

Expanding Paid Work Experience

A GUIDE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRACTITIONERS



FOUNDATION *for* CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Workforce Development

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SECTION 1:

The Power of Work-based Learning

Internship Introduction

In California community colleges, paid internships and other paid work-based learning (WBL) programs are proving to be highly impactful for student success, “...students employed through work-study programs or participating in paid internships are actually more likely to graduate than similar students who do not participate.” — *EdCentral*

By integrating WBL across disciplines, we eliminate the need for differentiation between career education and traditional academic fields, fostering optimal, integrated learning experiences for students. This approach allows us to design meaningful programs that align coursework with

industry standards, provide professional experience, build professional networks, and address local workforce needs.

The Governor’s Career Education Master Plan emphasizes the importance of intentional collaboration between the separate tiers of the California state education system to enhance career options for students. This collaboration should focus on expanding access to robust and paid WBL programs for students statewide, supporting them throughout their educational journeys.

Community college students often lack access to internship opportunities, with 4-year universities offering internships at a significantly higher rate. Nearly 64% of California community college students are already working part-time, but most likely not in their chosen career path. It’s time for California community colleges to close that opportunity gap by prioritizing career exploration and paid work experiences throughout students’ journeys. “We need to rethink college-connected work experiences not as a perk for a few students, but as a widely accessible way of promoting student success.” — *EdCentral*

In challenging economic times, paid work experience becomes even more critical, with unpaid work creating even further opportunity gaps between students with resources and those without. Designed career exploration and opportunities aligned with students’ areas of study produce evident and impactful outcomes. Our approach revolves around equitable, solutions-focused strategies.

California Community Colleges Chancellor Christian’s planning document, [Vision 2030: A Roadmap for California Community Colleges](#), emphasizes equitable workforce and economic development as key goals. This includes increasing educational access for prospective low-income learners through customized educational and training opportunities, specifically including, “...apprenticeships, WBL and incorporating LAEP.”

Internships and other WBL models, including pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and practicums, are longstanding models from which to build. We offer you a resource of best practices, strategies, and useful tools for building equitable, successful, and scalable work-based learning programs on your campus.



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SECTION 1.A:

THE BASICS

How to Build Paid Internship Programs

Initial 10 Steps to Building an Internship Program

1. **Commit** to the principle that career exploration and paid experiences must be threaded throughout your students' journey.
2. Identify **faculty and administrative champions**.
3. Prioritize serving a more **inclusive** body of students by **expanding access** to meaningful WBL opportunities.
4. Plan for **sustainability** by evaluating the availability of your funding sources and the duration of any secured grants.
5. Foster relationships with experts in the field to identify any **workforce gaps** and help design **industry-informed programs** and curricula.
6. Bolster your industry Advisory Board with a **core group** of engaged members to outline the **essential skill sets/skill assessments**.
7. Include a **work readiness component** while structuring your program model as well as other critical factors such as course integration, credit eligibility, cohort dynamics, and semester alignment when structuring your program model to ensure a comprehensive approach.
8. Partner with campus student support services, such as the Career Center, or community service organizations to provide **wrap-around supports**, strengthen student success, and alleviate potential barriers.
9. Employ **student-centered outreach** in developing your recruitment strategy, aimed at engaging student clubs, faculty, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and other student support systems, to help recruit a diverse pool of candidates.
10. Be **intentional** in placing your students in course-aligned, engaging workforce learning opportunities with defined objectives and deliverables that have been directly **informed** by industry's voice and workforce needs.



