



**2020-2022**

# **STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM**

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office | Sonya Christian, Chancellor





California  
Community  
Colleges

**SONYA CHRISTIAN**  
Chancellor

July 1, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Report on the California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program**

Dear Gov. Newsom:

Pursuant to Section 9795 of the Government Code, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Board of Governors for California Community Colleges is pleased to release the report on the California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program.

This report provides a comprehensive account of the Strong Workforce Program between 2019-20 to 2021-22, including details on its key components, investments and outcomes, along with a discussion of efforts to coordinate across other initiatives, updates on upcoming work and recommendations for the future.

If you have any further questions on this report, please contact Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Economic Development Sandra Sanchez at [ssanchez@cccco.edu](mailto:ssanchez@cccco.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonya Christian".

Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Enclosure: Report

**Chancellor's Office**

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# 2020-2022 STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM

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Prepared By

**California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office**  
Workforce and Economic Development Division

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, budget trailer bill legislation (Assembly Bill 1602) created the Strong Workforce Program to expand and improve career technical education (CTE) at California Community Colleges.

Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, the Strong Workforce Program provided more than \$500 million in funding to the California Community Colleges in support of the creation and expansion of high-quality CTE programs that lead to living-wage jobs. This funding supports the goals of initiatives like the Vision for Success and Gov Newsom’s Roadmap for California Community Colleges, which aim to improve student success, reduce achievement gaps and develop a skilled workforce in California. College districts and regional consortia invested Strong Workforce funding across a range of industry sectors that were identified as priorities locally. Types of investments included upgrading current programs, establishing new programs leading to well-paying jobs in high-demand occupations, creating pathways to and from other education and training systems and strengthening connections with employers.

Since its implementation, the Strong Workforce Program has demonstrated encouraging results in enhancing the quality and accessibility of CTE programs at California’s community colleges. While community college course enrollments have declined over the past decade, enrollments in CTE courses increased following program authorization through 2019-20 (in 2020-21, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, CTE course enrollments decreased, but less than non-CTE enrollments). Since the program began in 2016-17, Strong Workforce Program students have shown positive gains in noncredit student progress, credential attainment and transfer, employment and earnings outcomes, although equity gaps in CTE credential attainment are present for some student groups.

The Chancellor’s Office continues working to improve opportunities for students through the Strong Workforce Program, including developing a new career mobility framework and adopting revised regulations for work-based learning experiences. The Chancellor’s Office is also committed to leveraging data to assess program performance and close equity gaps, as well as aligning planning processes with the Federal Carl D. Perkins Program.

To improve the Strong Workforce Program in subsequent years, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office recommends:

- Expanding continuous learning opportunities to increase support of students at every stage of their working lives, from the dually enrolled K-12 student to the adult learner returning to college for upskilling.
- Growing work-based learning experiences for students by using Strong Workforce Program funding to create more opportunities and leverage employer connections cultivated through the program.
- Improving the use of data and research to identify successes and areas needing improvement by ensuring that colleges take advantage of the resources and support offered by the Chancellor’s Office.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Board of Governors for California Community Colleges established the Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy to make recommendations to help California meet a projected shortfall of one million industry-valued, middle-skill credentials by 2025. The task force found that while California Community Colleges career education programs were well-positioned to address this skills gap and help students obtain employment that can provide family-sustaining wages, some significant barriers remained:

- Career Technical Education (CTE) had not been historically prioritized at colleges.
- CTE programs had not received the resources necessary to meet student and labor market demand or keep pace with evolving industry requirements that facilitate successful student employment outcomes.
- The higher expense of designing and delivering CTE programs put them at a disadvantage compared to less expensive programming when competing for funding on local campuses.

As a result, the task force recommended establishing 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,” as well as other policy recommendations.<sup>1</sup>

## LEGISLATION

In 2016, the State created the Strong Workforce Program,<sup>2</sup> which provided \$200 million in ongoing funding to enhance the availability and quality of CTE programs in California Community Colleges across California. The legislation specified the **purpose of the program is to “[expand] the availability of high-quality, industry-valued career technical education and workforce development courses, programs, pathways, credentials, certificates, and degrees,”**<sup>3</sup> informally referred to as a directive to create “more and better CTE.” In 2017, Strong Workforce Program funding was increased to \$248 million and was again augmented in 2021 to provide an additional \$42.4 million for the expansion of work-based learning opportunities for students.

The legislation incorporated three key tenets: (1) regional collaboration among colleges and across other regional education, workforce and economic partners focused on regional priorities aimed at advancing students’ social and economic mobility; (2) responsiveness to regional economies by using labor market information to inform programmatic decisions; (3) transparency and accountability through the use of publicly-available student outcomes data to assess program effectiveness and incentivize performance.

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1 “California Community Colleges Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy Report and Recommendations.” August 14, 2015.

2 Education Code – Title 3. Postsecondary Education; Division 7. Community Colleges; Part 54.5 Strong Workforce Program [88820 - 88833].

3 Ed Code PART 54.5. Strong Workforce Program [88820 - 88833].

## REPORT STRUCTURE

The following report provides a comprehensive overview of the Strong Workforce program components, including its alignment with other community college system priorities, state initiatives, program investments and outcomes. Additionally, the report will highlight upcoming work and provide recommendations for the future of the Strong Workforce Program.

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

To foster regional collaboration, Strong Workforce Program legislation split the funding into two streams: direct funding to local community college districts (60% of the allocation, called the “local share”) and funding to CTE regional consortia—administrative groupings of community college districts established by the Workforce and Economic Development Division of the Chancellor’s Office for the purpose of coordination and joint planning within economic regions (40% of the allocation, called the “regional share”). The regional share of funding is spent in the service of the colleges and used to incentivize coordinated regional efforts and leverage economies of scale to fund interdistrict work.

The legislation tasked the eight regional consortia with the following as it relates to supporting the Strong Workforce Program:

- **Regional Collaboration:** Convening and collaborating with other public institutions such as local education agencies, adult education consortia, local workforce development boards and interested public universities as well as civic, labor, regional economic development and industry sector representatives.
- **Responsiveness to regional economies:** Helping member colleges align their CTE programmatic offerings with the needs of their students, workers, and regional employers in a way that encourages effectiveness and efficiency, avoids duplication of effort, and streamlines access to education and training opportunities and services.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Using student outcomes data and labor market information to inform evidence-based decision-making that supports student success and the closing of regional labor market gaps.

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The regional consortia are required to develop a Strong Workforce Regional Plan every four years (and updated annually) that incorporates input from a wide range of stakeholders, including community college districts, industry partners (i.e., employers, labor organizations, and industry associations), local workforce investment boards, K-12 education partners and community-based organizations. Together, they identify priority industry sectors, regional workforce needs, areas for interagency alignment and collaboration and strategies for CTE programs. Specifically, the plans are required to (1) analyze regional labor market needs to determine the prioritized industry sector; (2) adopt measurable regional goals aligned with the Strong Workforce Program accountability framework; (3) detail work plans, spending plans and budgets of regionally- and locally-prioritized projects and programs; and (4)

describe how the regional plan aligns with other education and workforce plans guiding services in the region.<sup>4</sup> The collaborative process ensures that the plans are comprehensive, inclusive, and reflect the specific workforce needs of each region. The regional and local share projects must align to the broad priorities outlined in the regional plans.

