SDIC Employment Readiness and Job Placement Project

Project Description

This project addresses the need to develop an infrastructure and processes for a regional system that will provide all of the San Diego Imperial County community colleges with access to programs that will help students develop workplace and career skills, including soft skills, and acquire employment upon completion of their program of study. WestEd is working with the colleges to develop a system with the following three key functions:

(1)   proactive CTE career planning and job readiness skills development;

(2)   proactive, case-managed job placement for CTE students, especially in the priority sectors (health, life sciences/biotech, clean energy and transportation) and emerging sectors (advanced manufacturing and ICT/digital media); and

(3)   an online management system that provides for student tracking of progress, benchmark intervention, job placement and documentation of all services provided.

Once complete and fully implemented, the proposed system will allow students to transport their career plans among the colleges, access regional internship opportunities, develop the work readiness skills they need, and get help to find a job in their field.

Methodology and Approach

Guided by **human-centered service design** principles, WestEd will draw upon its experience and expertise to support the Consortium in building the **human** an **electronic infrastructure** needed to implement such a system—one that is technically sound, harnesses the expertise of the users, and builds capacity for ongoing system improvement.

In recent years, Guided Pathways has emerged as the primary framework within California Community Colleges to support student completion. The SDIC Employment Readiness and Job Placement Project is aligning its efforts with this initiative.

Figure 1. Four Pillars of Guided Pathways

Project Components

- **Key Informant Interviews** (Jun – Sep 2017) - Conduct initial fact-finding and build relationships with SDIC faculty, career, and academic counselors, deans, and leadership.

- **Evaluation of Existing Tools** (Jul – Oct 2017) - Identify and evaluate promising tools for possible consideration by SDIC

- **Review of National Exemplars** (Aug – Nov 2017) - Identify "best practice" sites nationally reflecting SDIC implementation goals.

- **Virtual Engagements** (Oct 2017) - Conduct second phase of fact-finding to delve deeper into elements of the roadmap to inform development of use cases, system specifications, and final recommendations.

- **In-Person Convenings** (Spring 2018) - Conduct one-four regional in-person convenings bringing together representatives from all stakeholder groups to support the implementation of the approved recommendations and develop a comprehensive implementation plan.

- **National Site Visits** (Spring 2018) - Conduct a series of "site visits" to review a short list of promising tools or models of implementation to inform specifications and recommendations.

Emerging Perspectives

Interviews with Key Informants

- Interviewees were engaged and excited to share their ideas, and there is *interest in better connecting instruction and student services.* Many staff are part-time and tend not to utilize tools or processes beyond their areas of direct responsibility. *Faculty generally remain focused on course / program completion, though some have expressed a desire to track students' progress beyond program completion.*

- *Functions tend to happen in silos,* though there are promising signs of collaboration among staff to support faculty and students. One college, for example has moved career services under instruction, and several staff have *expressed interest in using some form of a case management system* to support student success.

- Career guidance and planning functions are handled by both counselors and career center staff, depending on counselor expertise/experience, institutional capacity, and organizational structure. Few have dedicated career counselors; most are general counseling staff who have been assigned career development responsibilities.

- Work-based learning is handled by various staff and faculty.

- Each college is unique in terms of its organizational structure, tools, and processes. In general, *employment is still not explicitly integrated into community college missions*, and no single system or set of systems emerged consistently across the colleges, though the College Career Network (Grossmont, Cuyamaca, Miramar, San Diego Mesa, San Diego City) and MiraCosta's JAIN system show promise.

Evaluation of Existing Tools

Frontrunners include the following:

- Dropout Detective
- GradGuru
- Starfish Enterprise System (Starfish Early Alert, Starfish Connect, Starfish Degree Planner)
- JAIN (GradLeaders) (Miracosta)
- College Career Network (Grossmont, Cuyamaca, Miramar, San Diego Mesa, San Diego City)
- Digital badges from the New World of Work (21st Century Skills) and LaunchPath (alumni associations, internship completion, and career pathways)