



Executive Summary

BUILDING A CAREER PATHWAYS SYSTEM

Promising Practices in Community College-Centered Workforce Development

WORKFORCE STRATEGY CENTER



Who We Are

The Workforce Strategy Center is a nonprofit management consulting group that works throughout the United States to help create public systems that promote career pathways leading people to high-wage, high-demand employment. Current projects include national research on how to put community colleges at the center of regional workforce development systems and partnerships with public and private sector leaders in California and New York to develop pathways to information technology careers for unemployed and underemployed individuals. For more information, visit our web site at www.workforcestrategy.org or contact us at 718-434-4790.

Building a Career Pathways System:

Promising Practices in
Community College-Centered
Workforce Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 2002

WORKFORCE STRATEGY CENTER
A NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM



Co-Authors:

Julian L. Alssid
David Gruber
Davis Jenkins
Christopher Mazzeo
Brandon Roberts
Regina Stanback-Stroud

Researchers:

David Dearden
Sara Rab

Editors:

Suri Duitch
Carl Vogel

Designer:

Julia Reich

Cover:

photo by Sharon Hall Photography,
provided courtesy of Martha Lucey,
City College of San Francisco

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CAREER PATHWAYS	1
<i>sidebar</i> : Our Research	2
<i>chart</i> : The Elements of a Sector-Based Career Pathway	3
CAREER PATHWAYS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES	4
Issues	4
<i>chart</i> : San Francisco IT Career Ladder System	5
Promising Practices	6
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR CAREER PATHWAYS IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE REGION	8
Issues	9
Promising Practices	9
STATE INVOLVEMENT FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS	11
Case Studies	11
Issues	12
Promising Practices	14
RECOMMENDATIONS	15
For Community College Level Administrators	15
For Community and Regional Level Policymakers	16
For State Administrators	16
For Community College System Policymakers	16
For California Policymakers	17

Introduction

At a time when the importance of training and education for disadvantaged citizens is more clear than ever, one key institution is being underutilized. The nation's 1,132 community colleges are accessible in almost every community and open to all. They offer low tuition, a wide range of education and training, and a continuing funding base. By using these facilities as a focal point for new career pathways to high-wage, high-demand employment, policymakers can link all the institutions in the workforce development system—workforce agencies, community-based organizations, social service agencies and employers.

Labor market research has increasingly demonstrated that continuing skill development is a key factor in moving families out of poverty. For example, a 2001 report by the Public Policy Institute of California found that even in an expanding economy, a large percentage of people placed in entry-level jobs earn wages at or below the poverty level. And a recent report from the Center for Law and Social Policy concluded that after leaving the welfare rolls, recipients "face significant financial instability and that employment alone will not lead to financial security."

However, a large gap remains between the requirements of increasingly complex well-paying jobs and the skills of unemployed, undereducated workers. To prepare disadvantaged individuals to succeed in the evolving labor market, this country's workforce and education systems need to be organized around long-term, comprehensive career pathways that integrate education, training and work.

The clear need—and opportunity—is to develop a large-scale, flexible and open system that offers education and training for all who need them: welfare recipients, unemployed workers, at-risk youth and anyone else who wants to better their job prospects but has few skills or little education. To function effectively, this system needs to be regional, focused on key employment sectors and able to offer training to meet a wide range of individual needs.

Many experts believe this kind of system should be built on career pathways that are tied to high-wage employment offering career progression opportunities. In addition to assisting individuals, career pathways also help employers (by both training current employ-

ees and creating a pool of qualified job applicants) and can enhance regional development (by invigorating key economic sectors).

Our research suggests that community colleges and the larger workforce system must make changes to create new systems based on career pathways. Community colleges must restructure how they plan and deliver education and career training. The workforce system must find new ways to engage and connect with colleges. Policymakers in both systems need to take advantage of flexible guidelines and redirect current funding to support career pathways, and new funding will be needed to bring the system to scale.

At the same time, however, most of the building blocks for a career pathways system—community colleges and workforce, economic development and social service agencies—already exist. Linking the existing services and resources of these now separate institutions creates a base to expand the scale and impact of training and education programs and to build industry-driven pathways to economic self-sufficiency. To grasp this opportunity, decision makers must be willing to rethink long-standing traditions, reallocate resources and create new partnerships. The promising models described below offer a template for moving toward that goal.

Career Pathways

Career pathways—targeted to regional labor markets, focused on employment sectors, and combining education, training and on-the-job learning—provide a framework for workforce development by integrating the programs and resources of community colleges, workforce agencies and social service providers.

By supporting a common model for career progression, these agencies can work together to develop pathways that assist economically and educationally disadvantaged individuals in entering and advancing in high-wage, high-demand employment sectors such as information technology, healthcare or manufacturing. Our research suggests that effective career pathways incorporate three levels of training, serving a broad range of individual needs:

Basic Skills Training For those with little in the way of skills and/or work experience, such as many welfare recipients, a first level of training offers orientation to career and educational opportunities and basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills.

Entry-Level Training This coursework provides college-level skills training in a specific industry, provided in relatively quick increments (up to six months). The classes are designed to offer a direct transition to higher-wage entry-level jobs in the region and often include internships and work experience.

Upgrade Training and Education Targeted to workers with demonstrated skills and work experience, this training provides additional skills and education to meet evolving employer and labor market needs. For maximum impact, upgrade training should be offered at the workplace, at community colleges and in the community.