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Critical Factors in Paid Work Experience Programs

As you develop your strategy for introducing a paid work experience program at your campus, laying the foundation with a well-defined vision, objectives, and solid program design is critical. This framework will address essential aspects that include program management, work readiness, worksite identification, financial planning and funding sources, as well as legal responsibilities. Some specific considerations are:

- **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT** - Who will provide ongoing oversight of student performance, employer satisfaction, and hours worked?
- **STUDENTS** - Are the students ready for the paid work experience? Who is responsible for recruiting the students?
- **HOST SITE(S)** - Are there employer sites to host the experience? Who is responsible for securing and vetting the sites?
- **FUNDING** - Is the host employer paying the wages, benefits, and pre-placement screening? If not, has funding been secured to cover these costs?
- **EMPLOYER OF RECORD** - Is the host employer serving as the employer of record? If not, what entity will be the employer of record?
- **CONTRACTING ENTITY** - Who will be legally responsible for the contract with the employer of record?

(Source: Building Blocks for Internship Design, CIWEA Webinar 2-2020)

Utilize the accompanying checklist as a practical tool to guide you through the implementation process:

Paid Work Experience Program



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Not Entirely Convinced?

You do not have to start from scratch. Paid WBL (internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, etc.) is instrumental in student success. Funding for these programs is at historic levels. There are numerous funding streams available from large foundations, industry associations, labor, federal and state programs, and the Chancellor's Office.

- **IF** you can't identify a faculty champion, **THEN** develop, foster, or hire one. See the resources for additional guidance on how to develop more beacons of student and industry engagement on your campus.
- **IF** you don't have the funding to support faculty to design and oversee internships, **THEN** tap into the various programs available. Secure a grant to get the process started and offer faculty appropriate release time for design and development.
- **IF** you are lacking a core group of dedicated Industry Advisory Board members, **THEN** mix it up, add some new members, and engage with them more frequently and intentionally. Some effective strategies for reaching out to potential board members include connecting with industry-specific organizations, local Chambers of Commerce, and workforce development boards. Another great option is using the power of LinkedIn as a professional social media tool.
- **IF** you don't have the personnel to obtain or administer grants, **THEN** hire a dedicated grant person. Start by utilizing categorical funding and as more grants are funded, the payoff will justify the expense.
- **IF** that is not possible, **THEN** identify community partners who are eager to work with community college students as part of their mission and can help with grants, employer connections, program design, and administrative support services.

SECTION 2:

Intentional Budgeting and Funding

Sustainable budgeting is key to the successful implementation of paid WBL programs and requires a comprehensive and well-thought-out financial plan. A comprehensive understanding of total costs, encompassing both individual program components and overall program administration, enhances program resilience.

Cost categories to consider that can significantly impact an overall budget include:

- **PROGRAM PERSONNEL:** Faculty and support staff that will provide instruction, student support, and execute program objectives.
- **INSTRUCTION:** Related course enhancements or supplies to be included.
- **WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT SERVICES:** Basic needs assistance or workplace readiness support provided to students.
- **EMPLOYEE SCREENING:** Required pre-employment screening costs that might not be covered by the worksite.
- **WAGES AND INSURANCE:** Student wages, taxes, and workers' compensation.
- **EMPLOYER-OF-RECORD SERVICE:** Associated fees for a third-party organization that becomes the legal employer of students placed in work experience.

Furthermore, determining funding source(s), whether it be employers, grants, LAEP, or a combination of all, is of paramount importance. If relying on grants, durations should be carefully assessed, as proactive efforts to secure future grants are necessary in any sustainable planning process. For more information on available funding opportunities for WBL, we recommend you explore the FoundationCCC's "[Grow Apprenticeship California Funding Matrix](#)." This resource provides valuable insights into potential funding sources beyond apprenticeships and can serve as a valuable tool for your specific WBL initiatives.



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LAEP as a Funding Stream

Designed to bridge the gap between college and career, LAEP provides an opportunity for eligible students at public colleges and universities to earn additional state aid to help cover their educational costs while gaining education-aligned, career-related employment. The program aims to promote equity in WBL opportunities and better align higher education with workforce needs.

LAEP provides an opportunity to fund meaningful WBL programs for eligible students. It can also serve as a powerful employer engagement tool to secure internships at local K-12 campuses, local nonprofits, or with private employers. The program, slated to run through the 2030-31 academic year, offers potential for sustainability by covering up to 100% compensation for college students working at their own California community college or university campus, up to 90% of compensation if eligible students are placed with a local K-12 district or a nonprofit, and 50% of compensation if they are placed with a private business.