## **RESPONSIVENESS TO REGIONAL ECONOMIES**

The Strong Workforce Program promotes the development of CTE programs, pathways and credentials that cater to the needs of students and the economy. It emphasizes the importance of using evidence-based decision-making in the development and refinement of programmatic offerings. In the regional planning process, each region evaluates labor market information, including projected job openings and supply and demand data, to identify priority industry sectors that are most critical to their regional economy. Regional consortia and college districts use current labor-market information to determine how to allocate Strong Workforce Program funds in ways that will best address identified skills gaps. All proposed Strong Workforce Program project must submit evidence of that labor market information in the NOVA reporting system. Additionally, the approval of new credit and noncredit CTE programs requires labor market justification and a recommendation from the colleges' regional consortium.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

Accountability, in the form of student achievement outcomes, ensures that college districts focus on improving the workforce outcomes of students enrolled in community college CTE programs. To this end, the Chancellor's Office developed Strong Workforce Program accountability metrics in 2016. These metrics are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Strong Workforce Program and to determine the allocation of incentive funding to regions and college districts.

In 2018, the Chancellor's Office engaged a group of practitioners to develop the Student Success Metrics, which are system-level measures that provide a holistic assessment of the California community colleges' efforts to improve student success. Subsequently, in 2019-20, the Strong Workforce Program Metrics were brought into alignment with the Student Success Metrics and the Student Centered Funding Formula by adopting those measures relevant to assessing the outcomes of students pursuing career education (see revised Strong Workforce Program Metrics in Table 1).

Regions, college districts and colleges can assess their own performance by referencing the metrics provided in the Strong Workforce Program tab of LaunchBoard.<sup>5</sup> This is a state-funded data system that is supported by the Chancellor's Office and offers publicly accessible information on student progress and outcomes related to education, employment and Table

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4 Strong Workforce Program Regional Plans can be found at <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Workforce-and-Economic-Development/Strong-Workforce-Program>.

5 <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx>

**Table 1: Strong Workforce Program Accountability Metrics**

Metric Type	Metric
Progress	Strong Workforce Program Students Who Earned Nine or More CTE Units in the District in a Single Year
	Strong Workforce Program Students Who Completed a Noncredit CTE or Workforce Preparation Course
Credential Attainment	Strong Workforce Program Students Who Earned a Degree or Certificate or Attained Apprenticeship Journey Status
Transfer	Strong Workforce Program Students Who Transferred to a Four-Year Postsecondary Institution
Employment	Strong Workforce Program Students with a Job Closely Related to Their Field of Study
Earnings	Median Annual Earnings for Strong Workforce Program Exiting Students
	Median Change in Earnings for Strong Workforce Program Exiting Students
	Strong Workforce Program Exiting Students Who Attained the Living Wage

## FUNDING MODEL

For the 2016-17 program year, Strong Workforce Program allocations to both college districts (local share) and regional consortia (regional share) was based on three factors: local unemployment rate, the proportion of CTE full-time equivalent students, and the proportion of projected job openings, with each accounting for one-third of the formula, as shown in Table 2.

Beginning in the 2017-18 program year, those three measures accounted for 83% of the allocation to regions and college districts, with the remaining 17% allocated through the incentive-funding model that is based upon performance on the Strong Workforce Program metrics. To assist with the design of the incentive-funding model, the Chancellor’s Office established a committee of knowledgeable leaders from across the community college system. With support from data experts, the committee reviewed research related to incentive models nationwide and provided recommendations for how the incentive funds should be designed to advance the goals of the Strong Workforce Program. The committee worked to ensure that lessons learned from other states were adapted to fit the context and scale of California’s community colleges.

To give colleges and districts ample opportunity to adjust to the inclusion of performance-based funding, the Chancellor’s Office used a phased approach to implement the incentive funding, with the 2017-18 allocation consisting only of the outcomes on two measures — course enrollments and credential attainment. Starting in 2018-19, the incentive funding was calculated using all Strong Workforce Program metrics, with the course enrollments

measure removed to incentivize greater focus on student outcome measures and eliminate duplication with the counting of CTE FTEs.

**Table 2: Strong Workforce Program Funding Model**

Measures	2016-17	2017-18+
Unemployment Rate	1/3	1/3
Proportion of CTE FTEs	1/3	1/3
Projected Job Openings	1/3	1/6
Strong Workforce Program Outcomes	N/A	1/6

## FIELD TOOLS AND DATA SOURCES

Data for this report comes primarily from two sources: the Strong Workforce Program Metrics Dashboard of the LaunchBoard <sup>6</sup> and NOVA.

### Strong Workforce Program Metrics Dashboard

The Strong Workforce Program Metrics Dashboard contained within the LaunchBoard is a public-facing platform that is used by Chancellor’s Office staff, district/college staff, the public and anyone else who has an interest in Strong Workforce Program programming to learn about the students and the outcomes of Strong Workforce Program programming.

### NOVA

To assist college districts and regions with planning for the Strong Workforce Program, the Chancellor’s Office developed an online reporting system called NOVA. NOVA allows colleges, college districts and regions to submit plans, budgets, and financial reports directly to the Chancellor’s Office through one portal. While the Strong Workforce Program was the first to report via NOVA, the Chancellor’s Office has expanded the number of programs on the platform to include K12 Strong Workforce Program, California Adult Education Program, Guided Pathways Integrated Plan, Student Equity, Apprenticeship, Economic and Workforce Development, Nursing and more. Today, NOVA has more than 11,000 users and integrates the management of more than \$3 billion in public funding. In 2020, the Chancellor’s Office made significant improvements to NOVA functionality that enhanced user experience and reporting and analysis capabilities.

## COORDINATION ACROSS INITIATIVES

To achieve maximum impact, the Strong Workforce Program is closely aligned with various initiatives of the Chancellor’s Office as well as other external workforce development programs. These key initiatives include:

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/SWP.aspx>



- **The Vision for Success**<sup>7</sup> is the California Community College’s ”North Star” for improving student success and closing achievement gaps within the system. The Strong Workforce Program is instrumental in meeting the Vision for Success’ goal of preparing students for living wage jobs related to their fields of study. The program also helps to achieve the Vision for Success’s objective of reducing equity gaps by prioritizing the provision of high-quality CTE programs to underrepresented and underserved populations.
- **The Roadmap for California Community Colleges**<sup>8</sup> outlines the state’s priorities and goals for the community college system and builds upon the objectives of the Vision for Success. The Strong Workforce Program supports the Roadmap’s objectives by financing investments in education and training programs that meet industry needs and promote student’s educational and economic successes.
- **The California Community Colleges Economic and Workforce Development Program** provides research, data and coordination services that inform the local and regional Strong Workforce investments. The collaboration between these programs ensures that California’s community colleges are well-positioned to provide education and training programs that meet the needs of local businesses and industries while promoting student success and regional economic growth.
- **The California Adult Education Program** provides educational services and resources to help adults improve their skills, earn high school diplomas or equivalencies, and prepare for college or career opportunities. The Strong Workforce Program and the California Adult Education Program can work together to build pathways between noncredit Adult Education programs and credit CTE programs that lead to greater educational and economic opportunities for adult learners.
- **The California Apprenticeship Initiative** aims to expand and diversify apprenticeship opportunities and increase access to apprenticeship programs throughout the state. In coordination with the California Apprenticeship Initiative, the Strong Workforce Program can help increase access to registered apprenticeship programs by supporting the development and implementation of new pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.
- **The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** and the Strong Workforce Program are closely aligned and work together to support the development of a skilled and competitive workforce in California. The Strong Workforce Program requires regions to develop plans that are informed by and aligned with the state’s workforce needs consistent California’s WIOA state plan. By providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to secure employment in high-demand industries,

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7 For more information on the Vision for Success, please see <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Vision-for-Success>.

8 For more information on the Governor’s Roadmap for California Community Colleges, please see <https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/Programs/Education/CCC-Roadmap-May-2022.pdf>.

the Strong Workforce Program supports the goals of WIOA and helps to strengthen California’s workforce development system.

- **The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (“Perkins”)** provides Federal funding to support CTE programs in high schools and community colleges. The Strong Workforce Program supports the goals of Perkins by providing additional state funding to expand and enhance CTE programs at the community college level. In addition, the Strong Workforce Program regional plans align with the Perkins requirements to improve the quality and relevance of CTE programs and meet the workforce needs of local employers.