Community colleges are the natural focal point for developing career pathways. However, pathways can,

and should, extend beyond campus borders. To reach economically disadvantaged individuals outside the traditional student population, for example, colleges can partner with community-based organizations to develop new “branch campuses” that combine college instruction with the access and support provided by neighborhood agencies. By offering basic skills and entry-level training in local neighborhoods, branch campuses provide a natural site for the first stage of a career pathway. To extend the pathway further, colleges can partner with local companies to offer upgrade training and education to current employees.

For example, five cities around the country are now developing a career pathways system focused on information technology. In these locations—San Francisco, the East Bay, San Jose, Los Angeles and New York—the pathway includes six basic steps:

1. Community outreach to economically and educationally disadvantaged adults
2. Basic skills coursework at community-based

OUR RESEARCH

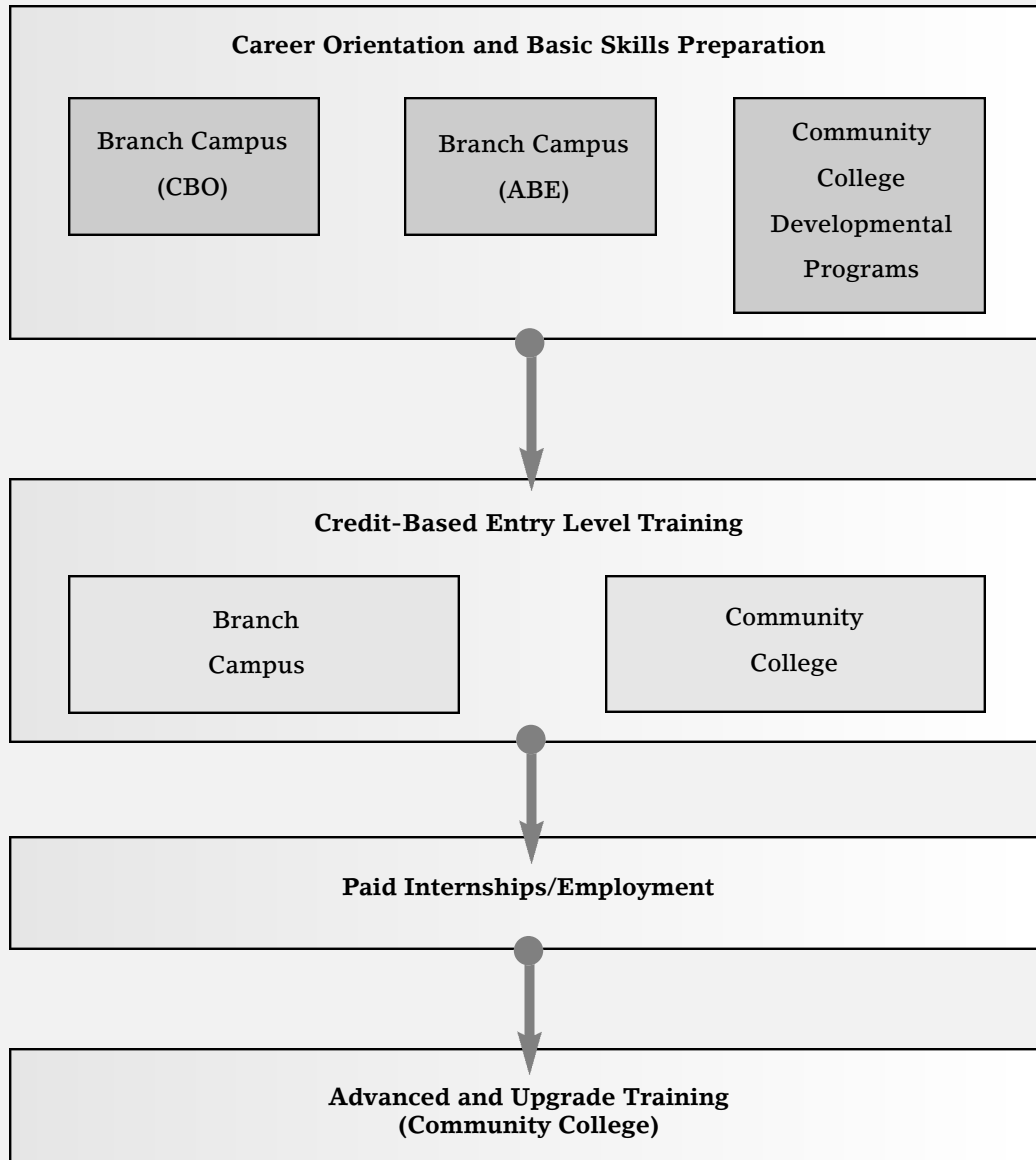
This report seeks to describe some of the best examples of community colleges and government and non-profit institutions that are changing and adapting their missions, organizations, practices and resources to begin to create career pathways systems. Our research included site visits and interviews in states with noteworthy career pathways systems—North Carolina, Washington, Florida and California. We visited 19 community colleges and related programs in those states and others, and interviewed staff at community-based organizations, Workforce Investment Boards, and state and local welfare providers.

This report is organized primarily to reach policy and decision makers at three levels: colleges, community and regional, and state. Individual chapters focus on each of these three levels and include the following sections:

- A summary of why career pathways should be of interest to decision makers
- A brief discussion of opportunities and issues
- A focus on effective policy and practice drawn from our research and site visits

The Workforce Strategy Center would like to thank The James Irvine Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The Annie E. Casey Foundation for their support of our research. This report, funded by the Irvine and Ford foundations, is the first in a series of four that are part of this project. We are also grateful to the state policymakers and the representatives of community colleges, community organizations, Workforce Investment Boards, and state and local welfare agencies who gave us their time and energies.

