic and racial diversity and a range of income levels.

In this varied area is opportunity for development of the workforce and the local economies. The region boasts 12 California Community Colleges with career and technical education programs that prepare students for employment in not only their immediate areas but also neighboring counties like Orange and San Diego.

Sources of data: Economic Development Department Labor Market Information Division, United States Census Bureau

1 Sources of data: Economic Development Department Labor Market Information Division, United States Census Bureau
California Community Colleges have had Career and Technical Education in the forefront of efforts to meet the needs of employers for a qualified candidate pool. However, the economic recession of recent years has surfaced the need for more concerted actions to align what the colleges are teaching students to what local employers are looking for in a worker. Hiring needs that have been identified through anecdotal information from businesses include soft skills, technological knowledge, and specialized skills.

The California Community Colleges’ Doing What Matters for Jobs and the Economy initiative (DWM), launched in 2013, puts the necessary and critical alignment of college curriculum to business needs on center stage and provides additional resources to assist with collaboration, partnership, outreach, alignment, and more.

Different from previous attempts to meet employer needs, DWM requires that colleges work as a regional group as they approach the development of a more educated and work-ready labor market pool.

**Priority and Emergent Sectors**

Regional economies in California vary significantly. In order to target resources and maximize the impact in the regions, the DWM initiative asked colleges to select their priority and emergent sectors.

**Inland Empire Sectors of Focus**

Through a collaborative process, regional community colleges reviewed labor market data that surfaced occupations and industries with the greatest employment opportunities for students in the Inland Empire.

The selected priority and emergent sectors include:

- Advanced Transportation and Renewable Energy
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Global Trade and Logistics
- Health
- Information and Communication Technologies/Digital Media, and
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
Enhancing Regional Sectors through Key Roles

The DWM initiative created industry expert roles in each region to ensure collaboration between community colleges and forward movement in getting students into good paying, high growth occupations. These regional industry experts, referred to as Deputy Sector Navigators (DSNs), have the charge of:

- Serving as in-region contact for a sector and working with the region’s colleges and employers to create alignment around workforce training and career pathways.
- Belonging to a network of DSNs within the same sector that is led and coordinated by a Statewide Sector Navigator. This network is designed to help the DSNs develop work activities, learn curriculum models and effective practices, and field “how to” questions.
- Shared responsibility for moving the needle on metrics and measures that are focused on improving student education attainment and employment outcomes.

In addition to the DSN roles, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office issued grants that support career pathways development across sectors and programs (SB1070) and the development of student pathways from community college into the energy efficiency and utilities sector (Proposition 39).

Key personnel in charge of managing these regional efforts constitute an integral part of regional implementation teams for the DWM agenda.

Key Regional Roles in the Inland Empire

With the selection of the priority and emergent sectors in the Inland Empire came a significant financial investment in the form of:

- **6 Deputy Sector Navigators with $300,000 each in grant funding per year**
- **$1.5 million in regional funding for career pathways coordination and alignment under the framework on the SB1070 grant for the years 2013-2015**
- **$850,000 for the Proposition 39 activities for the period from 2013-2015**

In all, these grants brought more than **$5.9 million** in two-year funding to the Inland Empire region. These dollars have been used to address workforce deficiencies affecting students, employers, educators, and other stakeholders.
INVESTMENTS THAT MATTER

DSNs’ and other key talent efforts to increase employability of community college students and promote employment opportunities come at a crucial time for Riverside and San Bernardino counties which were hit hard by the Great Recession. Unemployment rates in the counties have been in decline since their peak in 2010, currently hovering around eight percent in both counties.

Although unemployment looks to be diminishing, there is still room to lower these rates subsequently alleviating some of the poverty that exists in the more remote, rural, and otherwise economically distressed sub-geographies in the two counties.

In addition, 4-year and graduate level education attainment rates in both counties continue to be some of the lowest in the state. Conversely, adults 25 years and older are attending some years of college or obtaining an Associate degree at about the same rate as the population of the state as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Attainment/Geography</th>
<th>Riverside County</th>
<th>San Bernardino County</th>
<th>California</th>
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<td>Associate degree</td>
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<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
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<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
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<td>12.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional degree</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Benefits to Community**

The DSN grant guidelines provide direction for funding to be applied to:

- professional development
- curriculum alignment
- program development
- curriculum development

Following the charge of Doing What Matters (DWM), Inland Empire DSNs planned, held, and led efforts in numerous activities across these four areas from Fall 2013 through Spring 2015.

