

## A FactSheet: on The California Community College Linked Learning Initiative

Establishing clear roadmaps for Linked Learning Academy graduates to access the full range of postsecondary opportunities is essential to overcoming structural barriers to educational and career advancement. Students who successfully navigate California Community Colleges (CCC) to earn a community college degree or certificate nearly double their earnings within three years. However, only half of CCC degree or certificate-seeking students ever complete that process, and the rate is much lower for African American and Latino students.

The goal of the CCC Linked Learning Initiative is to extend the promise of Linked Learning into post-secondary education. CCCLLI aims to strengthen the connections between Linked Learning High Schools and their local community colleges. Using the CA Linked Learning District Initiative as a launching point, involved partners are working to align and extend pathways into the community colleges and other post-secondary institutions.

This new demonstration project—funded by the James Irvine Foundation—supports a structured system of early outreach and support for Linked Learning Academy students focused on industry-supported community college pathways, a transition program that prepares students for postsecondary success in a career pathway program, and ongoing student services and academic support while in college. At the same time, colleges and their high school partners will be supported to build dual enrollment opportunities, alternative assessment strategies, and contextualized, articulated coursework and student services support.

The Career Ladders Project will work with instructional leaders in several community colleges throughout the state to document the practices that foster more intentional educational and career transitions from high school, improve college retention and academic achievement, and subsequently, improve college and career success for graduates of Linked Learning High School programs.



### What Impacts Community College Success?

#### *College and Career Readiness*

In community colleges, 70 to 90 percent of first-time students require some remediation in Math, English, or both. Students who require remediation are far less likely to move into more interesting career-oriented coursework, or transfer level academic courses. Research points to at least three reasons: misalignment of high school and college curriculum; unreliable assessment tools; lack of thoughtful preparation for the assessment tests. In addition, there is no consistent standard for assessing career readiness in high schools, and linking student aspiration to industry requirements that are often reflected in community college certificates.

#### *Course Selection and availability*

Community colleges are faced with difficult funding choices that limit the availability of courses for all students. Without priority registration, students may not be able to enroll in the courses they need. Students who are not required to develop an educational plan often take courses unrelated to their career goals, in part because the courses are not offered sequentially, or they are not eligible to take the course because of pre-requisite requirements.

#### *Life Circumstances*

Many students who attend community college attend only part time, because of family or financial constraints. Limited resources sometimes mean that students can only use textbooks and other re-

sources at school, during open hours. Undocumented students face myriad challenges, though some may now be eligible for financial aid due to recent changes in federal and state policies.

#### *Community College academic tradition*

Linked Learning Academies have learned that changing schooling—so that content is not only rigorous, but relevant, and that pedagogy is real and exciting—can improve high school outcomes. It is no different in community college; recent evidence in projects such as the Career Advancement Academies (supported by the CCC Chancellor's Office) demonstrate that contextualized instruction, paired with student service support, can accelerate student progress and dramatically improve student success, even for students who came to college academically underprepared.

#### *Community College as a last-minute option*

Many students wait until the last minute to enroll in community college, either because they expect to attend a four year college, or they are planning to work. However, last minute enrollment today means closed classes, students unprepared for the high stakes assessment tests, and very limited student services support. Faced with a myriad of options and choices from a very complex catalog, students may not understand the importance of the initial course taking choices they make.



## Colleges Leading the CCCLLI Initiative

In 2012, three community colleges were chosen to provide leadership in three different industry sectors: Arts Media and Entertainment;(AME) Public Service/Law (PS/L); and Health Science and Medical Technology (HSMT). Pasadena City College's innovative Design Tech Pathway and their new Media Production Pathway have begun to connect with the Linked Learning Academies at Pasadena High School and John Muir High School. Sacramento City College's Allied Health Program is offering specialized attention to the matriculation process, and early engagement of students in contextualized pre-requisites and career-based transfer level courses, especially for students from the Health Professions High School in the Sacramento City School District. Pathway options include certificates and degrees in physical therapy as well as vocational and registered nursing. Contra Costa College's Administration of Justice program has initiated outreach to the Richmond High School Law Academy, and they are enrolling students in a newly developed Security Officers certificate program, leading to an Associate's degree in Administration of Justice. The program also includes Emergency Medical Services among its pathway options.

In the coming year, CLP will recommend an additional 9 community college programs to be designated as "partner" colleges to develop pathways in these three industry sectors and to work together with us to form a larger community of practice across this expanded set of colleges and allied industry partners.

While each college has designed its particular strategies in response to the specific needs they identified for incoming high school freshpersons, the strategies are generally arrayed around five basic areas:

- (1) Early Outreach and Orientation
- (2) Transition Support and Matriculation
- (3) Early pathway participation
- (4) Pathway design, alignment and industry relevance
- (5) Student Success outcomes

### A Community College Innovation that Aligns to the Linked Learning Approach

The Career Advancement Academies (a corollary to the Linked Learning approach) establish academic and career pathways for low-income young adults who face academic and personal barriers to post-secondary education and employment. CAAs enroll students in career technical education programs that lead to careers or higher education opportunities. CAAs accelerate student progress by integrating work readiness, career guidance, support services, contextualized basic skills, language learning and career technical training. Students take classes together as a cohort, forming a peer learning community. CAAs build on integral partnerships between local community colleges, high schools, adult education/ROCPs, employers, workforce boards, labor, social service agencies and community-based organizations. CAAs have been established at 29 community colleges across the state, offering pathways in a range of key sectors, such as education, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, transportation and public service.

### About CLP

The Career Ladders Project (CLP) works to strengthen educational and career advancement for Californians. Through research, policy initiatives and direct assistance to community colleges and their educational and workforce partners, CLP fosters career pathways in California.

CLP works with a number of large-scale innovative and systematic initiatives to build career pathways and improve postsecondary and career outcomes for students. As initiatives mature, CLP works with state leadership and policy makers to replicate and scale successful approaches and to make policy changes that can better support effective practice and improve completion.

The Career Ladders Project operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Foundation for California Community Colleges, a non-profit which is the official foundation of the CCC system.

### Learn More About Community College Reforms

**The Career Ladders Project** | [www.CareerLaddersProject.org](http://www.CareerLaddersProject.org)  
**LearningWorks** | [www.learningworks.org](http://www.learningworks.org)

**The Research and Planning Group** | [www.rpgroup.org](http://www.rpgroup.org)  
**Pathways to Prosperity** | [http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news\\_events/features/2011/Pathways\\_to\\_Prosperty\\_Feb2011.pdf](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news_events/features/2011/Pathways_to_Prosperty_Feb2011.pdf)

**The CCC Student Success Initiative** | [www.CCCCO.edu](http://www.CCCCO.edu)  
**The Concurrent Courses Initiative** | <http://www.concurrentcourses.org/publications.html>