CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Doing What MATTERS™

FOR JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

Using Employment and Labor Market Information in the LaunchBoard to Make Data-Backed Decisions

Labor market and employment outcomes data can play a powerful role in helping secondary and postsecondary educators better align program offerings with student interests and needs, regional occupational demands, and public accountability and accreditation requirements.

What is the LaunchBoard?

The LaunchBoard is a web-based, user-friendly data dashboard that brings education, employment, and labor market data together to inform decision making and planning in postsecondary institutions. Supported by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and hosted by Cal-PASS Plus, the LaunchBoard expands upon data available in the Chancellor's Office data system by pulling timely data from external sources such as:

- K–12 and intersegmental transfer information from Cal-PASS Plus,

- Wage records from the state's unemployment insurance database,

- Labor market information from Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI), and

- Student employment results from the CTE Outcomes Survey.

The LaunchBoard allows users to view critical metrics and milestones by college, program, and academic year. Each metric includes disaggregated information by student demographics such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and age group.

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Designed to support conversations on post-secondary program improvement among faculty, deans, directors, regional consortia, and community partners, the LaunchBoard can answer a variety of key questions to support decision making, including:

○ What is the projected number of job openings in a specific field in this region and how does that projection compare with the current number of graduates?

○ Of the students who participated in a particular program, how many have secured employment in the target occupation or a related field?

○ Are graduates of a program earning at least the starting wage for a job in that field?

○ How do wages for students who complete a certificate compare to those who complete a degree in a particular program?

○ What types of jobs are available for students who transfer and earn a bachelor's degree?

The section below provides an example of how one community college used the kind of information now readily available in the LaunchBoard to support program planning. A pullout box further highlights how the LaunchBoard could help to inform a similar process at any institution.

How Cabrillo College Used Labor Market and Employment Data to Drive Improvement

Program evaluation and planning have become more important than ever, with rapidly changing labor markets requiring colleges to adapt their programs to meet evolving workforce and student needs. Assembling all of the data required to assess programs has been an expensive,

labor-intensive effort. For example, educators at Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, California, describe a multi-year effort to align their Medical Assisting program with the needs of local employers. Perkins Core Indicator data showed that their program was achieving a 95% job placement rate. However, the Employment Outcomes Survey showed that while students were being employed, a decreasing percentage of them were finding work in the field of study. Labor market information that the college had purchased showed demand for medical assistants had not diminished during the same period of time.

The new program chair, Pam Sanborn, then shared the data with local employers and asked for their help in understanding the trend. A somewhat painful, but very productive discussion ensued in which employers described how they needed medical assistants with stronger writing and math skills.

This prompted the program to look at the average time to completion and persistence data, both for Medical Assisting and for other allied health programs. The other programs did much better by these measures. One major difference was that they were all cohort-based. A major redesign of the program was undertaken, instituting both a cohort model and contextualized math and English within the first year.

How Could the LaunchBoard Help?

Colleges can use data in the LaunchBoard to easily see the information that Cabrillo College had to purchase and compile. For example, a meeting could be convened where faculty, counselors, and deans from multiple colleges within a region compared the data available on the Launch-board's Community College Pipeline. At this meeting, participants could:

○ Examine which programs are most effective at reaching key milestones and securing strong student outcomes, and discuss the factors that support these outcomes

○ Examine the number of graduates within a region and compare this number to projected job openings to determine market saturation

○ Develop an agenda for a meeting with local employers where the colleges could gain industry perspectives on whether the program profiles shown in the LaunchBoard align with perceptions of students from area community colleges

Several years after the program redesign, retention and time to completion have both substantially improved. However, the program remains concerned about the labor market. Career education dean Rock Pfotenhauer observes that, "The labor market for medical assistants is quite complex. There are a variety of programs based in community colleges, private providers, adult schools, and Regional Occupational Programs. While the local and regional labor markets appear to be over-supplied, when we talk with employers they say they are having a hard time finding well-qualified candidates."

The college then worked with the Bay Area Community College Consortium, the Health Workforce Initiative, and the Centers of Excellence to convene multiple colleges and employers across the region. "We were able to use the kind of information that is available in the LaunchBoard to quickly determine how many programs we had, how many students were enrolled and graduating, and the size of the regional labor market."

That regional partnership has proven to be quite productive. For example, when the regional partnership reached out to the Chief Operating Officer of one of the largest employers of medical assistants in the Bay Area, the company immediately formed a team to work with the colleges because they were struggling to find candidates with the skill levels they needed. By demonstrating the aggregate scale of the community colleges, it became clear that the partnership could address industry needs.

Data has been essential to the evolution of the Medical Assisting program, but it has been time-consuming and expensive to gather and analyze. Pfotenhauer says, "We've been looking forward to having access to the LaunchBoard because it will enable us to do the same kind of work we did with our MA program, with more programs and less effort."

Where Can I Learn More?

To learn more about using labor market information for decision making, see these guides:

- ⭕ The Aspen Institute's *Guide for Using Labor Market Data to Improve Student Success*,[1] which provides case studies of how community colleges are using labor market data

- ⭕ The Centers of Excellence's *Making Use of Labor Market Information*,[2] which offers a framework for applying labor market data to college decision making

To directly access the LaunchBoard,[3] visit its page on the Cal-PASS Plus website, where you can find college-specific information and view a demonstration of its key features.

To find out more about the LaunchBoard,[4] visit its webpage on the Doing What Matters website, where you can:

- ⭕ View a calendar of upcoming LaunchBoard webinars and trainings, facilitated by WestEd

- ⭕ Access recorded webinars that provide LaunchBoard overviews

- ⭕ Watch video clips with detailed instructions on how to use the LaunchBoard

- ⭕ Review a PowerPoint presentation describing LaunchBoard features

- ⭕ Read instructions on how to upload information to the LaunchBoard

For further information, contact:
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1 http://www.rpgroup.org/sites/default/files/LMI%20Research%20Brief%20%28Fall%202013%29.pdf
2 http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/portals/6/docs/Making%20Use%20of%20Labor%20Market%20Information%20FINAL.pdf
3 http://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/LaunchboardDemo.aspx
4 http://doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu/LaunchBoard.aspx