THE ELEMENTS OF A SECTOR-BASED CAREER PATHWAY



Students can begin their journey through a career pathway at a branch campus situated at a community-based organization (CBO) or an adult basic education (ABE) provider. Opportunities for entry-level training and internships help focus learning on well-paying career options. At the final stage, advanced training helps participants advance in responsibility and compensation.

organizations that serve as branch campuses of local community colleges

3. Entry-level training for computer technicians and office workers
4. Internship placement
5. Entry-level employment as a computer technician or officer worker
6. Upgrade training in programming, database applications and computer networking

Career Pathways at Community Colleges

Community colleges are the United States' core public institution for education and skills training, with a total student population of 10.4 million. Nearly half of college students begin their post-secondary education at community colleges. In California alone, 108 community colleges serve 1.5 million students a year, a number that continues to grow. No other entity matches these schools' combination of scope and scale, typically a broad offering of basic skills, technical training and traditional post-secondary education. Community colleges, moreover, are a long-term, stable presence in the community, open to all. However, developing career pathways requires changing how community colleges structure and deliver education and career training to the community as a whole and to economically disadvantaged adults in particular.

For college administrators, career pathways can:

- *Improve student recruitment and increase enrollment*, both by offering a new program directly aimed at providing good employment and by raising the profile of the college in the community.
- *Improve student retention and success*. Career pathways offer a bridge between the large num-

ber of students enrolled in remedial programs and higher-level, credit-bearing courses.

- *Raise the stature of the institution*, because the college becomes the natural place for business, government and community leaders to work together to increase the economic viability of the community or region.
- *Provide access to new funding* by expanding the college's ability to attract students and by building new relationships with employers and government funding sources.
- *Improve the quality of education* by connecting programs and faculty from workforce, academic and remedial divisions.

We found colleges creating innovative career pathways targeted to the economically disadvantaged in communities throughout the country. Programs include career pathways in sectors such as manufacturing, information technology and health careers, many of which are reporting success in moving low-income individuals to high-wage employment. While each initiative differs depending on local labor market and resources, all encompass a career pathways model that seeks to advance individuals to new jobs and career opportunities

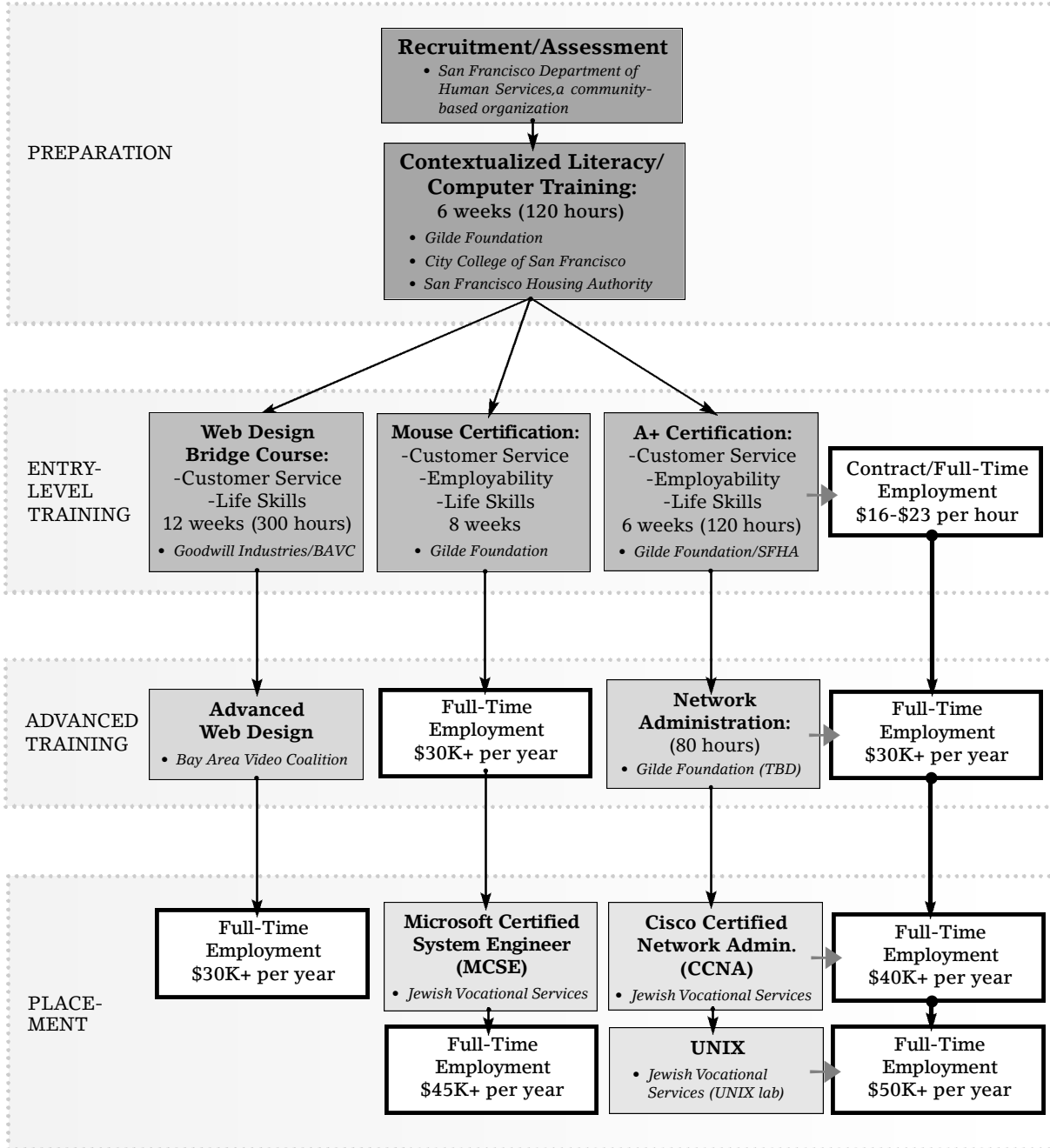
Guilford Technical Community College in North Carolina offers a glimpse into how a pathway can work. The college's Highways to Success program prepares former welfare recipients for careers as medical office specialists or computer office specialists. The 12-week program combines job readiness and basic skills instruction with occupational skills training, culminating with an internship in a local business. In the past two years, it has graduated a total of 194 participants out of the 218 enrolled, and more than 96 percent of all graduates found work. Most started their new jobs earning more than \$20,000 a year.

