



# Applied and **WORK-BASED LEARNING**

Preparing students to succeed academically and thrive in their future careers

## WHAT is applied and work-based learning?

Applied and work-based learning experiences allow students to apply their classroom learning in professional settings and gain real-world experience in the process. Examples of experiences include internships, apprenticeships, workplace simulations, student-led enterprises, and other opportunities in the business or nonprofit arenas. Faculty play a critical role in ensuring these experiences are embedded into curriculum and support learning.



“In the 21st century, the majority of entry-level jobs require a rich mix of formal postsecondary education along with high-quality work experience.”

*(Carnevale & Smith, 2018)*

## HOW does it help students?

Applied and work-based learning can provide students a deeper, more engaging and relevant learning experience in a number of ways:

-  **Connects academic learning with real-world experiences, making learning relevant**
-  **Supports students in defining career goals**
-  **Enhances student motivation, retention, and academic success**
-  **Gives students practical experience and helps them develop in-demand technical skills, 21st century skills, and career competencies**

“Applied learning enables students to learn through doing, which can result in greater understanding than learning through reading and listening alone.”

*(California Department of Education, 2010)*

## What do the experts say?

Research has found that work-based learning increases students’ persistence, graduation rates, and employment rates, with notable gains for students from underserved racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Holzer & Lerman, 2014; Kuh, 2008; Lerman, 2010; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007).



## Career Awareness and Exploration

**24%** (39% CE; 16% Non-CE) of responding faculty incorporate **workplace tours** into their classes



## Career Preparation

**27%** (31% CE; 25% Non-CE) of responding faculty incorporate **service learning** into their classes



## Career Training

**34%** (48% CE; 25% Non-CE) of responding faculty incorporate **unpaid internships** into their classes and **26%** (40% CE; 18% Non-CE) incorporate **paid internships** into their classes

WBL exists on a continuum that reflects the progress of experiences from awareness-building to training. Students often cycle back through the continuum many times throughout college and throughout their careers.

## What faculty in San Diego and Imperial County community colleges are saying about work-based learning

Faculty<sup>1</sup> from 10 community colleges in San Diego and Imperial Counties were surveyed about their involvement with and attitudes about work-based learning.

### Opportunities for collaboration and growth

#### Room to expand applied and work-based learning opportunities across the colleges

- **Room to increase intensity of applied and work-based learning activities:** A larger percentage of applied and work-based learning activities offered are low-intensity (e.g., career days or industry speakers) versus deeper applied learning and job placements (e.g., internships, apprenticeships)
- **Room for more faculty to get involved:** There is room to expand applied and work-based learning across the colleges for both CE and Non-CE to make learning more engaging and relevant. Collaboration can help make opportunities available to all.

#### Faculty reactions to applied and work-based learning

- 71% of responding faculty who use applied and work-based learning strategies do so because it “brings relevance to curriculum – helps students understand why they need to learn something”
- “[There’s] a cultural shift at the colleges that it’s every faculty member’s responsibility to prepare every student for success in their career.”
- “My wish would be that career education programs collaborated with GE courses (and vice versa) to build 21st century skills in focused, reinforced, relevant ways.”

<sup>1</sup> Surveys were sent to a selection of faculty across 10 community colleges in San Diego and Imperial Counties. A total of 376 faculty responded – 140 of those were career-education faculty and the other 236 were academic faculty.