Various DSN and other grants activities benefit community college faculty and staff, community college students, high school faculty, high school students, community college and high school counselors, and workforce partners.

Efforts to strengthen connections between students, educators, and employers benefit the overall economy in the following ways:

- **Students** are exposed to career opportunities that are relevant to a community college level of education
- **Faculty** can avail themselves of resources not previously available to them
- **Workforce and education partners** are directly connected to qualified job candidates and community colleges
FOCUS ON STUDENTS

Student success is at the core of DSN efforts and essential to the health of the regional labor market. Middle-school, high-school, and post-secondary students benefit from DSN efforts directly and indirectly through greater exposure to the opportunities available with career and technical education and training.

In the last two academic years, DSNs in the Inland Empire have counted 100 efforts/activities designed to increase awareness of career pathways.

Bringing awareness to career opportunities has been realized by:

1. **Career Exploration Events.** such as a manufacturing day that allowed students to experience the inner workings of manufacturing processes first-hand, meet employers, and learn about available community college program offerings, proved to be successful and attracted more than 250 students.

2. **Sector-Specific Conferences.** For example, a conference that introduced middle school females to careers in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) field was hosted by a DSN in partnership with Chaffey College. Forty-two female students and their mothers listened to a panel of employers, participated in demonstrations, and attended exploratory workshops.

3. **Program and Curriculum Planning.** DSNs and college faculty worked together on the creation and revision of curricula and programs in Information and Communications Technologies, Healthcare, and Advanced Manufacturing in order to provide students with most up-to-date training that meets the needs of area employers.

4. **Streamlining the Path from K-12 to Postsecondary.** The regional SB1070 Project Coordinator facilitated the creation of approximately 1,100 articulation agreements across all colleges from 2013 to 2015.

Given the rising student debt burden and the underemployment of young college graduates — along with the demonstrated high returns on two-year technical degrees and certificates — it becomes even more important to educate students about the variety of pathways to success available to them.
FOCUS ON FACULTY

Faculty members are key partners as the region is working to address workforce and economic issues. With much of their time dedicated to classroom specific tasks, faculty often do not have the capacity or resources to acquire information about industry trends and new technologies, or engage with their colleagues at neighboring colleges.

DSN sponsored opportunities for high school and community college faculty numbered more than 100 in the past two years. Some activities were directly related to imparting knowledge and education to faculty, others indirectly supported their work by contributing to curriculum improvement, pathways development, or partnerships.

From 2013-2015, Inland Empire DSNs worked toward strengthening the path from high school to community college by engaging faculty in the following ways:

- Sponsored articulation agreement development
- Facilitated conversations about dual enrollment options
- Ensured the engagement of K-12 partners with CalPass
- Assisted faculty in developing curriculum that aligns with industry certifications
- Utilized labor market information to inform conversations about program offerings and their relevance to employer needs
- Hosted industry specific events that served as learning communities for faculty
- Offered industry certification opportunities to faculty
- Sponsored faculty externships for on-going learning

The SB1070 project worked with regional colleges to:

- Increase the number of articulation agreements and credit awards in the region to nearly double over the past one and a half years
- Coordinate the adoption of the CATEMA system – 11 of 12 colleges now utilize CATEMA
- Create an articulation workgroup that developed resources for colleges, faculty, parents and students
- Provide training on articulation tools such as CATEMA and Get Focused, Stay Focused
**SHOWCASE**

**Hybrid/Electric Faculty Training**

Sixteen faculty members – 14 from the colleges’ automotive programs and two from high school programs – were convened by the Advanced Transportation and Renewable Energy DSN, Larry McLaughlin, at Riverside City College for hands-on training of hybrid and electric vehicles.

“It was a full blown training session, we were able to take that information and infuse that into our current curriculum which helps our students”.

Paul O’Connell, Automotive faculty member

O’Connell believes that the training allowed faculty to update their skill sets in advanced transportation. In turn, students benefited from improved curriculum and enriched class time because instructors were able to share their new skills and knowledge. The training will ultimately result in improved outcomes for businesses as students will be better prepared when entering the
FOCUS ON WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION PARTNERS

Workforce and education partners are invaluable to the efforts of the DWM initiative.

**Workforce Investment Boards** can help community colleges increase enrollment and success by directing potential students to programs and utilizing community college training to address workforce development needs.

**Other education providers**, such as four-year universities and K-12 districts, are critical partners in improving student success through the building of stronger pathways between the institutions.