ISSUES

Separate and Conflicting Programs

The single largest barrier to creating successful career pathways is reconciling community colleges'

San Francisco IT Career Ladder System



Note:

Case Management: community-based organization

Job Retention: community-based organization

Curriculum Development: City College of San Francisco

Instruction: City College of San Francisco

various separate and distinct missions, departments and programs. The nation's 1,132 community colleges are expected to fulfill a wide variety of roles: a gateway to higher education, remediation for students unprepared for college, workforce training and an economic development engine for business growth. In attempting to fulfill all of these divergent missions, colleges often have created what are, in effect, a group of separate institutions: a transfer preparation college, a remedial training college, a vocational training college, a contract training college for employers.

Each of these "colleges," with its own faculty, resources, contacts, funders and students, often operates in its own sphere, with little integration with the rest of the campus. However, in order to build effective career pathways, schools must integrate the education and training offered from the different departments, which typically requires overcoming substantial institutional biases and habits.

Lack of Resources

Community colleges, like most public institutions today, are under budget constraints. However, creating career pathways does require new funding.

- Money for curriculum development, lab facilities, employer and student outreach, and faculty development is scarce and frequently restricted by regulations and guidelines.
- Most community college budgets are tied up in salaries for instruction. Administrators have limited discretionary money and rely on grant funding for new program development or to explore new ways of teaching.
- Disadvantaged students also tend to need more support than other students, and this attention is expensive.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to allocate more funding. In general, working poor adults lack a strong political voice.

Isolation from Employers

Due in part to a focus on facilitating academic trans-

fer to four-year institutions, many community colleges have limited connections to job opportunities for students. When there is a connection on campus to employers, it tends to be isolated from the rest of the school. For example, contract training departments, which are hired by local firms to teach specific skills to their workforce, are typically self-supporting and independent of college-credit divisions.

Lack of Incentive to Serve the Disadvantaged

Community colleges may place less emphasis on serving disadvantaged students than other priorities. The relatively high cost of serving this population is one disincentive, especially since part-time students often do not qualify for federal or state financial aid, and few states provide financial aid for students in non-credit programs.

Also, power in many community colleges is concentrated in the academic faculty, which tend to see their role as teaching college-level subject matter and, as such, are sometimes resentful of having to deal with students who are not prepared for college. A focus on transfers to baccalaureate schools remains the primary measure of success in community colleges, giving little incentive to develop programs that have employment as a goal.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Creating Bridges between Developmental and Credit Bearing Programs

Colleges need to develop formal bridge programs that make remedial education more relevant to adults seeking career training. Under this approach, courses such as remedial English, reading and math incorporate materials from a specific field into the actual course context. For example, at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Michigan, the faculty developed a 16-week "bridge to technology education" program that prepares adults recruited from inner-city Detroit for entry-level skilled jobs and post-secondary training in manufacturing and other technical fields. The curriculum integrates compe-

tencies from technology, mathematics, communication and “career entrepreneurship.”

Creating Internal Pathways to Certification and College Degrees

Students in career pathways programs tend to have as their most immediate priority a decent-paying job. In the long run, however, they need the option of pursuing a college degree. A growing number of schools offer college credit for training that leads to industry or professional certifications. We found community colleges in Arizona, North Carolina and Portland, Oregon, that have created such programs for biomedical, health care, office skills, legal systems and other careers.

Integrating Academic and Vocational Education

Full-time academic faculty need to work with contract staff and faculty members, either individually or in departments. Some colleges create opportunities for interdisciplinary development of career pathways through joint committees, formal inter-departmental agreements or “buy-outs” of time for participating faculty. At Las Positas College in Livermore, California, committees of academic and vocational faculty meet with employers to develop curricula that draws from all divisions of the college.

Expanding Support Services

Low-income community college students need support services to successfully balance family, financial and life issues along with going to school. Ideally, the various services (assessment, financial aid, counseling, referrals) should be coordinated to provide a full range of support. In Portland Community College’s Professional Technical programs, all students are assigned a “Technical Skills Learning Specialist,” who monitors student progress and provides general career guidance and support.

Integrating Administrative Structures

Our research found that colleges that bring together traditionally separate departments under a single administrator gain a significant advantage in their efforts to integrate learning, access new resources and develop career pathways. Edmonds Community College in suburban Seattle has appointed a Vice President for Workforce Development, who is responsible for both contract training and professional/technical degree programs.

Using Resources Effectively

Community college instructional funds are the core resource for career pathways. However, there are other available funding streams:

- Several states provide funding based on full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollments for non-credit programs and for students whose basic skills fall below what is generally required of college credit courses.
- Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (VATEA)—federal funding to support vocational and technical education—has been used by some community colleges to develop career pathways programs and support faculty development.
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) funding explicitly encourages the development of programs that integrate basic skill instruction with training for employment.
- Welfare and economic development funding can be used to support elements of career pathways. Mission College in Santa Clara, California, has used VATEA and CalWORKS (welfare-to-work) funding to create courses that integrate basic and technical skills, such as “ESL for Child Development” and “Math for Graphic Arts.”