## PROGRAM INVESTMENTS AND RESULTS

Since its inception, the Strong Workforce Program has directed almost \$950 million to support CTE at California Community Colleges.<sup>9</sup> The allocation of Strong Workforce Program funding is based on regional workforce needs and performance on program metrics, with each region identifying priority industry sectors for investment.

### STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM FUNDING FOR 2016-22

The Strong Workforce Program funding model is composed of four key components: regional share funding (base and incentive) and local share funding (base and incentive), as described above. The tables below show the funding allocation for each of these components across the eight regions, alongside the corresponding percentage of the SWP Program funding designated for that region. Overall, cycle one (2016-20) funding for the Strong Workforce Program was \$896,800,000 (shown in Table 3). The Bay Area and Los Angeles regions received the highest percentage of SWP Program funding at 21%, while the South Central Coast region was allocated the smallest share at 6%. In the first two years of Strong Workforce Program cycle two (2020-22), the total funding was \$511,100,000 (shown in Table 4). The Bay Area has the highest percentage of investment at 20%, while the South Central Coast region has the lowest at 7%.

**Table 3: Cycle 1 2016-20 Strong Workforce Program Investment by Region**

Region	Regional Share Funding	Local Share Funding	Regional Incentive Funding	Local Incentive Funding	Total for Region	% SWP Program Funding
Bay Area	\$65,973,609	\$98,960,414	\$9,774,388	\$15,005,675	\$189,714,086	21%
Central Valley/ Mother Lode	\$35,343,880	\$53,015,818	\$5,107,573	\$7,578,914	\$101,046,185	11%
Inland Empire/ Desert	\$31,925,742	\$47,888,613	\$3,549,251	\$4,988,696	\$88,352,302	10%
Los Angeles	\$67,371,563	\$101,057,350	\$9,834,700	\$14,441,884	\$192,705,497	21%

<sup>9</sup> Five percent of the total was retained for statewide coordination activities.



Region	Regional Share Funding	Local Share Funding	Regional Incentive Funding	Local Incentive Funding	Total for Region	% SWP Program Funding
North/Far North	\$34,073,801	\$51,110,704	\$5,062,799	\$7,642,677	\$97,889,981	11%
Orange County	\$29,992,593	\$44,988,886	\$5,330,012	\$8,195,264	\$88,506,755	10%
San Diego/Imperial	\$27,352,390	\$41,028,589	\$4,919,164	\$7,764,890	\$81,065,033	9%
South Central Coast	\$19,566,422	\$29,349,626	\$3,542,113	\$5,062,000	\$57,520,161	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$311,600,000</b>	<b>\$467,400,000</b>	<b>\$47,120,000</b>	<b>\$70,680,000</b>	<b>\$896,800,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4: Cycle 2 2020-22 Strong Workforce Program Investment by Region**

Region	Regional Share Funding	Local Share Funding	Regional Incentive Funding	Local Incentive Funding	Total for Region	% SWP Program Funding
Bay Area	\$33,882,435	\$50,823,653	\$6,938,827	\$10,408,237	\$102,053,152	20%
Central Valley/Mother Lode	\$22,489,970	\$33,734,953	\$3,791,026	\$5,686,539	\$65,702,488	13%
Inland Empire/Desert	\$16,414,249	\$24,621,375	\$2,740,982	\$4,111,473	\$47,888,079	9%
Los Angeles	\$29,135,958	\$43,703,936	\$6,998,087	\$0,497,129	\$90,335,110	18%
North/Far North	\$24,975,636	\$37,463,453	\$4,016,903	\$6,025,359	\$72,481,351	14%
Orange County	\$15,206,140	\$22,809,211	\$3,577,199	\$5,365,798	\$46,958,348	9%
San Diego/Imperial	\$15,566,640	\$23,349,961	\$3,638,019	\$5,457,027	\$48,011,647	9%
South Central Coast	\$12,695,638	\$19,043,458	\$2,372,291	\$3,558,438	\$37,669,825	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$170,366,666</b>	<b>\$255,550,000</b>	<b>\$34,073,334</b>	<b>\$51,110,000</b>	<b>\$511,100,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

## INVESTMENTS IN PRIORITY SECTORS

In their regional plans, each region identifies priority sectors in which to focus their investments. Table 5 shows how the regions distributed Strong Workforce Program funding to the sectors. The Health and Information and Communication Technologies/Digital sectors received the most investment overall. However, the Central Valley/Mother Lode and North/Far North regions also invested significantly in Agriculture, Water, and Environmental Technologies and Advanced Manufacturing. The South Central Coast region allocated a substantial portion of its funding to Advanced Transportation and Logistics, accounting for almost a quarter of its investment.

**Table 5: Cycle 2 2020-22 Strong Workforce Program Investments by Sector, by Region**

Sector	Bay Area	Central Mother Lode	Inland Empire Desert	Los Angeles	North/Far North	Orange County	San Diego/Imperial	South Central Coast	Total
Advanced Manufacturing	12%	22%	10%	8%	13%	4%	7%	7%	11%
Advanced Transportation & Logistics	8%	5%	13%	3%	9%	9%	11%	23%	9%
Agriculture, Water & Environmental Technologies	6%	10%	1%	1%	12%	3%	4%	8%	6%
Business & Entrepreneurship	10%	7%	7%	7%	7%	13%	14%	6%	9%
Clean Energy (Prop 39 related)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Education & Human Development	7%	5%	3%	1%	4%	7%	3%	2%	4%
Energy, Construction & Utilities	8%	9%	6%	3%	7%	6%	9%	4%	6%
Global Trade	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health	16%	20%	26%	15%	15%	11%	14%	12%	16%
Information & Communication Technologies (ICT)/Digital Media	17%	5%	22%	10%	6%	13%	18%	20%	13%
Life Sciences/Biotech	5%	0%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%	0%	2%
Public Safety	4%	14%	5%	3%	8%	2%	11%	4%	6%
Retail/Hospitality/Tourism 'Learn and Earn'	3%	1%	5%	2%	10%	13%	5%	6%	5%
Other <sup>10</sup>	5%	2%	2%	42%	11%	16%	2%	7%	13%

<sup>10</sup> “Other” refers to investments made not directly connected to a priority sector listed. The NOVA system allows applications submitted to list priority sectors or “other.”

The investments made through the Strong Workforce Program support the development and improvement of CTE programs that align with industry standards, meet the demands of the job market, and support student educational and employment goals. The regional share funding is allocated to support joint projects aimed at promoting regional collaboration between colleges, employers, and/or other educational sectors. The regions can use this funding to finance cross-district initiatives, leverage economies of scale and support labor market data and research. Meanwhile, college districts have the discretion to use local share funding to support their colleges' priorities (which are still aligned with the regional plans).

Strong Workforce Program investments cover various areas, including:

- Upgrading current programs (such as through curriculum development, equipment purchases, and the implementation of work-based learning opportunities).
- Establishing new programs leading to well-paying jobs in high-demand occupations (including credit, noncredit, not-for-credit and apprenticeship programs).
- Creating pathways to and from other education and training systems (such as K-12, adult education, apprenticeship) and the workforce (through activities like work-based learning and career services).
- Strengthening connections with employers that will help guide program development and create a supply of work-based learning opportunities and job placements.

## **STRONG WORKFORCE PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

The metrics used in the Strong Workforce Program aim to measure the program's effectiveness in increasing student enrollment in high-quality CTE programs that lead to employment in high demand, living wage jobs. These metrics track progress towards outcomes such as student progress, increased program completion and transfer rates, employment in relevant fields and higher earnings. Based on the current outcomes, the Strong Workforce Program has demonstrated encouraging results in enhancing the quality and accessibility of CTE programs at California's community colleges.