In the region, DSNs engaged with workforce and education partners through the following efforts:

- Worked with four-year institutions to improve curriculum alignment with community colleges
- Held events to bring together industry with students and faculty
- Acted in an advisory capacity on various industry boards
- Helped coordinate training for filling employment vacancies in the region
- Worked with Regional Occupational Centers/Programs (ROPs) on how to integrate curriculum and opportunities into the ROP system

The SB1070 project was instrumental in seeing nearly 3,700 high school students earn college credit through articulation in 2013-14 and an estimated 3,000 in 2014-15.

SHOWCASE

High School CTE Teacher Event

Susanne Mata, Director of CTE projects at Mt. San Jacinto College, along with the region’s DSNs, convened high school CTE teachers from Riverside and San Bernardino counties for a conference.

“A lot of times, the teachers focus on where they work. This was a chance to bring them together from different schools. They were able to hear what other people were doing”.

*Susanne Mata, Director of SB1070 Regional Grant*

Attendees of this first time event worked on developing pathway documents with their colleagues who teach in the same sector – an asset that can help teachers, students, and the region as a whole.
FOCUS ON MARKETING

Marketing of regional CTE programs have been central to all grant projects. Community colleges have long understood that technical and proprietary schools create competition for students. Where for-profit education institutions rely on strategic marketing to attract students, community colleges have had to rely on lesser means of advertisement. The funding of DSN and other regional grants have at last provided for marketing and advertisement endeavors. More specifically, funds have been utilized to:

- Introduce Doing What Matters and the DSNs to regional stakeholders
- Develop an inventory of regional CTE programs and curricula
- Partner with the Foundation for Sustainable Communities to produce a white paper on ICT pathways in the region
- Develop sector specific web pages for the regional consortium website
- Promote Business Information Worker pathway curriculum to regional colleges
- Sponsor Norco College ICT/DM career exploration and concurrent enrollment conference
- Develop an online marketing campaign to introduce students to career opportunities in Global Trade and Logistics
- Develop an education and career pathways survey to understand student needs/wants and improve marketing efforts
- Collaborate with the business outreach teams of the San Bernardino and Riverside Counties Workforce Investment Boards in reaching out to the region’s small businesses
- Participate in DSN “Road Shows”, organized trips to a local college campus to raise awareness about the resources DSN and other regional grants can offer to community colleges
- Create a Small Business Resource Guide marketing brochure
- Host a Manufacturing Day event to showcase Advanced Manufacturing career opportunities to students
FOCUS ON NEW AND EMERGENT PROGRAMS

Mini-grants conferred to individual college programs expedite the development of new curriculum, alignment of curriculum between institutions, promotion of new programs, and advancement of career pathways. The awarding of individual funding allows colleges to pursue the creation and promotion of emergent CTE programs.

Some of the projects underwritten by DSN mini-grants include:

- **Chaffey College**
  - “Personal Care Assistant”

- **College of the Desert**
  - “Transition to Practice Allied Health”

- **Crafton Hills College**
  - “Strengthening Employability of Students through Clear ICT/DM Pathways from Secondary and Post-Secondary Education to the Workplace”

- **Mt. San Jacinto College**
  - “Social Media Marketing Online”
  - “Drug and Alcohol Counseling”

- **Norco College**
  - “Entrepreneurship”

- **Riverside City College**
  - “Information Assurance/Security for ICT”
  - “Adobe Certified Expert (ACE) Program”
  - “Ambulatory Care”

- **San Bernardino Valley College**
  - “3D Printing for Art”

- **Victor Valley College**
  - “Digital Media”

SHOWCASE

**Norco College Entrepreneurship Mini-grants**

Through the two mini grants, Gail Zwart, Professor of Business, has developed two stackable entrepreneurship certificates. Zwart was able to conduct outreach with the regional business community to learn about skills students need to succeed as entrepreneurs and collect input on course content before she developed the curriculum.

“I got to see fascinating products in development,” she said. “I think as a faculty member that was some of the best information that I got.”

*Gail Zwart, Professor, Norco College*

One of the most beneficial outcomes of the mini-grants was being able interact and confer with entrepreneurs in the area.
TARGETED OUTCOMES

Millions of dollars of financial investment for raising awareness of and successfully moving more students through CTE programs has resulted in important outcomes for the Inland Empire region. Previous to DWM and the regional DSN roles, community colleges could elect to function as single institutions or collaborate with only neighboring campuses. DWM promotes regional collaboration as a mechanism for success for all colleges and simultaneously for other education partners, other workforce stakeholders, and the region as a whole.