Strategic Partnerships for Career Pathways in the Community and the Region

To fully implement career pathways as a framework for workforce development in a community or region, individual community colleges need to form partnerships with key local and regional institutions: employers, workforce agencies, social service organizations, welfare agencies, economic development agencies, adult education providers and community-based organizations. In many respects, all these entities share the common goal of supporting career progression for individuals, and, as a necessary corollary, meeting the needs of regional employers.

However, these local and regional institutions rarely act in concert. By working together, each can expand its funding base, broaden its reach and scope, and provide students and clients with new opportunities. For example, a neighborhood organization can become a branch campus of a local community college, reaching neighborhood residents who might otherwise have no access to post-secondary education. Similarly, a local Workforce Investment Board can have more impact by working with a community college to integrate resources and create new career pathways.

The opportunities go beyond each community. Citywide or regional partnerships have even more potential for success, given their reach and their ability to attract and leverage stable, long-term funding.

For community college administrators, participation in strategic partnerships can:

- *Expand recruitment and enrollment* through outreach to community residents currently unaware of post-secondary opportunities.
- *Access new funding resources* from workforce and welfare programs and government and philanthropic grants.

- *Expand needed support services* by forming partnerships with CBOs and adult education providers.
- *Increase visibility* with employers and within the community and region.

For local workforce agency administrators, career pathways can serve to:

- *Provide access* to an established training and education infrastructure that offers a broad range of options to workers at all skill and education levels.
- *Leverage scarce workforce dollars* with state education funding to support the instructional cost of training.
- *Provide a range* of supplementary remedial and supportive services available at little or no additional cost.

For CBO administrators, partnerships with community colleges can serve to:

- *Provide clients* with an array of new education and career opportunities.
- *Expand the range* of on-site educational and training offerings by establishing the CBO as a branch campus of the college.
- *Leverage state education funding* to pay the salaries of instructors housed at the organization's offices.
- *Raise the organization's profile* and visibility in the community.

For employers, partnerships with community colleges can serve to:

- *Provide a wide range* of customized training for employees, from basic skills to advanced upgrade programs.
- *Meet labor market needs* for employees at all skill and education levels.

- *Provide a source*, in cooperation with the workforce system, for subsidized training for employees, as well as subsidies for new employee wages.

We found many examples of partnerships among colleges, workforce agencies and community providers such as adult education providers and social service agencies. In a number of communities, we saw innovative use of resources, with workforce funding supporting and enhancing community college-led career pathways in high-demand occupations. While examples of this kind of collaboration remain limited, existing cases show the clear potential to make better use of current resources.

ISSUES

Inertia/Lack of Incentive

The greatest obstacle to development of most regional career pathways is simply that the key potential constituents have always operated as separate entities with independent (although clearly overlapping) missions. Absent a firm mandate to collaborate, agencies will naturally continue to pursue their primary mission: delivering services as dictated by funding sources and regulations.

Lack of Framework for Collaboration

Even where agencies have the political will or other incentive to collaborate in developing career pathways, groups must facilitate the difficult task of planning and then maintaining these new partnerships. Developing a collaboration that includes multiple entities and employers requires additional staff and a place where separate players can meet, plan, negotiate and work together. Although this role can, and perhaps should, be undertaken by Workforce Investment Boards, few have taken this level of responsibility.

Lack of Resources for Operation

While there are clear opportunities to more effectively use current workforce, welfare and community college funding in underwriting community and regional career pathways, these resources alone are probably not sufficient to support a large scale system. Recent budget deficits, fiscal pressure on remaining

welfare surpluses, and proposed federal funding cuts will all diminish the ability of communities to support new, resource-intensive programs.

System and Regulatory Barriers

Integrated career pathways can be hobbled by gaps between each agency's distinct target populations, reporting requirements, funding cycles and so on. And community colleges may see the short-term objectives of workforce agencies as conflicting with their broader educational mission.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Partnerships with the Workforce and Social Service Systems

One-Stop Centers, welfare agencies, and organizations that provide training and support services are natural partners for colleges. Managing billions of dollars, these agencies can reach underserved individuals, fund new career pathways programs and provide necessary services to help disadvantaged adults succeed in an often difficult environment.

Under Washington State's pre-employment training initiative, for example, Edmonds Community College helps finance the local One-Stop Center and maintains staff there to assess interested clients for college readiness and to provide basic skills and literacy instruction. In Los Angeles, the county welfare agency has allocated \$12.5 million in surplus TANF funds over the next five years to pay for the costs of an information technology career pathways initiative, including case management, social support, administration and pre-employment preparation services.

Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations

Community colleges and community-based organizations are ideally situated to work together to create branch campuses that marry community college instruction with neighborhood-based social services. CBOs are accessible and credible to adults isolated from educa-

tional institutions and training programs. In many communities, CBOs offer a full spectrum of services, from counseling to employment training. At the same time, however, they are often limited by a lack of resources, limited training and educational offerings, and few connections to employers. Community colleges have the resources and capacity to provide a full spectrum of education and skills training. Yet colleges often have difficulty recruiting low-income individuals to appropriate programs and effectively serving individuals who need additional support.

Community colleges/CBO partnerships link college-provided training with CBO accessibility and support services. Basic skills and entry-level instruction offered at the CBO can become the first step to more advanced training and courses offered on the college campus. For example, working closely with Modesto Junior College, the Central Valley Opportunities Center in Modesto, California, recruits students, works with participants on basic skills and provides support services while they attend MJC.