As you plan your budget and consider leveraging LAEP as a funding stream, it's essential to be mindful of specific points that may impact the overall financial strategy. While LAEP offers clear benefits, there are critical considerations to ensure a smooth and sustainable implementation.

LAEP at a Glance

(Information based on 2023 guidelines from the [California Student Aid Commission's website](#).)

Category	Eligibility	Points of Consideration
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From an underrepresented background. At least half-time enrollment at a participating public college or university. California resident classification. Satisfactory academic progress in a program leading to a degree or certificate. Demonstrated financial need. Eligibility to work in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underrepresented: See the LAEP handbook for further definition of underrepresented background. Students will have to meet at least one of the criteria. Unmet need: LAEP is a part of financial aid and therefore institutions are responsible for determining a student's total work hours while considering unmet needs. Priority: Priority will be given to first-generation college students, current/ former foster youth, and students who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Further priority will be given to students majoring in STEM disciplines.
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Colleges and Universities: Research centers and institutions operated by public post-secondary educational institutions are given opportunities to participate in research. Nonprofit and For-Profit Employers: Nonsectarian, nonpolitical organizations or corporations capable of providing or connecting students to full-time employment after graduation. Public Schools: Educational institutions operated by school districts, and county superintendents of schools, Department of Youth Authority, or Department of Education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of LAEP Funds can be allocated towards student compensation for placements with public colleges and universities. However, if the direct employer is a UC, CSU, or CCC, they must provide participating students with direct opportunities to participate in the research that is undertaken at these institutions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research must be a significant component of the position. Campus can define the research. 90% of LAEP Funds can be allocated toward student compensation for placements with nonprofits or Public Schools. 50% of LAEP Funds can be allocated toward compensation for placements with for-profits. LAEP Funds may not be used to cover sick leave, vacation pay, holiday pay, fringe benefits, workers' compensation, retirement, transportation costs, or other benefits. This is true even if LAEP funds are used for 100% of the student's compensation. An Employer Agreement between the institution and employer is required for all LAEP positions with outside employers. Ensure that the placement of LAEP students does not displace workers currently employed by the participating employer, or impair existing contracts for services. Ensure the work performed by the student shall not be related to the activities of any sectarian organization or any partisan or nonpartisan political activities. Ensure that students will be paid at a comparable rate to that of paid positions for comparable duties within the organization or similar positions in the field of work. Emphasis on employers that are capable of providing students with full-time employment opportunities, or opportunities to connect with other employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities, within their areas of study after graduation.

SECTION 3:

Fostering Partnerships

Internal Partners

Success requires a coordinated effort to provide your students with opportunities. Developing a WBL task force with representation from several of the key departments on your campus, including Career Services, Financial Aid, Risk Management, and Student Services, will help to establish better processes and not duplicate efforts. Moreover, fostering strong partnerships offers the benefits of on-site expertise, such as tapping into the Career Center to provide tailored work readiness guidance to students, collaborating with Financial Aid to explore potential funding options for special populations (such as LAEP), working with Risk Management to ensure compliance, and engaging Student Services to enhance support or help minimize potential barriers to employment. These collaborations can create a holistic support system that not only streamlines administrative processes but also enriches the quality of the program, ultimately contributing to the satisfaction and success of the student.

Industry Partners

Establishing strong relationships with industry partners is foundational for the success of any educational program. Fostering these connections serves a dual purpose: It enables educational institutions to stay informed about industry trends, workforce needs, and emerging skill requirements, thereby ensuring that curricula remain relevant and responsive to real-world demands. Additionally, the careful selection of industry partners aligned with the program's vision and goals is critical. When partners share the educational institution's commitment to providing students with quality assignments that enhance their skill sets while addressing the industry's workforce gaps, a symbiotic relationship is formed. This collaboration not only benefits students by providing practical, hands-on experience but also meets the needs of employers seeking skilled and well-prepared individuals. Furthermore, identifying worksites that cultivate a mentoring culture enhances the overall internship experience. In environments where there's room for questions, support, and guidance, students can seamlessly transition into their first professional roles, gaining not just technical skills but also valuable insights and mentorship crucial for their professional development. This approach creates a win-win scenario, fostering a mutually beneficial partnership that contributes to the growth and success of both educational institutions and industry partners.



