

GATEWAY PROGRAM CONVENING FALL 2006

Career Ladders Project 1203 Preservation Park Way, Suite 201, Oakland, CA 94612



Meeting Inspires Renewed Energy and Commitment

Participants from seven counties across California assembled November 30, 2006 at Preservation Park in Oakland, California for a second convening to share program successes, challenges and new methods and solutions for enhancing and continuing the Gateway Program. Representatives from community colleges, workforce development, business and industry, social and community services and expert consultants collaborated to work together to assess the current status of their programs and identify and share what they had learned and applied to their projects. Four Focused Discussions followed team reports and state-wide updates, and then a panel of experts led discussion on Outreach and Recruitment. Colleagues noted there was renewed interest and energy and left the convening with innovative and helpful information which was of great value to their local projects.

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“The relationship between education and earnings is growing even more pronounced with higher wages now routinely linked to some form of post-secondary education and training”

Ladders of Opportunity, 2001

Outreach, Recruitment, Assessment & Referral

Participants had the opportunity to work as county teams to share their accomplishments, challenges and solutions. Discussions focused on identifying key elements which included planning ahead, identifying resources early, leveraging partnerships and resources and meeting regularly with all involved community organizations to foster positive relationships and open communication. From this the focus shifted to discussing strategies to develop diverse outreach and recruitment plans, and clarifying the assessment and referral process.

Teams discussed the components of a plan, and it was generally agreed that program complexities can vary and include geographic locations (even within the same county), service area size, presence and strength of community and faith based support organizations, involvement of the Workforce Investment Board and EDD, available public transportation, college culture, community environments, local employers and area workforce needs. Additionally, the specific targeted populations and the added challenges associated with outreach and recruitment were identified and included individual youth experiences and situations, financial difficulties which contribute to instability and transience, physical and mental health issues, legal status, probationary/parole status and undependable housing and transportation. From this came in depth discussions on addressing the major pieces of the formula: location, youth, resources and commitment.

Some specific recommendations emerged. Marketing, must clearly communicate the program design and benefits, which for targeted youth were the career opportunities and future financial stability, the high level of support services available at every step and the commitment of the college, community support organizations and employers to individual student success. Other marketing suggestions included creating a design that identifies targeted community based organizations and other potential partners and getting them involved in developing the plan; determining who your sources and partners are in the community, educating them about the program and strategizing with them to identify and recruit students that meet program criteria; seeking out other “points of contact” for the youth you are recruiting; getting the information out with clear and concise details so there is a community understanding of the program; eliminating “jargon” that may be confusing; ensuring recruitment materials are easily understandable and clear in expectations; putting information on all partner’s websites, with links to other resources/services; enlisting a student recruiting assistant; utilizing internet job boards (such as Craig’s List); sending out news releases and having information booths at community events.

Recruitment involved personal connections with the youth and discussion about the program from the community based organizations. Many of these youth have positive relationships with case managers, service

Please see *Outreach* on page 4

Connecting Students to Resources

Several innovative resource strategies were shared by participants as all agreed that meeting the unique needs of each student can be a challenging and labor intensive venture. Specifically, finding housing, child care, food, transportation and counseling to provide stability, personal sufficiency and family support often proved to be a "group" project involving the case manager, academic counselor and student. Key to efficiently addressing basic needs was ability to identify and access resources in the community.

Participants identified resources they were able to supply which included bus passes, book vouchers, housing assistance, child care, clothing for interviews and employer site visits, personal counseling and daily lunches. They also suggested individual attention and support as the student enters the program, completes the required coursework and then moves to regular college curriculum. Case managers and counselors stressed the importance of the "Warm Hand-Off" program in making sure the student has help as they progress through their academic and career plan.

Some programs accessed CalWorks for child care funding assistance, California Connected by 25, Independent Living Programs and Transitional Housing Program Plus for housing support, local transit providers for bus passes and affiliated employers for lunch and snacks for class. For all these resources, participants stressed that planning ahead and resolving issues quickly were imperative for long term student success.

Partnership with San Jose State University

In a first time collaboration between Mission College, San Jose City College, Work2Future (WIA), Santa Clara County Department of Family and Children's Services and San Jose State University (SJSU), 10 students were able to be housed in the SJSU dorms, and received 10 meals weekly at SJSU. Not only did this provide a stable and more structured living environment, with food and assessable transportation, it also exposed the students to college life at a four year university. The Santa Clara County team suggested programs connect with the EOPs and Independent Living Programs at their nearby state colleges to discuss housing availability in residence halls to duplicate this type of agreement.

Financial Aid

Once it has been determined that the student has the ability to benefit from the program and test scores qualify them for enrollment, they need to immediately complete a FAFSA and meet with financial aid advisors to access Pell Grants, Chaffee funding and local scholarships. To be the most prepared, case workers should assist students in assembling all the necessary records and documentation needed to apply for financial aid.