Partnerships with Adult Basic Education Providers

The adult basic education system is rarely focused on career progression and transition to post-secondary education and training. However, ABE can be an ideal foundation to bring participants into a career pathway, providing basic education skills to a broad population that is otherwise disconnected from the community college system. ABE programs can offer career orientation, work readiness and contextualized basic skills, with a direct transition to partner community colleges. For example, Orange County Community College offers non-credit ABE courses on-site at 12 area CBOs.

Partnerships with Employers

Employer and regional labor market demand are the foundation for career pathways strategies. Work sites also offer an additional venue for colleges to deliver upgrade training, which can then be supported by WIA customized job training money and state economic development funding. California's Employment Training Panel (ETP), for example, sets aside \$50 million for training incumbent workers. IT collaboratives in the East Bay and Los Angeles, California, are employing this ETP funding to encourage employers to support upgrade training.

Instituting Regional Partnerships

Strategic partnerships between colleges and other local institutions can be expanded to become part of a citywide or regional strategy, which can identify career sectors and aggregate programs and training to meet larger-scale needs. A regional approach can also mitigate competition from multiple institutions. In Washington State, for example, a regional perspective provided otherwise competing community colleges the scope to develop complementary areas of specialization.

Regional collaborations focusing on connecting low-income citizens with training and economic opportunity have become a notable strategy in economic development. These programs show that regional collaborations work and provide potential sites for career pathways systems. The Capital Area Training Foundation in Austin, Texas, an industry-led nonprofit, works through sectoral-focused steering committees to connect local employers, professional associations and educators. The U.S. Department of Labor has provided millions of dollars in recent years to develop regional skills alliances and has set aside resources for local consortia of business, labor, community-based organizations and local WIBs.

State Involvement For Long-Term Success

With career pathway initiatives now primarily separate and limited programs, state support is needed to increase scale and create more comprehensive systems. Explicit in this discussion is the notion that states have an opportunity—some might argue an obligation—to create an education and training environment that facilitates skills development, employment and life-long learning. As the primary authority for education, workforce training and economic development initiatives, every state has both the institutions and resources necessary to make this happen on a statewide basis.

From a workforce and economic development perspective, a state career pathways model can serve to:

- *Better address the workforce needs* of employers, particularly those in high-skill sectors.
- *Enhance the long-term earnings* and economic self-sufficiency of low-income workers.
- *Retrain and reemploy workers* dislocated by economic change.
- *Lead to a more efficient and effective use* of publicly allocated education and workforce development resources.
- *Strategically link* education, workforce and economic development policy efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of local economies and business.
- *Erase current perceptions* that the state supported workforce development system is ineffective or even irrelevant.

For a state's community college system, implementing career pathways can serve to:

- *Better address labor market needs* and raise college visibility in the business community.

- *Bring new resources* to support system programs and goals.
- *Better prepare individuals* to achieve economic self-sufficiency.
- *Provide a greater role* in state and local economic and workforce development efforts.
- *Make clear* to government officials and employers that community college education and training can lead to economically viable employment.
- *Generate greater support* for the community college system among state policymakers, employers, advocacy organizations and the public in general.

CASE STUDIES

Washington State

When federal welfare reform was instituted in 1996, each state was given a large degree of latitude to determine its own policies about changing the welfare system. Washington State expanded its welfare reform program to develop a career pathways training system that could help low-income families move up the wage ladder.

From July 1998 through June 2002, Washington invested approximately \$75 million in state TANF surplus funds to develop career pathways programs in community colleges across the state. The effort, operated by Governor Gary Locke's office, works as a partnership with key players at the state level, including the community college, TANF, employment security, and economic and community development systems.

The initiative includes:

- Pre-employment training in short-term courses of 12 to 22 weeks, geared to hiring needs of local employers.
- Financial assistance to pay for tuition and books for low-wage workers with families, including TANF recipients who are currently working.
- Workplace basic skills that provided literacy training for low-wage workers in entry-level

jobs—customized to their jobs and provided at their worksites.

- Families That Work, a program that trains public assistance recipients and other low-income parents with young children in literacy, parenting and family management skills, to help them prepare for work.
- Funds for colleges based upon plans developed with local partners to redesign programs and services for low-income working adults attending college.

After two years of this effort, the community colleges have trained more than 1,500 welfare recipients and other low-income adults, and the results illustrate the difference that training can make. For example, 66 percent of welfare recipients who completed a pre-employment training program started a job earning more than \$7.50 an hour, compared to 28 percent of all other welfare recipients placed in employment. And 68 percent of welfare recipients completing training in 1998-1999 stayed employed for one year, while only 51 percent of the overall caseload achieved this milestone.

North Carolina

North Carolina's community college system is recognized worldwide for its success in addressing the customized training needs of local industry and businesses. But for the past five years, its colleges have also been developing a more systemic approach to providing career pathways training in key sectors of the state's economy.

In 1998, the state allocated \$500,000 of TANF funds to 12 community colleges for short-term career training programs, referred to as The Pathways Program, which combined basic skills remediation with job readiness and occupational skills training. In addition to the TANF funds, the state community college system redeployed some of its adult literacy funds (under Title II of WIA) to six community colleges pursuing career pathways strategies.

In looking at North Carolina's effort, three important features of the system's community colleges set them apart from those of many other states.

- Community colleges are the training provider of

choice because state legislation identifies the system "as the primary lead agency for delivering job training, literacy and adult education programs in the state."

- As suggested in the law, North Carolina's community colleges also have responsibility for adult literacy training—one of only a handful of states where adult literacy is delivered primarily through community colleges.
- The state has a history of funding community colleges for human resource development and job readiness training to adults with little or no work experience.

