



Executive Summary

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California Community Colleges lead the state and nation in providing postsecondary career technical education (CTE) and training. Serving more than 2.1 million students, the 113 community colleges provide workforce training, basic skills education, and transfer preparation. Students can enroll in associate degree and certificate programs in 350 fields of study. The colleges also offer apprenticeship programs, short-term training aligned to third-party credentials, and incumbent worker training to upgrade skill sets in various industry sectors.

Employers currently struggle to find workers who possess the necessary skills to fill job openings, and this skills gap is projected to grow. By 2025, 30 percent of all job openings in California – or a total of 1.9 million jobs – will require some form of postsecondary education short of a four-year degree. California’s education pipeline is not keeping pace with the higher levels of skills and education required by employers and must significantly increase the number of individuals with industry-valued, middle-skill degrees, certificates and credentials.



“If we don’t get it right in California, not only California but the country stands to lose its global competitiveness.”

Brice W. Harris, Chancellor
California Community Colleges

Far too many Californians do not possess the right skills and education to obtain a good job. Employers in key industries have difficulty filling job openings because the workers with the skills and aptitudes required are in short supply. Unless California immediately begins to address this mismatch, the state’s economic prosperity and the success and income mobility of thousands of Californians are threatened.

California’s community colleges have a strong career technical education mission and, with added emphasis and prioritization, are well positioned to close this impending skills gap. The CCC Board of Governors launched the Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy (Strong Workforce Task Force) to address the projected shortfall in middle-skill workers. The task force, comprised of both internal and external stakeholders, was convened to recommend a series of policies and practices to increase the production of industry-valued degrees and credentials.

The 25 recommendations in this report build upon current college efforts and address barriers to enhancing the capacity of California Community Colleges to prepare students for high-value jobs in regions throughout the state. The recommendations are the culmination of extensive input from more than 1,200 stakeholders during a nine-month period to identify actions that can be taken to provide policy guidance, regulatory review, and legislative and budgetary actions with the goal of increasing the number of students obtaining CTE degrees and certificates – crucial for closing California’s skills gap.

The importance of creating incentives, streamlining processes, and identifying and showcasing best practices was an overarching theme of the deliberations and the final recommendations.

Student Success

Community college students need a broader range of support services than traditional, four-year, post-secondary students. Both populations are challenged by the need to identify a viable career path, but a greater percentage of community college students are first-generation and are prone to experience major impediments to completing their education. The Strong Workforce Task Force recommends a series of actions to raise awareness of and support for career exploration and planning starting in high school, to collaborate with education and workforce partners to enhance support services, and to increase financial support for community college CTE students.

Task Force Recommendations:

1. Broaden and enhance career exploration and planning, work-based learning opportunities, and other supports for students.
2. Improve CTE student progress and outcomes.

Career Pathways

Career pathways provide a seamless sequence of academic and CTE coursework across K-12 and postsecondary education. The Strong Workforce Task Force recommends creating pathways and curricula driven by industry and labor market needs, contextualizing basic skills and workplace readiness skills into pathway curricula, developing model CTE curricula and ensuring that career pathways meet the needs of non-traditional students.

Task Force Recommendation:

3. Develop and broadly publicize industry-informed career pathways that prepare students for jobs needed within the regional labor market.



Workforce Data and Outcomes

Colleges need robust metrics and outcome data in order to continuously improve pathways within career technical education, identify which programs employers' value, and align their program and course offerings to local and regional labor market needs. The Strong Workforce Task Force recommends building on current community college initiatives measuring student progress to align common metrics among all workforce programs; to increase the ability of governmental entities to share employment, licensing, certification, and wage outcome information; and to improve the quality and accessibility of student outcome and labor market data.

Task Force Recommendations:

4. Create common workforce metrics for all state-funded CTE programs and expand the definition of student success to better reflect the wide array of CTE outcomes of community college students.
5. Establish a student identifier for high school students and those enrolled in postsecondary education and training programs to enable California to track workforce progress and outcomes for students across institutions and programs.
6. Improve the quality, accessibility and utility of student outcome and labor market data to support students, educators, colleges, regions, employers, local workforce investment boards, and the state in CTE program development and improvement efforts.

Curriculum

A rapidly changing labor market and diverse student body present a series of challenges and opportunities for career technical education. Faculty strive to keep courses and programs current with appropriate levels of academic rigor, yet lengthy local- and state-level approval processes can delay curriculum development and revision. The Strong Workforce Task Force supports clarifying and streamlining curriculum development and approval processes, achieving better alignment of curricula with the needs of business and industry, and improving articulation across institutions to support portability and completion in our increasingly mobile society.