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Foundational Framework:

TEMPLATES FOR COLLEGE-INDUSTRY INTERNSHIP COLLABORATION

[Worksite Screening Questions](#)

[Template Job Description](#)

[Industry Guide to Hosting Interns](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON A FACULTY CHAMPION

Rose-Margaret Ekeng-Itua, Ph.D.

Only one in nine interns nationwide hail from a community college. Despite this, a significant number of interns from a Northern California community college secure placements at prestigious institutions like Lawrence Livermore Labs, the Stanford Linear Accelerator, and Tesla, thanks to the unwavering commitment of Dr. Rose-Margaret Ekeng-Itua, Ph.D., the Program Director for the Smart Technology Manufacturing Program at Ohlone Community College.



Rose-Margaret's dedication stems from her belief in providing WBL opportunities to underserved students, influenced by her experiences partnering with Virgin and T-Mobile in the U.K. It was there that she saw how essential internships and workforce experience were as a strategy for retention and how students exhibit more enthusiasm for the real-world application of the sciences with every new experience.

More recently, Rose-Margaret's trajectory led her to the epicenter of funding for the E in STEM — Washington, D.C., where she encountered individuals who encouraged her to apply for a National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education grant. Reflecting on this opportunity, she notes “It was a blank canvas for women in Smart Manufacturing and expanded to underserved and first-generation students.” Following an intensive application process, she successfully secured the grant, enabling her to establish the SMISVIP. The funding for the grant recently expired, but during the three years of the program, participation increased from 20 to 60 interns. Rose-Margaret attributes the success of the program to fostering relationships with her already established industry partners. “We formalized it by eliciting the necessary technical/professional skill sets from a core group of advisory board members.” At the time, her students faced limited opportunities, primarily directed toward those attending 4-year institutions. However, in the summer of 2020, she collaborated with the Director of Recruiting for Engineers at Lawrence Livermore Labs to advocate for lab internships. They became the inaugural company to host interns from Ohlone Community College. Stanford Linear Accelerator, Tesla, and other companies later joined as partners.

She emphasizes the importance of employer engagement and personalized support for students, addressing challenges like imposter syndrome. “We reach out one-to-one as they are often intimidated by the national reputations of some of our industry partners.” Through her program, students with diverse backgrounds excel, exemplified by a student with a 2.3 GPA interning at SLAC and now transferring to San Jose State University. “The key was just really having intention. Now, we are inundated with requests.”

To maximize your relationships with your advisory board, Rose-Margaret suggests scheduling meetings at their convenience and emphasizing the advantage of diversifying their workforce. She stays actively engaged and reciprocates by attending their networking events as well. Rose-Margaret's dedication highlights the profound effect of consistent support on student achievement.

“The key was just really having intention. Now, we are inundated with requests.”

SECTION 4:

Lighten the Load with Career Catalyst

FoundationCCC is the nonprofit partner to the California Community Colleges system, dedicated to reducing barriers to opportunity, strengthening communities, and accelerating paths to economic and social mobility for all Californians. FoundationCCC operates over 70 innovative programs and services to benefit students, colleges, and communities across six areas of impact, including, student success, workforce development, equity, community impact, climate action, and system support.

Since 1998, FoundationCCC has supported student employment through its Career Catalyst service, which initially enabled state agencies to hire interns and temporary employees while FoundationCCC handled liability through its human resources and payroll services. This service has since expanded beyond the public sector to include private companies, industry associations, state and local agencies, workforce intermediaries, colleges, and nonprofit organizations. Career Catalyst offers a suite of customizable services for organizations throughout California seeking to offer paid work experiences, including short-term, part-time, seasonal, and full-time employment.