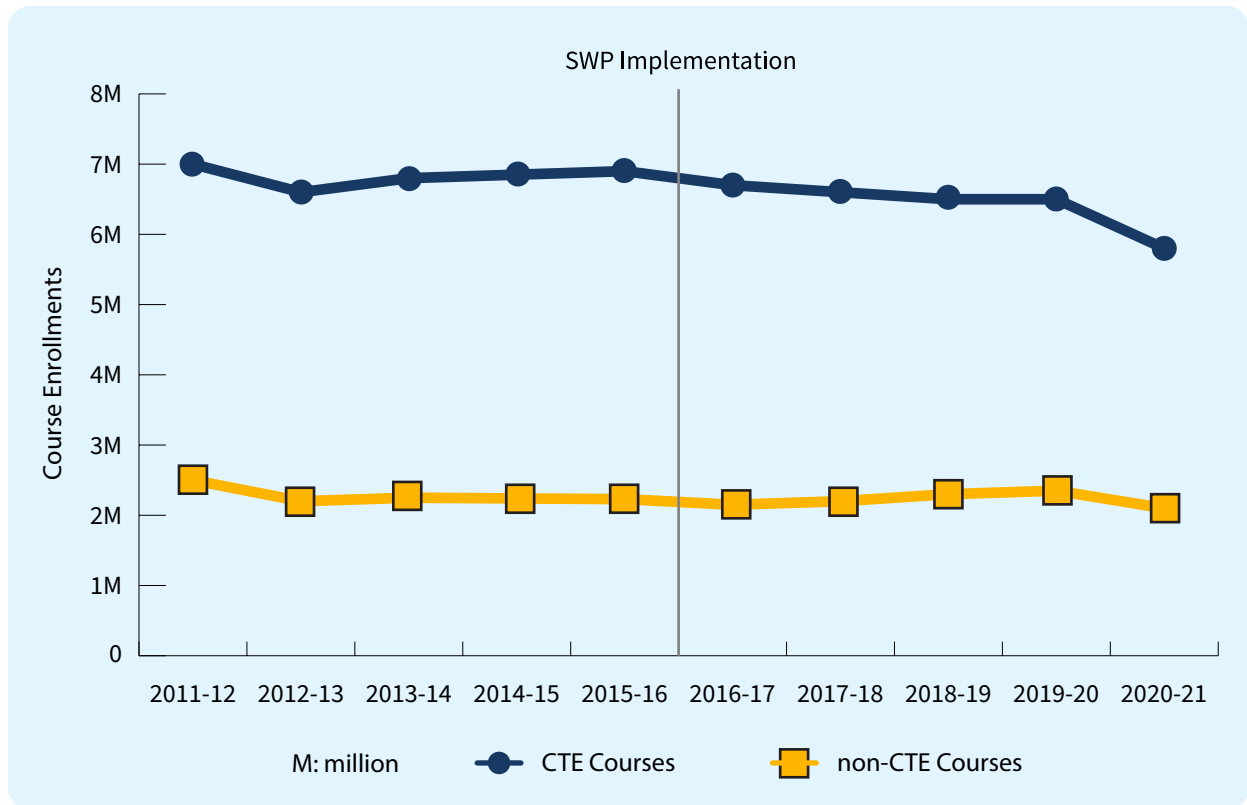
### **Enrollments**

Our system has seen an increase in CTE learning opportunities for students following the implementation of the Strong Workforce Program. Prior to its authorization, enrollment in CTE course enrollments were declining, down 8% from 2011-12 to 2015-16. However, following the program's authorization in 2016, CTE enrollments increased by 3% as of 2019-20, while non-CTE enrollments decreased by 5% during the same period. Additionally, even during the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, CTE enrollments decreased at a smaller rate (8%) compared to non-CTE enrollments (12%) between 2019-20 to 2020-21. Given the current concerns regarding declining community college enrollments and the forthcoming demographic cliff, CTE programs have the potential to help bolster enrollment at California Community Colleges.<sup>11</sup>

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11 For more information on the Strong Workforce Program metrics, please see <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx>.

**Table 6: Course Enrollments by CTE Status**

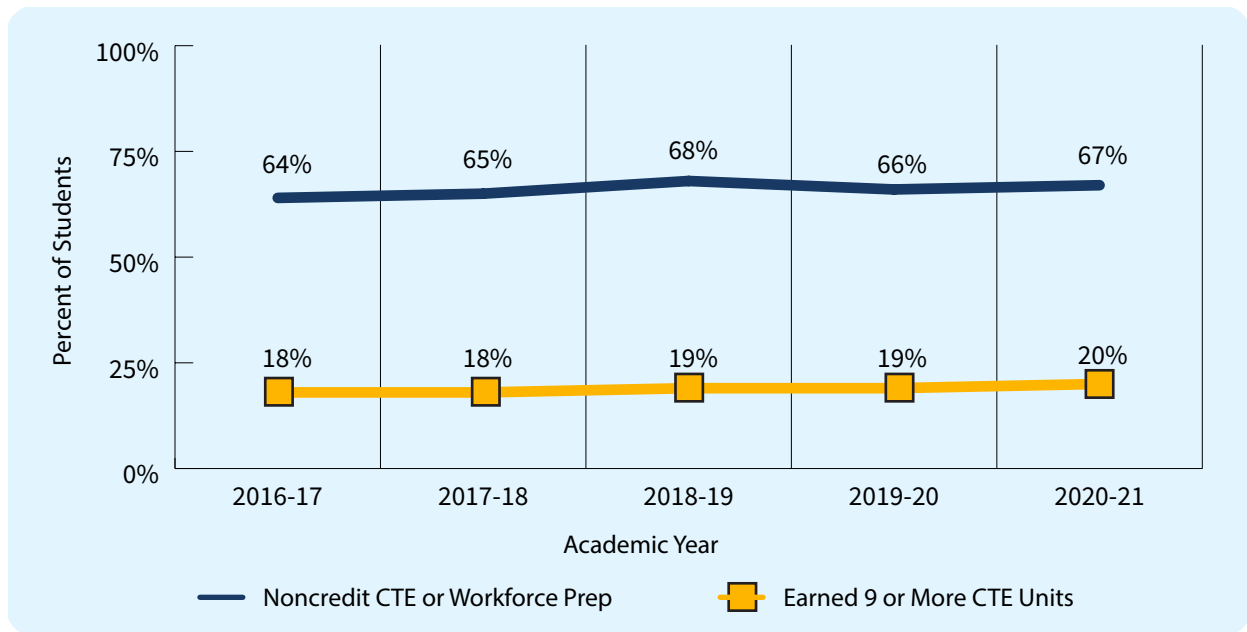


### Progress

The Strong Workforce Metrics comprises two measures of student progress, one for measuring credit and another for noncredit Strong Workforce student progress. For the credit measure, which tracks students earning more than nine CTE units in a year (in a single district), the percentage of students achieving this measure has remained relatively stable before and after Strong Workforce Program’s authorization.