Task Force Recommendations:

7. Evaluate, strengthen, and revise the curriculum development process to ensure alignment from education to employment.
8. Evaluate, revise and resource the local, regional, and statewide CTE curriculum approval process to ensure timely, responsive, and streamlined curriculum approval.
9. Improve program review, evaluation, and revision processes to ensure program relevance to students, business, and industry as reflected in labor market data.
10. Facilitate curricular portability across institutions.
11. Develop, identify and disseminate effective CTE practices.
12. Clarify practices and address issues of course repetition for CTE courses when course content evolves to meet changes in skill requirements.





CTE Faculty

Education and work experience requirements for hiring CTE faculty and salary differentials in highly paid fields may limit a college's ability to recruit a qualified pool of faculty for CTE courses and programs. The Strong Workforce Task Force recommends a range of activities to increase the pool of CTE faculty including developing pipelines for industry professionals to teach in community colleges, enhancing professional development opportunities for current faculty to maintain currency in industry standards, and exploring solutions for attracting industry experts to community college teaching from high-salaried fields.

Task Force Recommendations:

13. Increase the pool of qualified CTE instructors by addressing CTE faculty recruitment and hiring practices.
14. Consider options for meeting minimum qualifications to better integrate industry professionals who possess significant experience into CTE instructional programs.
15. Enhance professional development opportunities for CTE faculty to maintain industry and program relevance.
16. Explore solutions to attract industry professionals in high-salaried occupations to become CTE faculty in community colleges.

Regional Coordination

State-, federal-, and foundation-funded initiatives to address regional workforce and economic development often have similar and overlapping goals that may result in a fragmentation of efforts, duplication of services, and confusion to both students and employers. Successful integration of these initiatives can result in effective practices to meet student, job seeker, and regional economic needs. The Strong Workforce Task Force recommends enhancing the regional CTE framework within the community college system to improve coordination and provide greater alignment with the colleges' overall governance and reporting structures. The task force also endorses developing robust regional partnerships among community college, industry, and other workforce and economic development entities to improve CTE program delivery and responsiveness to regional and industry labor market needs.

Task Force Recommendations:

17. Strengthen communication, coordination, and decision-making between regional CTE efforts and the colleges to meet regional labor market needs.
18. Clarify and modify, as appropriate, state regulations to allow colleges to regionalize course articulation along career pathways utilizing regional or state curriculum models.
19. Develop regional leadership and operational partnerships among community college, industry, labor, and other workforce and economic development entities to improve the delivery of all CTE efforts.
20. Develop robust connections between community colleges, business and industry representatives, labor and other regional workforce development partners to align college programs with regional and industry needs and provide support for CTE programs.
21. Create a sustained, public outreach campaign to industry, high school students, counselors, parents, faculty, staff, and the community at large to promote career development and attainment and the value of career technical education.



Funding

Career technical education courses are funded at the same level as general education, lecture-based courses; however, these programs have higher startup and operating costs, high costs for equipment and specialized facilities, increased needs for professional development, and more frequent curriculum revision and program review. To ensure that CTE courses keep pace with the increasing demand for middle skill jobs, the Strong Workforce Task Force recommends a series of funding strategies that include establishing a supplemental funding source targeted to support high-cost courses and programs, creating a funding stream to support regional and local infrastructure and coordination, and leveraging public workforce funding streams to support training efforts for priority sectors in regions.

Task Force Recommendations:

22. Establish a sustained, funding source to increase community colleges' capacity to create, adapt, and maintain quality CTE courses and programs that are responsive to regional labor market needs.
23. Create a predictable, targeted, and sustained funding stream that leverages multiple local, state, and federal CTE and workforce funds to support an infrastructure for collaboration at the state, regional and local levels; establish regional funding of program start-up and innovation; and develop other coordination activities.
24. Review, analyze, and modify, as needed, laws and regulations related to student fees for disposable and consumable materials and CTE facilities.
25. Create incentives and streamline processes to maximize public and private investment in support of CTE programs.



Conclusion

The recommendations of the Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation, and a Strong Economy are the result of months of deliberations based on input from a wide variety of sources reflecting agreement from both internal and external stakeholders of the community college system. Some recommendations may require changes in statute or regulation, while others can be accomplished within the existing structure and parameters of the system. In all cases, these recommendations enhance career technical education and workforce training to meet the demands of the economy and the labor market, thus benefitting individuals, communities, and the entire state.

To ensure the economic prosperity of the state and its diverse population, California must address the issues and recommendations identified by the task force. This requires a broad-based commitment from the entire community college system, education and workforce partners, business and industry, and state policymakers so more Californians can acquire the education, skills, and work experience to participate in a strong and vibrant economy.