FoundationCCC assumes liability, performs all necessary human resource functions, and ensures proper compensation for workers at the employer site. Through Career Catalyst, FoundationCCC equips employers with the tools, materials, and expertise necessary to support workers in gaining essential workplace skills and attributes to be successful. Please note that there are fees involved in accessing these services.



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Receive a Career Catalyst Service Estimate

Service Offerings Benefits for Employers

1. **EMPLOYER OF RECORD.** FoundationCCC serves as the employer of record, administering payroll, managing workers' compensation, and addressing human resource needs.
2. **COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES.** Career Catalyst offers an all-in-one web-based human resources service, making it easy for your organization to manage employees. Features include paperless employee acquisition, online timekeeping, payroll, and employee access to paystubs, W-2s, and training videos.
3. **CUSTOMER-SERVICE FOCUSED.** Career Catalyst is backed by dedicated human resources, workforce development, and payroll specialists ready to assist your organization.
4. **ESTABLISHED PARTNERSHIPS.** FoundationCCC is the official nonprofit supporting the largest system of higher education in the nation and partners with some of the nation's largest companies, foundations, and state agencies.
5. **FLEXIBLE SUPPORT.** Our services can support short-term, part-time, summer, and full-time employment. Career Catalyst serves private companies, industry associations, state and local agencies, workforce intermediaries, colleges, and nonprofit organizations.

[Start Your Estimate](#)

SECTION 5:

Your Next Steps Implementation and Sustainability

In recent years, colleges have faced significant challenges, prompting innovation and efficiency improvements. Emerging from these challenging times, we face fatigue, division, low enrollments, hiring freezes, and unprecedented early retirements, impacting campuses and industries alike. In light of the recent affirmative action rulings, the continued call to double down on access, diversity, and equity work is essential.

Despite these obstacles, unprecedented funding from multiple sources now supports internships, apprenticeships, and other WBL programs. Various models, such as internships functioning as pre-apprenticeships, are gaining traction alongside an increased emphasis on the California Community Colleges K12 Strong Workforce Program, Guided Pathways collaboration, and regional economic alignment.

The data supports paid WBL as a sustainable and replicable solution. This resource serves as a call to action, urging capacity building and dismantling of silos. If you encounter resistance, utilize these best practices. Embarking on this journey does not require reinventing the wheel. Begin by strengthening existing industry advisory boards, and identifying common ground to align internships with students' success, campus effectiveness, and industry workforce needs.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND SUCCESS

Internship Resources

[The College-to-Jobs Playbook](#)

[The Internship Playbook](#)

[The Unpaid Internship: Benefits, Drawbacks, and Legal Issues](#)

Apprenticeship Resources

[Grow Apprenticeship California – An Initiative of FoundationCCC](#)

[Building and Growing Apprenticeship with Equity in Mind-Grow Apprenticeship Toolkit](#)

[Toward Sustainability and Scale](#)

[LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network](#)

Other Resources – Playbooks, Research and News Articles

[A Toolkit for Building Successful Community College Employer Relationships – Brookings Institute](#)

[Work-based Learning in California Community Colleges – Academic Senate for the CCC](#)

[National Survey of College Internships 2021](#)

[Open the Door: Disparities in Paid Internships – A NACE Brief](#)

[Paid Internships – Moving Toward Greater Equity – A NACE Brief](#)

[Supporting Community College Student Success through Paid Work Experience](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

Foundation for California Community Colleges

Sonia Anchundo-Reynoso

Alina Barragan

Jenna Elam

Joshua Modlin

Leti Shafer

Ohlone College

Kelsey Bensky

Emily Burns

Dr. Rose-Margaret Ekeng-Itua

Lily Espinoza

Workforce Innovation Labs, Inc.

Sheila Dufresne

Audrey Le Baudour

Xavier Nazario

Febbie Porras



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