In contrast, the percentage of students who completed a noncredit CTE course or workforce preparation course saw a significant 10% increase in the first year of the Strong Workforce Program implementation, reaching 64% in 2016-17. This percentage has further increased by three points to 67% by 2020-2021, as shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Strong Workforce Student Credit and Noncredit Progress**

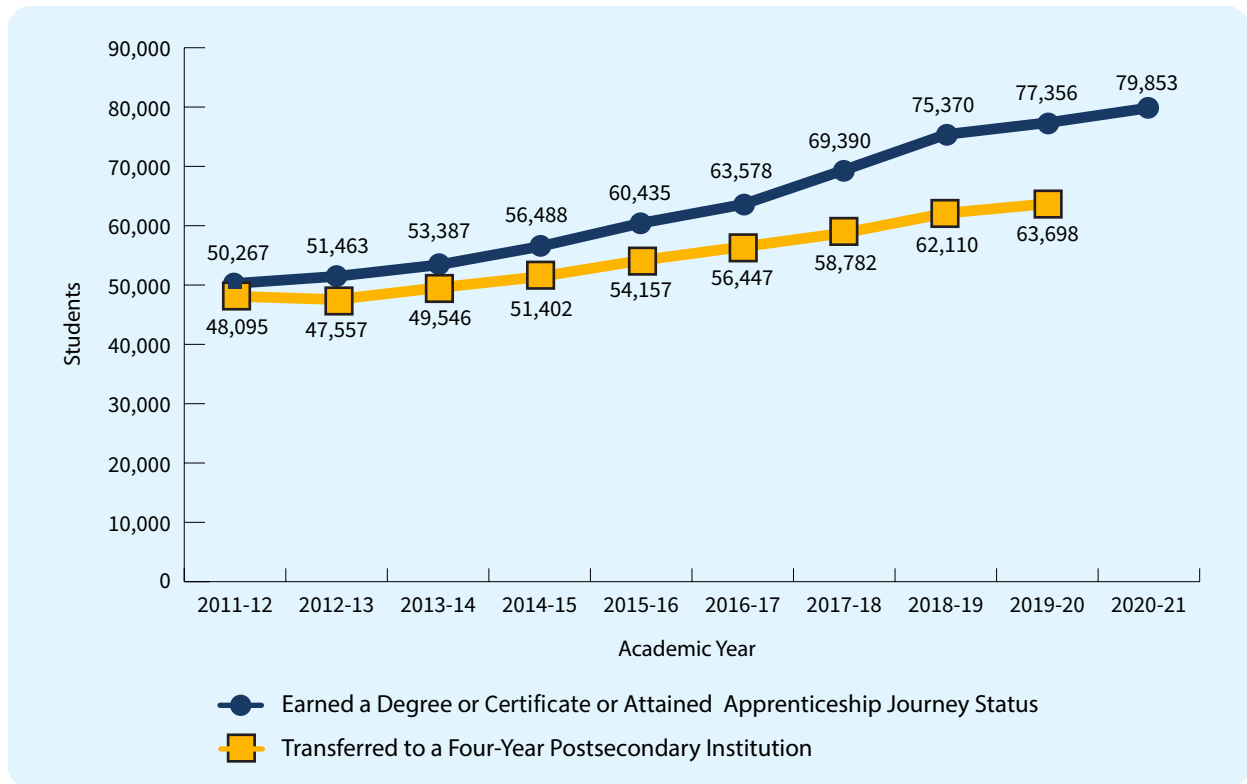


### Credential Attainment and Transfer

Over the past decade, there has been a consistent rise in the number of students in California Community College CTE programs who have earned various types of credentials—noncredit certificate, Chancellor’s Office approved certificate, associate degree, California Community Colleges baccalaureate degree and apprenticeship journey status—and who have successfully transferred to a four-year institution. This increase is likely due to several initiatives undertaken by the California Community Colleges, including the Strong Workforce Program, the Vision for Success, the California Apprenticeship Initiative, California Community College Baccalaureate Degree programs, the Associate Degree for Transfer, and developmental education reform efforts.

In 2021-22, nearly 80,000 Strong Workforce students obtained a credential (as shown in Table 8). Since the implementation of the Strong Workforce Program in 2016-17, this number has risen by 26% in 2020-21, with a notable increase of 45% in the number of students achieving apprenticeship journey level status. Regarding equity gaps in credential attainment for Strong Workforce students in 2020-21, there is an underrepresentation of students younger than 20 years old, as well as Black and African American, and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students. While female-identifying students attain credentials at a higher rate than other groups, there is no demonstrated disproportionate impact on male-identifying students.

**Table 8: Strong Workforce Student Credential Attainment and Transfer**

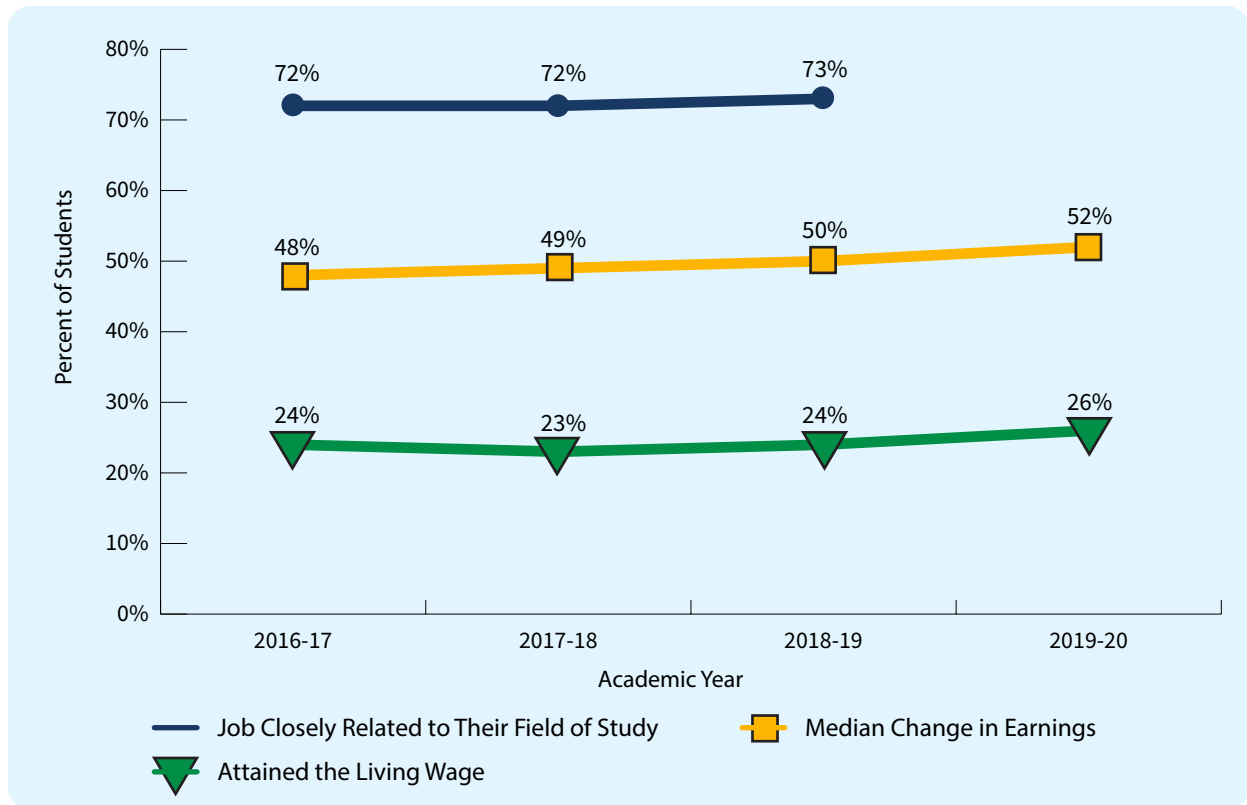


### Employment and Earnings

The Strong Workforce Program has made strides in improving the employment and earnings outcomes of its students, as evidenced by the data presented in Table 9.<sup>12</sup> The percentage of students obtaining jobs closely related to their field of study has remained consistently high, ranging from 72% to 73% over the program’s duration, demonstrating that CTE programs are adequately preparing students for training-related employment. In the 2019-20 academic year, the median annual earnings of Strong Workforce students upon leaving college were \$37,384, a 6% increase since the program’s implementation in 2016-17 (not included in the table), which resulted in wage gains for over a quarter of all students. Moreover, the proportion of Strong Workforce students attaining living-wage employment has risen steadily, reaching 52% in 2019-20. It is worth noting that the Strong Workforce Program supports a diverse set of fields and programs, and the earnings for jobs related to different programs can vary significantly depending on their industry sector and occupation.