The North Carolina community college system is continuing to expand its career pathways, recently developing frameworks in four sectors—manufacturing, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, boat building and industrial maintenance—that provide a template for module-based training that awards certificates to participants.

ISSUES

Lack of Constituency to Motivate Change

It can be difficult to change the perceptions of workforce development and welfare officials on the value of skills training, the importance of community colleges and the overall need to pursue a career pathways strategy. Even if state policymakers have a vision and a desire to act on a career pathways strategy, they need support from businesses and/or low-income advocacy groups if they are going to change the direction of major institutions and systems. In too many states, neither businesses nor advocates are focused on state workforce development issues.

Insufficient Integration of Workforce and Economic Development Systems

Even in Washington and North Carolina, the state Workforce Investment Act system has not been used to its potential, denying a source of training funds, intensive services (e.g., case management support) and participant referrals for college programs. While

some colleges develop their own connections with local WIBs, the efforts are ad hoc and not necessarily long lasting. At this point, we see no significant examples of states linking their WIA efforts to support career pathways.

Failure to Utilize the Workforce and Community College Systems

Although the community college system is a formidable source of skills training in almost every state, only a few, such as North Carolina and Washington, have recognized the system's value for career pathways. Without building around this system, which has the resources, faculty and organizational framework necessary to implement a career pathways model, piecing together a viable framework is next to impossible. Community colleges are often not valued for their flexibility in skills training, particularly in providing short-term training and serving economically and educationally disadvantaged populations. In fact, the workforce system in some places relies more on private and proprietary training organizations, even though their cost may be higher.

Lack of Resources to Sustain and Institutionalize Career Pathways Efforts

Sustaining a career pathways initiative over time will take more than TANF and WIA funds, as important as they are. Over the long term, career pathways must become an integral part of workforce development, and long-term funding must be reallocated or created to keep these systems in operation.

Limited Resources for Career Programs and Training

Funding can be a powerful source of leverage for system policymakers to engage community colleges in career pathways. Unfortunately, too often state community college administrators do not allocate core FTE and other supplemental dollars to non-credit vocational and continuing education courses, foreclosing a significant source of funding for career pathways. In other states, such courses do receive FTE reimbursement, but at a fraction of the rate for credit-bearing courses.

Reluctance to Establish Career Programs for Academic Degree Credit

Policymakers for the state community college system can encourage individual schools to offer career pathways programming for academic degree credit in a variety of ways. However, they are usually limited in any efforts to create new program options by onerous and unwieldy approval procedures for credit classes that are not responsive to evolving employer needs. In addition, many faculty and administrators are resistant to shifting their school's emphasis from academic programs to courses they consider less academically rigorous.

Insufficient Access and Support Policies

State tuition and financial aid policies can make community college unaffordable for many students, especially part-time adult students. System regulations and policies often provide little incentive for individual colleges to focus on the financial aid and support needs of disadvantaged students. For example, many college system policies limit access for students who score below basic skills thresholds on placement examinations, relegating them to ABE and ESL divisions either off-campus or within an entirely different division of the college. While colleges cannot serve all students with basic skills deficiencies, they can serve many more than they currently do.

Weak Incentives and Accountability

Community college systems tend to provide weak incentives for the schools to work with the hardest to serve—students with low basic skills or from low-income communities. Furthermore, when some kind of benchmark does exist, it is often inappropriate to workforce development efforts. Base funding for colleges is still allocated mostly on per-student (FTE) basis, and performance measures focus on degree attainment indicators that are more suited for colleges' academic transfer mission. Where performance goals for workforce programs do exist, they tend to come from outside the college system via WIA, VATEA and other categorical programs. These kinds of measurements are usually poorly aligned with the school system's core measures.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Innovative Partnerships and Strong Leadership

Neither a state's community college system nor its workforce development agency alone can support a career pathways strategy. An ideal career pathways initiative advances a broad array of state-level interests, including those of economic development and social service agencies, businesses and low-income advocacy groups, as well as local philanthropic organizations. Leadership can come from any of these stakeholders, but somebody must push for change. Washington State's career pathways initiative brings together senior level leaders from the state's community college system, the TANF system, the Employment Security department and the economic and community development department into an executive task force, chaired by an official of the Governor's Office.

Creative Use of Resources

All states have the authority to utilize existing resources to support a career pathways strategy, including money from federal funding streams such as TANF, WIA titles I and II (adult literacy) and VATEA. For example, both titles I and II of WIA allow states to use 12.5 percent to 15 percent of their total funds for discretionary activities. In California, the total pool of funds approximates \$90 million. All of these resources can be used to support skills training initiatives and thus promote career pathways by financing tuition, support services, case management, curriculum development, stipends and internships.

Commitment to Skills Training, Increased Earnings and Economic Competitiveness

State policymakers need to reexamine longstanding assumptions about welfare, economic development and education policies. A career pathways system is predicated upon valuing skills training and job advancement for low-wage workers and meeting the workforce needs of key economic sectors. For states, this means abandoning

strict state-level "work first" policies—the WIA and TANF programs are good starting points for implementing this policy shift—and recognizing the community college system as the primary deliverer of training services. For example, in North Carolina, community colleges are a key player in economic development and have been designated by state legislation "as the primary lead agency for delivering job training, literacy and adult education programs in the state." Success should be measured by participants achieving some level of economic success rather than job placement and program completion. Finally, programs should aim to prepare workers for positions within key economic sectors and to do so in ways that help strengthen the competitive position of business.