"To succeed in the new economy workers must do more than find a job; they must gain the skills that enable them to build a career".

Ladders of Opportunity, 2001

Unanticipated Lessons

*When students receive financial aid or other monetary support, assist them with budgeting strategies.
Anticipate retention problems. Communicate early and often with each student and develop strategies for motivation and encouragement.
Develop "connected" relationships.
Mix cohorts of students-foster youth, disadvantaged and dislocated workers.
Look beyond known resources for needed support.
Use the media and/or a special event to provide information to the community and potential resources.
Explore resources for part-time employment or internship opportunities for students.
Encourage mentors and "job coaches".*

Upcoming Convenings

Participants of this second convening responded positively to the agenda and outcomes. In addressing the most valuable aspects of the Convening, a majority named the four Focused Discussions sessions and the Panel Discussion in Outreach, Recruitment, Assessment and Referral as highly relevant, practical and useful. Many expressed appreciation for the chance to exchange information and to interact with colleagues who were involved in the same issues. In addition, participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in networking and to have all of the stakeholders in attendance.

There will be more convenings in 2007-2008 and we will be connecting the new Career Advancement Academy programs with current Gateway and Bridge programs to share best practices and learned experiences. Preliminary planning involves topics suggested by convening participants including the inter-workings of WIBs, contextual curriculum innovations, review of MDRC's research results and program sustainability. We encourage you to check the Career Ladders Project Website for updates, links, briefs addressing issues raised at the convenings, resources, templates and support.

www.careerladdersproject.org



Case Management, Counseling & Classroom Management

The concept of case management for students is new to community colleges. While many learning community models have combined instructional and counseling faculty in the classroom, utilizing case managers from community organizations in the classroom to support and motivate students is a recently implemented model that has had excellent results. When students have already formed a relationship with the case manager who coordinates their services, their trust and respect can transfer to the classroom environment. Instructional faculty do not have the resources to address transportation, housing, financial or child care needs, while case managers have the expertise and resources to resolve such issues. While participating in the classroom, case managers can also observe behavior, identify concerns and collaborate with the instructional and counseling faculty to proactively anticipate problems and develop motivation strategies.

Convening participants reported several learned practices that positively contributed to student outcomes. All contributors strongly agreed that the most successful programs had case managers in every class attended by the students. In addition they cited the strength of professional collaboration as creating a more cohesive and productive learning environment. However, they warned that case managers must be included in the planning and brought into the project as early as possible to insure participation in faculty and staff orientation and program development. There appears to be a learning curve both on the part of the college and community based organizations about the role of colleagues and the most positive results for programs were achieved by those who spent time communicating and working together to come to a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Retention of students for Gateway programs is an often complex and multi-layered challenge which needs good case management, academic counseling and instruction. Many factors can create barriers to student's efforts to succeed in classes. These can vary from need for basic life support, lack of housing and vulnerability when communicating challenging problems, whether legal, personal or academic issues which become overwhelming to the student. Additionally, many of these students have been recently emancipated and are in the process of improving their skills to cope with their new independent situation.

Like recruitment, retention requires planning, communication and resource identification by providers. Participants at the convening recommended several strategies to anticipate and resolve retention issues. They included teaming together case managers, academic counselors and instructional faculty to 1) make certain that students are placed in the Gateway program because they meet the criteria required, not because their enrollment is needed; 2) evaluate each student to determine if there are basic needs not being met, prior to starting the program and finding resources to provide for those needs; 3) implement a pre-program orientation for all participants to become familiar with the other students, faculty, staff and expectations of the program; 4) incorporate a "Life Skills" or "College Success" class as part of the program and provide lunch and class supplies; 5) develop individual relationships with each student and try to link participants with community mentors; 6) connect students with EOPS, CARE, DSPS, and tutoring programs; 7) meet with each student regularly to assess progress, recommend support and address needs; 8) hold students accountable to behavioral expectations; 9) recognize student achievement and create opportunities for student feedback; 10) have clearly delineated career pathways and activities that include visiting employers so the student can see where they are going; 11) continually review curriculum, making changes to improve student engagement and 12) set clear classroom policies and enforce them consistently.

Some representatives shared situations that developed in their programs that were not anticipated and required shifting time and resources to address. These included meeting basic students needs, transportation, housing, child care and financial support which were addressed on an individual basis by student's case workers; special needs for students with learning disabilities or emotional challenges which emerged with the start of instruction and required coordination with available services both at the college and with case managers; some confusion among providers on roles and expectations for classroom involvement which became the focus of many early team meetings for discussion and resolution and motivating students while managing the classroom environment relied on peer support for suggestions and strategies. Trusting relationships between partners, willingness to continually re-evaluate and re-tool coursework and a commitment to communication and collaboration appeared to become the cornerstone of the program.