The contribution of the Inland Empire DSNs and other regional roles to student success is measured using the California Community Colleges’ Common Metrics. These metrics are defined by DWM and include specific Momentum Points and Leading Indicators related to pathways and curriculum alignment.2

In the Inland Empire, students and college faculty have resoundingly supported grant activities that targeted curriculum alignment and pathways development.

Curriculum Alignment

Over the period from 2013-2015, regional grant funds were used to provide 30 opportunities for curriculum alignment to faculty. With additional resources, faculty were able to align their programs with those at neighboring colleges including colleges outside of the region; consider program content in relation to third party certifications; learn about industry trends; and receive training on the use of new technologies. Improving curriculum to more effectively educate students meets the DSN requirement of increasing the number of students who complete CTE courses, programs, and soft skills training.3

Curriculum alignment with industry and with K-12 partners is essential to student success and to faculty development. Grant activities that benefit both groups are the most effective. In the Desert area, one such activity gained the praise of a local employer.

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3 California Community Colleges Momentum Points 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21-26 and Leading Indicators 1, 2, 5.
Career Pathways

The creation and improvement of pathway options for students has been a significant undertaking of DSN and other regional grants. There were 50 actions involving students, faculty, K-12 partners, and others focused on addressing improved pathways. Specifically, middle, high school, and community college students were led on visits of businesses, and participated in workshops and conferences with specific industry focus. Pathway development was also addressed through events that targeted incumbent workers via job fairs, workshops and short-term courses aimed at upward mobility through skills upgrades.

Some of the success stories from the pathways work in the region using DWM support funding include:

**Regional Action:** One unique activity that all DSNs and other grant projects participated in was the development of a regional strategic plan to improve pathways for students. The work was accomplished through a collaboration of all regional grant projects, the regional consortium chair, CTE Deans, and community college Vice-Presidents and Presidents. The proposed plan with expected outcomes was submitted to the Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Economic Development as a strategic mission for the regional colleges.  

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4 California Community Colleges Momentum Points 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25-28 and Leading Indicators 2, 4.
Summer Camp: One success story in pathway development was the Small Business and Entrepreneurs Summer Camp held at San Bernardino Valley College. The three-day-long camp intended to teach students the ins and outs of starting and running their own businesses. Various workshops were conducted on topics such as how to develop a business plan and soft skills needed for business development. About 50 students attended the camp, and five faculty conducted the workshops. Business owners shared challenges and lessons learned. Representatives from workforce development agencies served on the judging panel as well as presented information on resources available to start-up businesses. The event was so popular with the student attendees that a similar camp will be held again this coming winter.

SHOWCASE
Entrepreneurship Summer Camp for High School Students

“Businesses open all the time, but the vast majority close within the first four years. These issues can be addressed with some simple education, such as how to get a loan. If we can keep business open and growing, then it helps the economy at large.”

Lisa Kiplinger-Kennedy, Small Business & Entrepreneurship DSN

Positive outcomes of the camp included showing faculty the benefits of incorporating entrepreneurial content into curriculum, and encouraging students to think about the academic pathways from high school through college that can help them succeed as business owners.
SHOWCASE INTERVIEW
With Gail Zwart, Professor of Business, Norco College
“Entrepreneurship Mini Grants through the Doing What Matters Initiative”

Gail Zwart is a business professor at Norco College and has worked closely with the Inland Empire Entrepreneurship Deputy Sector Navigator Lisa Kiplinger-Kennedy, who is hosted at Victor Valley College. Zwart has served as the project director for two Entrepreneurship Mini Grants through the Doing What Matters Initiative.

Through two mini grants, Zwart has developed two stackable entrepreneurship certificates. The first certificate is called Entrepreneurship: Getting Started, which has successfully navigated the curriculum approval process at the college and is being offered this fall to students. The second certificate is in entrepreneurship financing and is currently going through curriculum approval process.

Overall, Zwart plans to develop three stackable certificates. The third certificate will be called entrepreneurship marketing. A student will be able to enroll in all three certificate programs to earn a larger 18-unit certificate in entrepreneurship.

“We’re doing it in phases,” Zwart said. “We are not a really big college so we have to space things out a bit in an attempt to get enough students in each of our classes.”

