



Designing with Careers in Mind

Santa Monica College

Their Approach

Santa Monica College (SMC) has a history of supporting the Career Services Center. With this in mind, a cross-functional team — which included students — was put together to figure out the best way to guide students in choosing a major and potential careers. The team set out to learn what students need to explore how their passions, the college’s offerings, and potential careers intersect — and to understand why there were equity gaps in retention and completion rates. This group began by discussing ways to ensure **all** new students experience career planning. They focused on understanding what students need to formulate education and career goals and how to design ways to reach students where they are with the career planning resources they need.

What They Did

In Fall 2019, SMC began implementing six recommendations for improving career exploration, career planning, and college completion. They were:

- Ensure career counselors are present in key classes that many first-year students take.
- Offer additional career planning classes and encourage undecided students to enroll.
- Facilitate 75-minute College-to-Career Workshops on campus and in classrooms, clarifying the pathway to employability.
- Develop a 7 Steps to Success guide for students to explore careers, programs, transfer institutions, and career development activities and support students through their community college journey, assisting students in understanding the benefits of experiential learning and network-building.
- Add an assignment to English courses that asks students to explore a potential career, conduct research, and write an essay that develops self-awareness.
- Launch an exploratory “area of interest” to provide intentional support for undecided students.

What They Learned

As one counselor said, “If students know why they are at school and what their goal is, they are more likely to complete their education.” Students report that they are feeling more confident in making choices and more aware of what they want for their lives. Through this work the students, faculty, and staff have a deeper understanding of the tools and resources provided by the Career Services Center, which is leading to increased use by students and demand from faculty.