Funding Opportunities

Several funding opportunities were announced including the Career Advancement Academy which is part of the Governor's \$20 million allocated to the community college Career Technical Education programs by this year's State Budget. This program has been established to develop pipelines for undereducated, underemployed youth and young adults who will have the opportunity to increase their performance levels in reading, writing, and mathematics, and obtain career technical training skills that will lead to careers and additional higher education opportunities. Three regional grants will be awarded. More information is available at http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/esed/aa_ir/aa_grants.htm.

Another opportunity is the Workforce Investment Act Governor's Discretionary 15 Percent 2006/07 Funds, Pre-Vocational Training Grant. It is anticipated that there will be three to five awards funded. The maximum total award to a grantee will be \$300,000. The estimated funding available for the SFP is \$1 million. More information is available at <http://www.edd.ca.gov/wiarep/wiasfpvocqa.htm>.

Outreach from page 1

providers, religious leaders, school personnel and advocates, which often makes them the best recruiters. Teams developed lists of contacts that they found to be helpful in recruitment:

- County Departments of Children and Family Services
- High school coaches, counselors, teachers
- Community based organizations
- Established provider networks
- Foster Parent Associations
- WIC groups & One-Stops
- College programs: DSPS, EOPS, CARE, CalWorks, AmeriCorps, Upward Bound and Financial Aid
- ROCP, adult schools and continuation schools
- Subsidized preschool and child care centers
- Housing Authority, Section 8 programs
- Juvenile justice system
- Probation and parole officers
- Youth centers
- Youth/high school police officers
- Community based, faith based & cultural organizations
- CBET programs
- Halfway houses
- Transitional youth housing

Once youth were recruited for the program it was essential that they also be assessed by the college to determine if they met the enrollment criteria and are correctly placed. If eligible and referred to the college, it was recommended that the student's personal situation was reviewed for essential needs and resources identified for support prior to the program starting. The student also needs to be given a clear view of program expectations and time commitments.

Connecting to Career Pathways

This session focused on four areas: how to identify pathways of importance in local, regions/economy; how to develop linkages; how to establish sequencing to develop a full career pathway and how to help students to acquire both foundational basic skills and career technical skills.

Having clear career pathways, with visible industry partners committed to hiring qualified students is key to recruitment and retention of students, and to help them attain a sustainable career. Programs with strong partnerships with area employers realized higher retention and completion rates. When students were able to understand the purpose of their coursework, and the relationship between their classes and their career path, they appeared more motivated to meet program requirements.

Developing the pathway requires collaboration between the college and employers, and sustained efforts to communicate standards, contextualize curriculum and support student transition to the workplace. Working with the college's occupational program to build on strong employer relationships, and then presenting a "package" that meets their training needs shows the employer that the college is willing to respond to their industry. In addition the WIB can be an excellent partner as well as EDD in identifying and connecting with businesses looking for employees with specific skills.

Foundational Skills & Contextual Learning

Presenters in this breakout section agreed that connecting to the content of specific careers and using real world applications contextualized to occupations or industry sectors, is useful in motivating students and accelerating subject mastery in basic skills. They acknowledged that this can be difficult to accomplish; it requires faculty time and collaboration. Inclusion of industry stakeholders, counselors (support specialists) and instructional faculty is also key. Another challenge is the lack of current contextualized textbooks that would be of value in these programs.

Some programs found great value utilizing instructional faculty familiar with the specific industry focus for the program, and all sites recommended using a learning community cohort model, with a case manager at all classes. Faculty participants believed that students in these accelerated programs were more successful with contextualized curriculum that familiarizes them with career possibilities and is applicable to daily life. Including industry representatives to embed industry-specific vocabulary and numeracy norms is critical. Some suggested inclusion of trade and apprenticeship exams to demonstrate required levels for employment. By teaching with a career as an end result, personal life skills and appropriate behavioral and social aptitude were more easily incorporated.

When designing curriculum, CTE faculty suggest building on and modifying existing coursework to specifically connect with the identified career pathway. Programs should be designed as stepping stones that help students advance from pre-collegiate skills, to college-level work, to certificate or post-secondary degrees that lead to careers not just jobs. Focus on helping students combine school and work can better enable them to achieve higher levels of education or training as well as advance in a career over time. How certificate and degree structures interact with wage gain or career advancement is an important design element.

The [Career Ladders Project](#) for the California Community Colleges works to strengthen the role of community colleges in providing educational and career advancement opportunities for Californians. Through research, policy initiatives and strategic assistance to colleges and their workforce development partners, the Career Ladders Project works to foster career ladders in California.

The [Career Ladders Project](#) (CLP) aims to improve post-secondary career pathway access and completion for underserved populations.

www.careerladdersproject.org
510-268-0566

Email: marlinda@careerladdersproject.org