Through the mini grants, Zwart was able to conduct outreach with the regional business community and collect input on course content before she developed the curriculum. She also asked business leaders about the skills they thought students needed to succeed as entrepreneurs and what should be included in the curriculum. Among the groups she consulted were the Inland Empire Small Business Development Center, the Inland Empire Women’s Business Center, and Michael Stull, the academic director of entrepreneurship program at Cal State San Bernardino and the director of the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship. She also gathered suggestions from the industry advisory committee at Norco College and conferred with Kiplinger-Kennedy to determine what type of content Kiplinger-Kennedy thought should be included in the curriculum.

One of the most beneficial outcomes of the mini-grants was being able interact and confer with entrepreneurs in the area, Zwart said. “I got to see fascinating products in development,” she said. “I think as a faculty member that was some of the best information that I got.”

Zwart is currently working on organizing a Veterans Entrepreneurship Regional Conference which is scheduled to be held Oct. 29. Kiplinger-Kennedy is assisting in securing a keynote speaker for the event.
SHOWCASE INTERVIEW
With Jerry James, Project Manager at CLP
“Solar Energy Technician Curriculum Update”

Through an activity initiated by Deputy Sector Navigator Larry McLaughlin, Jerry James, a project manager for CLP, provided input on how to update curriculum for solar energy technicians. James is in charge of all utility solar builds for CLP in the continental United States, and is based in Tempe, Arizona.

The idea behind the curriculum update was to include the most relevant skills that employers like First Solar and other companies with similar projects in the region would find desirable in new hires. James and the Deputy Sector Navigator discussed the type of workers coming out of the program and how to weight the lesson plans with real-world examples, rather than theory.

The existing training program was geared more toward residential and minor commercial solar builds. The problem was that the class wasn’t relevant to utility-scale solar builds, James said. He helped to integrate new skills into the curriculum that would prepare a technician to work in the desert putting together a 350-megawatt or larger projects.

The curriculum also incorporated “OSHA 10,” a type of federally mandated safety training, which employers value for new hires.

“It is the most recognized safety training given,” James said.

He believes the updated curriculum impacted other colleges as well, including Palo Verde College, near Blythe. CLP and McLaughlin conducted job fairs at the college. James stressed that personal connections are important in connecting students with job opportunities, and he applauded the efforts of George Puddephatt, a special project coordinator for Riverside County Workforce Development, who has worked with employers to match graduating students with job openings.

“It did make a difference,” he said. “It made workers more qualified to be hired by me and to be hired on these projects.”

Positive outcomes from the DSN activity included job fairs that connected students with employment as well as new curriculum which provided skill sets that are in high demand by employers, making students more employable. Faculty benefited from gaining new insights into what skills and training are valued by solar industry employers who are undertaking utility-scale projects in the region. Companies in need of solar technicians gained skilled workers trained in the areas for which they were hiring. The community at large also benefited by having skilled workers who were able to fill local jobs, thereby supporting the local economic engine.
SHOWCASE INTERVIEW
With Paul O’Connell, Automotive Instructor, Riverside City College
“Hybrid/electric Vehicle Professional Development Training”

Paul O’Connell, an automotive instructor at Riverside City College, identified a training event on hybrid and electric vehicle technology organized by Deputy Sector Navigator Larry McLaughlin, as the most useful and relevant activity that he has attended through the Doing What Matters Initiative.

The training was held at Riverside City College and was attended by 16 faculty members from San Bernardino Valley College, Riverside City College, and College of the Desert as well as from high school programs. Larry McLaughlin secured a trainer from Northern California to conduct the multi-day training.

The goal of the training was to provide professional development for automotive faculty in the region. The training involved hands-on learning. Participants took apart vehicles and were able to study electric and hybrid systems in depth. Instructors obtained real-world experience in some of the latest automotive technologies and received first-hand knowledge of the vehicles’ systems.

“It was a full-blown training session,” O’Connell said. “We were able to take that information and infuse that into our current curriculum which helps our students.”

The overall outcome of the training activity was that it allowed faculty to update their skill sets in advanced transportation, he said. Ultimately, improved curriculum and enriched class time were outcomes for students because instructors could share their new skills and knowledge in the classroom, and faculty were able to incorporate the most current information on advances in hybrid and electric vehicles into their curriculum.

“That’s important for us because we don’t work in the industry every day,” O’Connell said of automotive faculty. “We need to keep the information current, so we can pass that along to our students.”

O’Connell said an important part of the training had to do with safety since electric and hybrid vehicles can be incredibly dangerous to work on and could kill an inexperienced mechanic.