<sup>12</sup> The SWP Metric “Job related to Field of Study” comes from the Career Technical Education Employment Outcomes Survey (CTEOS) and earnings data come from a data sharing agreement with the California Employment Development Department (EDD). Data for the employment and earnings measures is lagged behind other Strong Workforce Program metrics, so the figures in Table 9 represent the latest available data.

**Table 9: Strong Workforce Student Employment and Earnings**

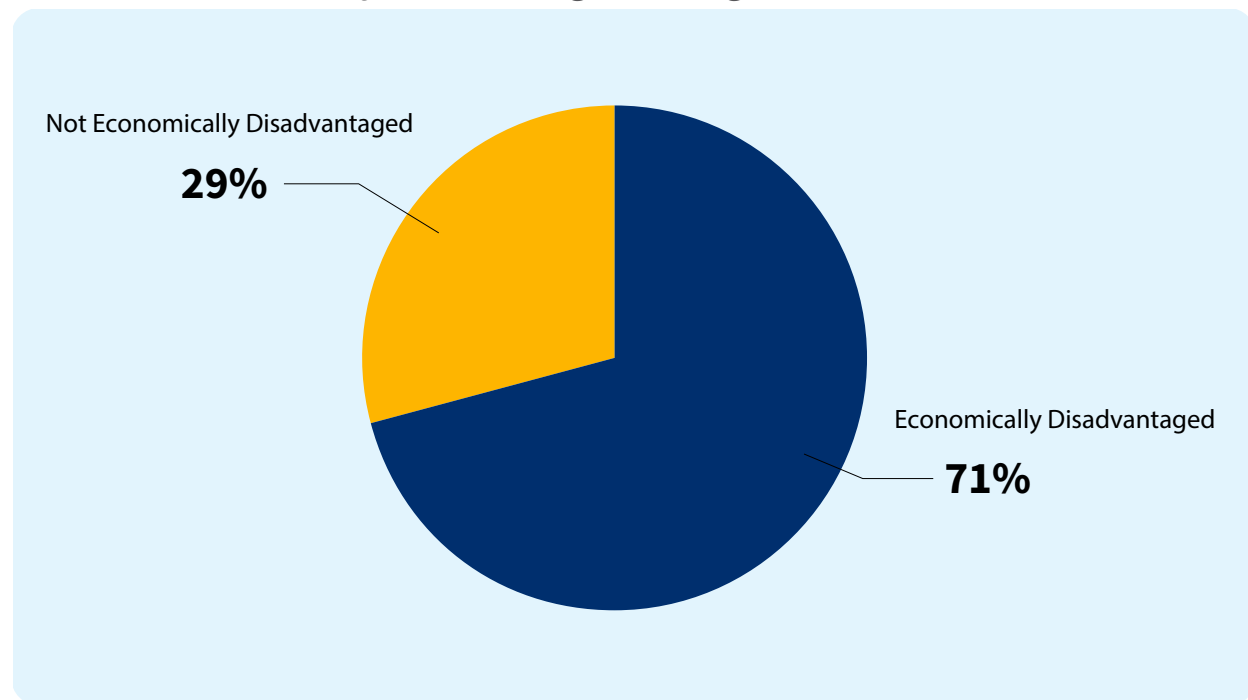


### Strong Workforce Student Demographics

While the demographics of the Strong Workforce Program students generally align with those of the overall system, over the last ten years, higher percentages (about 5-6% more) of Strong Workforce students were economically disadvantaged<sup>13</sup> students than non-Strong Workforce students. In 2019-20, the program provided support to nearly 650,000 economically disadvantaged students, which accounted for a significant 71% of all Strong Workforce students. In addition, older individuals, as well as those who identify as white and male, are slightly overrepresented in CTE programs.

<sup>13</sup> Students who meet the following criteria are considered economically disadvantaged: have ever participated in the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) program at any college where enrolled OR; ever received a financial aid award at any college where enrolled OR; ever identified as a participant in a CalWORKs program at any college where enrolled OR; ever identified as economically disadvantaged status at any college where enrolled.

**Table 10: Economically Disadvantaged Strong Workforce Students**



## LOOKING FORWARD

The past few years have brought unique challenges to our state, the California Community Colleges and the system’s students. While community college enrollments have been declining for some time, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated that trend as other priorities took precedence over education for many students. Additionally, the shift to fully online programming at the start of the pandemic was challenging for some institutions and learners. However, this upheaval has also brought new opportunities. With elevated levels of vacant jobs in California and many employers dropping degree requirements for employment, California Community Colleges CTE programs are well-positioned to address these skills gaps and help regain college enrollment lost over the past several years. In particular, the Strong Workforce Program, which is designed to foster innovation, will be critical to creating and expanding these career opportunities for students.

## FUTURE WORK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Chancellor’s Office is working to create more opportunities for the Strong Workforce Program to enhance career mobility for students and support a system of continuous learning.

Recently, the Chancellor’s Office has introduced a career mobility framework that focuses on serving students as learners throughout their entire working lives (such as through reskilling and upskilling opportunities) and providing them with access to career pathways that offer living wages and provide upward mobility. The funding provided by the Strong Workforce Program plays a crucial role in helping colleges invest in programs that prioritize career mobility and support a system of continuous learning.



To further advance the career mobility of students, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges recently adopted revised Title 5 Regulations that will create more universal access to work-based learning experiences.<sup>14</sup> These new regulations include requirements and guidelines for colleges offering internships, apprenticeships, and other forms of work-based learning. The regulations emphasize the importance of providing students with quality work-based learning experiences aligned with their academic and career goals, as well as ensuring workplace safety and compliance with labor laws. The regulations also outline the role of employers, faculty and college staff in supporting and supervising work-based learning experiences for students. As more students become eligible to participate in these experiences, the Strong Workforce Program can invest in developing structures that support the creation of additional work-based learning opportunities.

The Chancellor's Office is dedicated to leveraging data to drive the ongoing enhancement of the Strong Workforce Program. As part of this commitment, the Chancellor's Office has recently updated its grants management and reporting system, NOVA, with improved planning tools and additional data elements to enhance its ability to assess program performance. Furthermore, the office is prioritizing providing additional data and research support to practitioners as well as more assistance in interpreting, understanding and using data to improve local programs with an emphasis on addressing and closing equity gaps.

The Chancellor's Office is also working to better align the planning processes of the Strong Workforce Program and the federal Carl D. Perkins program to enable regions and colleges to develop more streamlined, coordinated and evidence-based plans.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a review of the Strong Workforce Program plans and progress reports and discussions with community college leadership, the Chancellor's Office has the following recommendations for improvements:

- **Expand continuous learning opportunities:** Colleges can leverage the Chancellor's Office career mobility framework and Strong Workforce Program funding to address the career development needs of students at every stage of their working lives. The Strong Workforce Program can play a key role in this effort by broadening CTE offerings to dually enrolled K-12 students, creating more pathways from Adult Education noncredit programs to credit CTE, and offering more upskilling and reskilling opportunities to adult learners.
- **Grow work-based learning experiences for students:** Work-based learning experiences have demonstrated, positive benefits for students.<sup>15</sup> With the proposed Title 5 Regulations to expand these opportunities for students, as well as other state initiatives like the Learning-Aligned Employment Program,<sup>16</sup> colleges should

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14 At the time of this report, these changes to Cal. Code Regs. tit. 5, § 55252 are pending publication by the Secretary of State.

15 College to Jobs Initiative. (2021). College to Jobs Playbook. Retrieved from <https://college-to-jobs-initiative.netlify.app/college-to-jobs-playbook.pdf>

16 For more information on the Learning-Aligned Employment Program, please see <https://www.csac.ca.gov/learning-aligned-employment-program>.

further leverage Strong Workforce Program funding and the employer connections developed through the program to greatly expand high-quality work-based learning opportunities for CTE students.