Another positive outcome of the training event had to do with businesses. Students who complete the updated automotive courses will be better prepared to enter the workforce, and businesses will benefit from hiring students who have a cutting-edge skill set in automotive technologies. Because the technologies incorporated into the updated curriculum are so new, the current employees of those businesses don’t have the skills sets that the recently graduated students have, making those students highly desirable to employers.

“I think it builds pathways to industry,” O’Connell said. “The student comes out with a better skill set, so they are more likely to be employed.”
SHOWCASE INTERVIEW
With Lisa Kiplinger-Kennedy, Small Business and Entrepreneurship DSN, Victor Valley College
“Small Business and Entrepreneurs Summer Camp”

Lisa Kiplinger-Kennedy, the Inland Empire’s small business and entrepreneurship Deputy Sector Navigator, considers the Small Business and Entrepreneurs Summer Camp held at San Bernardino Valley College in July to be one of her most successful activities to date.

“I really enjoyed interacting with the kids,” she said. “It was fun to see the faculty-student interactions.”

High school students were invited to attend the three-day-long camp intended to teach students the ins and outs of starting and running their very own businesses. Various workshops were conducted on topics such as how to develop a business plan and soft skills needed for business development. On the last day of the camp, students presented their business idea pitches to a panel of judges. About 50 students attended the camp, and five faculty conducted the workshops. Business owners shared challenges and lessons they learned from starting their businesses. Representatives from workforce development agencies served on the judging panel as well as presented information on resources available to start-up businesses.

The event was so well received, Kiplinger-Kennedy is now planning a winter entrepreneurship camp. Because high school will be in session, the camp will be held over three consecutive Saturdays rather than during the week.

“In the end, everyone was asking when our next event was going to be, and to me that was huge, which is why we decided to do the next event,” she said.

The goal of the camp was to teach students what it really takes to run a successful business. Kiplinger-Kennedy said the camp addressed the “nuts and bolts” of starting a business: What are your expenses going to be? How are you going to finance it? How are you going to market it? Who is going to be your team?

Team building and skills related to working well with others were also addressed. Students discussed their personality traits and the importance of collaborating with others, despite what may be perceived differences. “Businesses open all the time, but the vast majority close within the first four years,” Kiplinger-Kennedy said. “These issues can be addressed with some simple education, such as how to get a loan. … If we can keep business open and growing, then it helps the economy at large.”

Positive outcomes of the camp included showing faculty the benefits of incorporating entrepreneurial content into curriculum, and encouraging students to think about the academic pathways from high school through college that can help them succeed as business owners.
SHOWCASE INTERVIEW
With Susanne Mata, Director of CTE Projects for Mt. San Jacinto College
“Regional CTE conference, Unlocking Key Partnerships”

Susanne Mata, the director of CTE projects for Mt. San Jacinto College, identified the “Unlocking Key Partnerships” conference as the DSN activity that has been most useful to her work. The two-day conference was held at the end of April and convened high school CTE teachers from Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Nearly 80 people attended the event.

“A lot of times, the teachers focus on where they work,” Mata said. “This was a chance to bring them together from different schools. They were able to hear what other people were doing. I thought that was a really good thing.”

Deputy Sector Navigators from the Inland Empire attended the event and shared information on the projects they were working on. Faculty who attended were able to provide feedback to the DSNs, regarding what assistance they needed. Mata and a colleague conducted a breakout session on the “Get focused, Stay focused” initiative, a career exploration program for high school students.

The two-day conference was kicked off by a keynote speaker from industry who talked about workforce trends and building connections and partnerships. Lori Sanchez, from the Inland Empire/Desert Region Center of Excellence, also gave a presentation on labor market information in the region. On the second day, the faculty split up into groups based on their teaching disciplines. The teachers were tasked with completing a pathway activity, mapping out how students could pursue a certain career track from high school through college and what courses they would need to complete to obtain employment. They also incorporated information from the first day’s speakers into the pathways documents.

Faculty could fill out a card at the end of the conference requesting more information. Mata was able to follow up with them and schedule appointments to share more in-depth information about the work of the DSNs. An exit survey was conducted, and one of the most common items of feedback from teachers was that there are not enough opportunities that offer professional development and training to CTE faculty.

After the conference, the pathways documents that were created by each group were sent out to all the teachers who had attended the event. The information laid out in the documents is an asset that can help teachers, students, and the region as a whole, Mata said.

“I work with the 12 (community) colleges and all the high schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, and sometimes it’s hard to get the right people to the table,” Mata said. “This was a chance to meet with the right people at the right time, and they were all in the same place. It was a chance to make some good connections.”
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