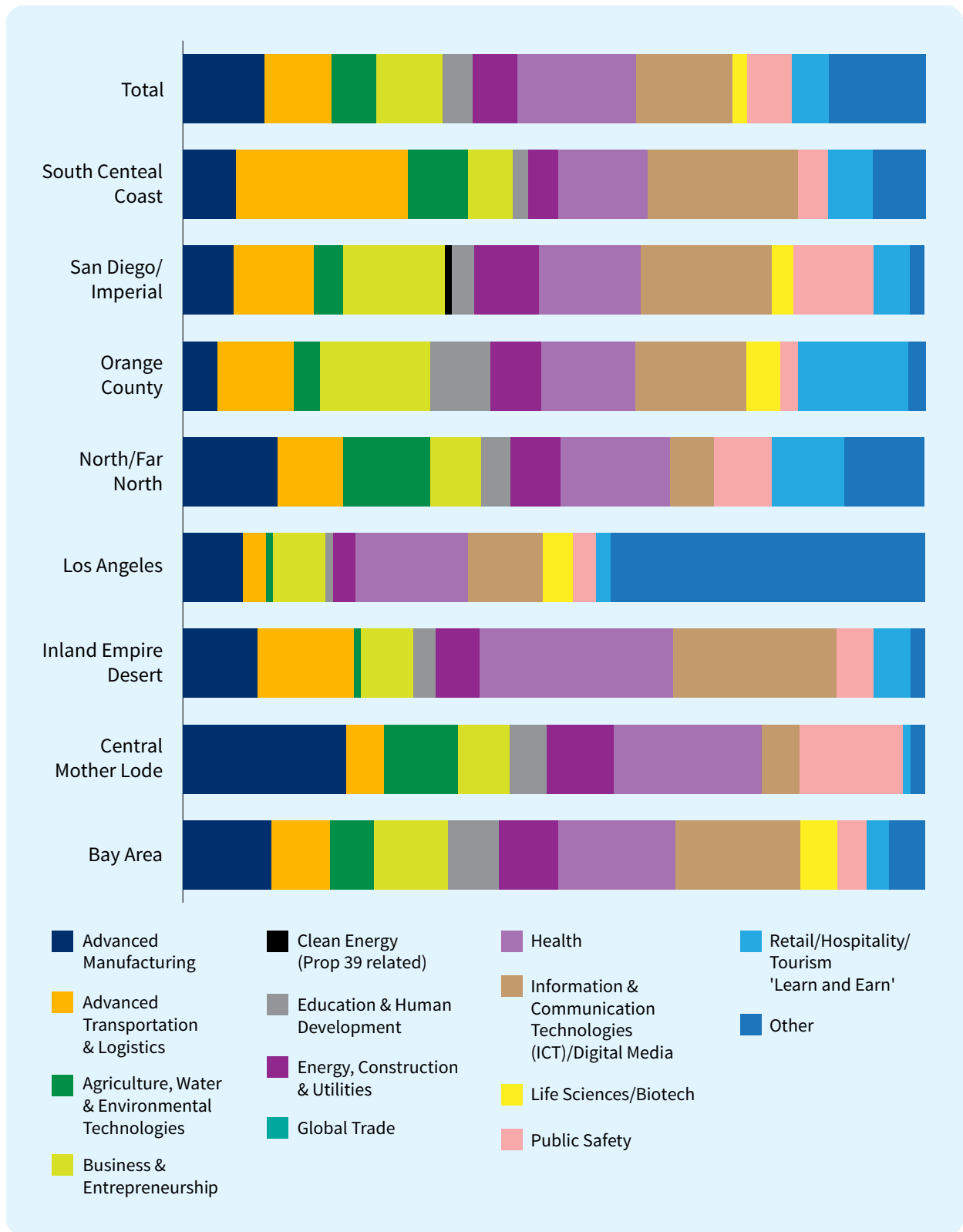
- **Improve the use of data and research:** The Strong Workforce Program’s focus on accountability and transparency has increased practitioners’ use of data to make informed decisions about CTE programming. To improve regional and local processes, practitioners should take further advantage of the Chancellor’s Office’s dedicated resources and training on labor-market information and student-level outcomes data. As the Chancellor’s Office makes more data resources available, community college leadership, administration, and faculty should take advantage of them to identify areas of success and areas that need improvement.

## CONCLUSION

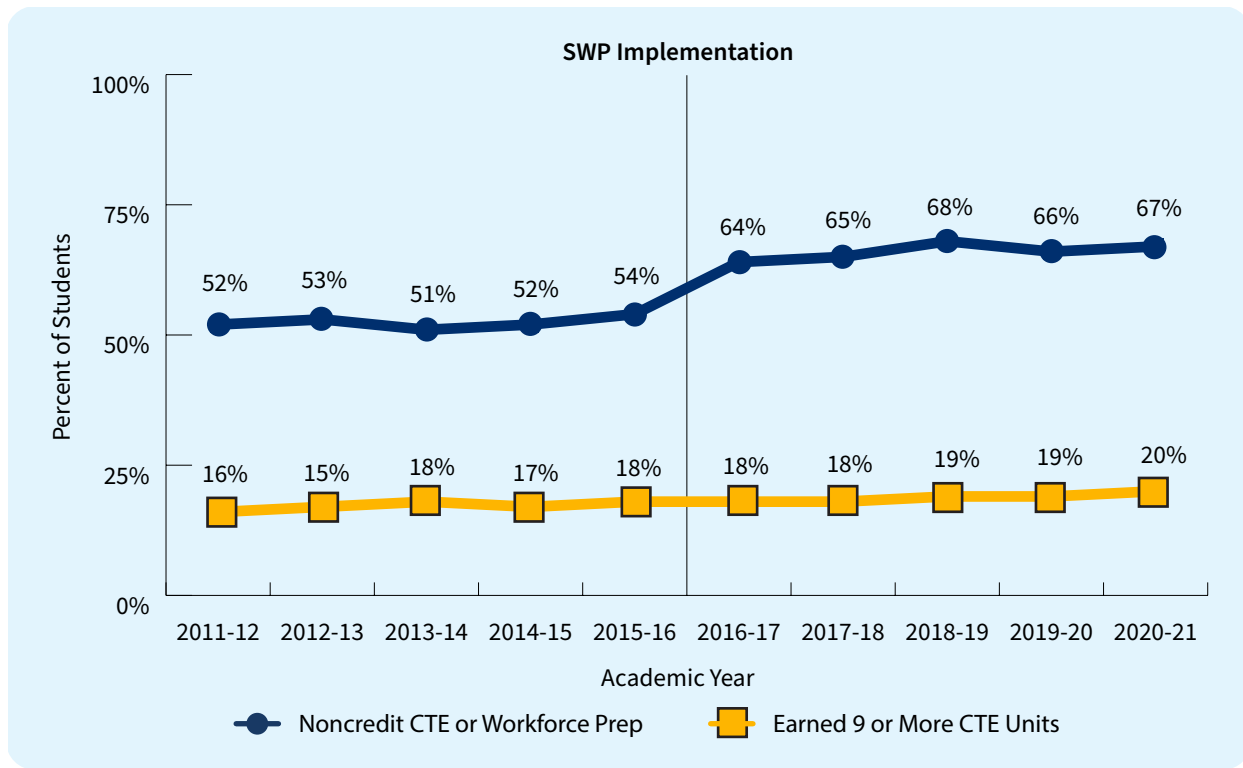
The Strong Workforce Program has provided over \$500 million in funding to California Community Colleges between 2020-2022, supporting the creation and expansion of high-quality CTE programs. The program has demonstrated positive outcomes in enhancing the accessibility and quality of CTE programs, with enrollments in CTE courses increasing and students showing gains in noncredit student progress, credential attainment, employment and earnings. The Chancellor’s Office is working to further improve opportunities for students through the Strong Workforce Program by developing a career mobility framework, revising work-based learning regulations and leveraging data to assess program performance of the program. In the coming years, the Strong Workforce Program aims to build on the progress made by colleges and regions in improving CTE programs that meet industry needs and promote the economic and career mobility of Californians.

# ALTERNATIVE VISUALIZATIONS

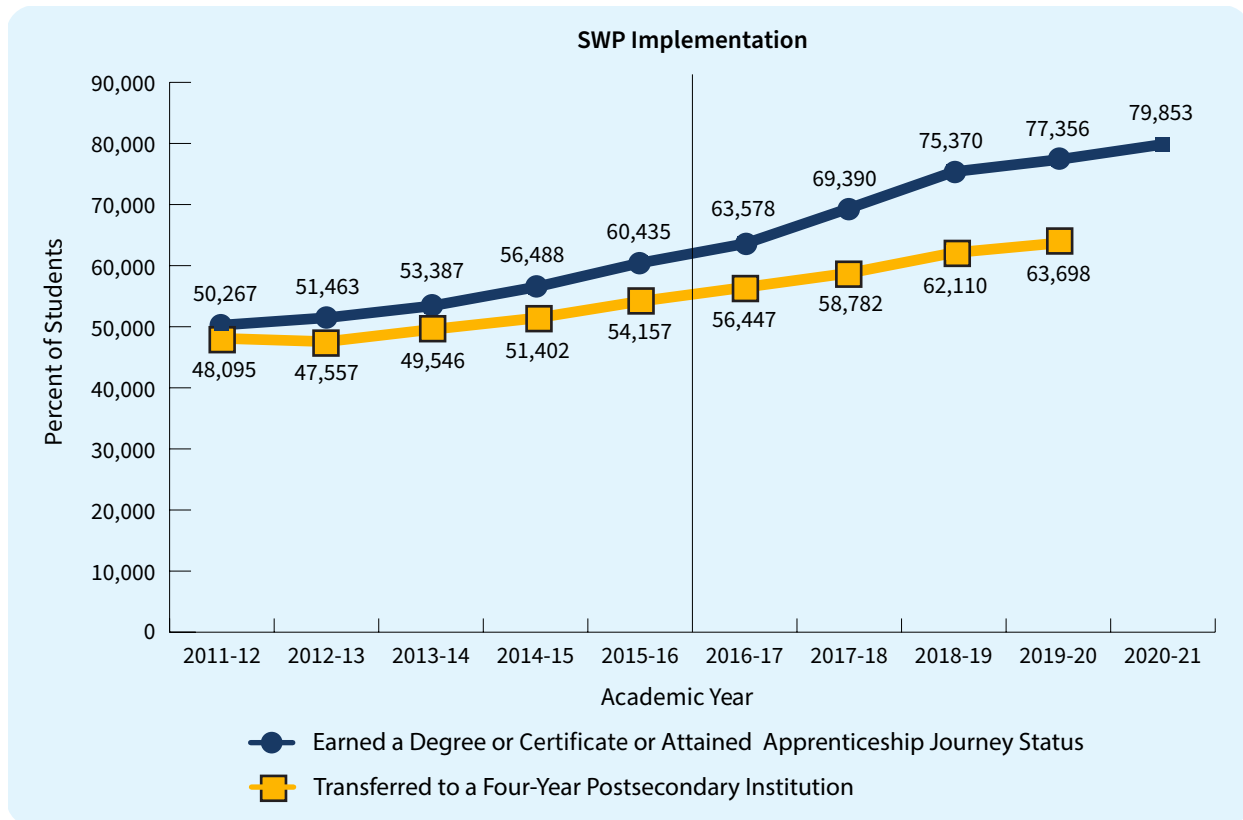
Table 5: Investments by Sector, by Region



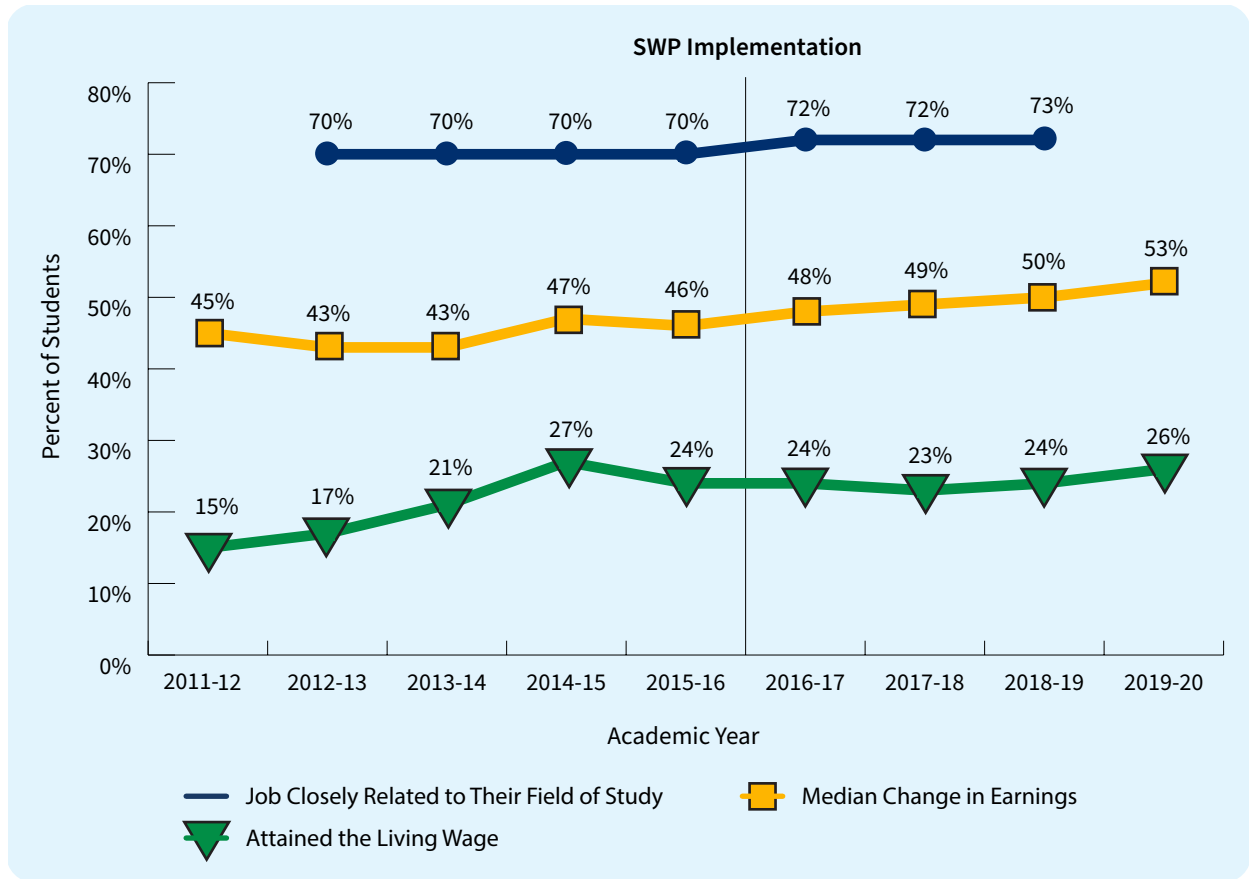
**Table 7: CTE Student Credit and Noncredit Progress**



**Table 8: CTE Student Credential Attainment and Transfer**



**Table 9: CTE Student Employment and Earnings**





Front cover photo: Diablo Valley College

Photo at right: Long Beach City College

Back cover photo: Evergreen Valley



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