Supportive State Community College Policies

State-level community college policies profoundly affect the ability of individual colleges to develop and operate career pathways. To promote career pathways, the community college system can:

- Streamline the curriculum review and approval processes for credit-based career programs.
- Institute accountability measures that emphasize outcomes, such as the percentage of remedial students enrolling in career programs or how much career pathways participants earn upon leaving the program.
- Increase state funds (e.g., FTE reimbursement rates) for vocational and career pathways programs to encourage colleges to give as much, or even more, attention to career programs as they give to general transfer classes. The community college system in Texas provides FTE funding for any students engaged in non-credit, career-focused continuing education classes.
- Subsidize the tuition and fees of low-income students to make it easier to attract participants to a career pathway.

Recommendations

The following specific recommendations are built from our experience and research, distilling lessons learned by community colleges, local and regional government agencies, community groups, employers, and state policymakers from around the country. Three overarching ideas were in evidence at virtually all of the institutions or agencies we visited that had successfully implemented career pathways: a vision of career pathways as a framework for workforce development; integration of traditionally separate departments, programs and agencies; and links to current funding sources and, where feasible, development of new funding opportunities.

We have organized the recommendations in the same manner as our findings—at the community college, local and regional, and state levels. In each of these levels, there are compelling opportunities:

- Individual colleges can make immediate changes to program, policies, structure and administration to begin career pathways initiatives.
- Local and regional policymakers can integrate current workforce development and training into a more unified system that is centered on community colleges and career pathways.
- States have the ability to change policies on funding, education, workforce and economic development that allow—and even promote—thriving career pathways.

It is easy to recommend collaboration, new systems and changes in funding. To move beyond the rhetoric, however, requires a catalyst of dollars and high-level leadership, a continuing and sustaining resource base, and strategic and technical assistance. For any long-term success for career pathways, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of coordination of efforts, funding, and leadership at the community college, local and regional, and state levels.

While most of our attention is focused on these three levels we would be remiss if we did not reference the important role of the federal government, which provides funding via a number of programs

(including TANF, WIA, Perkins, ABE and Pell). Within the next 18 months all of these programs will be coming up for reauthorization, providing federal lawmakers an opportunity to incorporate and encourage the use of career pathways throughout the states.

FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS

1. **Create bridge programs.** Enhance traditional remedial and noncredit courses with programs that offer a direct transition from adult literacy, vocational and customized workplace training to credit-bearing career preparation courses.
2. **Promote learning communities that bring together academic, vocational and contract faculty.** Options include supporting academic faculty to work on career pathways curricula and using contract training staff for technical assistance to create industry-responsive programs and instruction throughout the college.
3. **Create administrative structures that foster collaboration across traditional divisions.** Proven models include a workforce and economic development division that encompasses a range of programs and services or a system where each academic dean is responsible for both academic and vocational programs.
4. **Employ internal resources to creatively build bridge programs.** FTE, adult education and ESL funding can support contextualized basic skills. Support services funding can be reallocated. And VATEA funds can be used for faculty development, partnerships with business and retention of disadvantaged students.
5. **Seek and implement new federal and state grant opportunities.** The breadth of a career pathways model allows funding from a wide range of sources, everything from federal Title V funds to economic development discretionary grants.
6. **Develop links to the workforce, education and**

social services systems. Work with CBOs to create bridge programs and to access student social services. Build partnerships with ABE providers to develop basic skills curricula that lead directly into college career pathways. Engage WIBs and welfare agencies to develop training programs that best utilize existing regional resources.

FOR COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL LEVEL POLICYMAKERS

1. **Make community colleges a preferred training partner in the workforce system.** This action can greatly expand the range of training available and makes scarce training dollars go further by leveraging instructional funds.
2. **Develop a targeted sectoral approach with explicit roles and responsibilities for community colleges, the workforce system and employers.** Assess the region's high-skill, high-demand labor market sectors and develop relevant career pathways led by community colleges.
3. **Encourage the support of foundations and other private funders.** Opportunities include convening key regional and community partners, providing funding and technical assistance for initial planning and development, disseminating successful models, networking communities and regions, supporting development of statewide or national intermediaries, and leveraging public funding to create demonstration programs.

FOR STATE ADMINISTRATORS

1. **Develop a career pathways vision and model for the state as a direction for continuing workforce development.** Create a state level partnership with welfare, workforce, economic development and community college officials to develop a career pathways framework, and designate a high-level executive to administer

this initiative.

2. **Allocate resources such as WIA, TANF and VATEA to stimulate and sustain a career pathways strategy.** Pooling resources from these various programs can create a sizeable pot of funds.
3. **Explicitly designate community colleges as the primary deliverer of workforce training.** Opportunities include giving community colleges responsibility for administering all adult education programs or directing the WIA system to view community colleges as a preferred training provider.
4. **Seek new strategies and approaches for engaging both workers and businesses in skills upgrading.** The state workforce system also should look for ways that human and social service programs can encourage and support low-wage workers who want to pursue additional education and training.

FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM POLICYMAKERS

1. **Develop and disseminate a vision for career pathways focused on the state's key employment sectors.** Encourage integration of academic, vocational and contract education at colleges. Incorporate capacity building and technical assistance into the state system's mission.
2. **Provide start-up resources.** Colleges have few discretionary dollars to develop new programs or reorganize existing ones, so resources (financial and other) can be crucial.
3. **Increase financial support.** In states such as California, the state can offer "growth funding" to avoid a cap on money when colleges have reached their enrollment goals. Additional funding can be earmarked specifically for career pathways programs, and the state can offer a higher FTE for career pathways that serve low-income and low-skilled adults.
4. **Develop and support bridge programs.**

Remove restrictions on community college attendance for students with low basic skills. Where low-skilled adults and second language learners are served in school districts and other adult education programs, college systems can develop collaborations with the state agency responsible for ABE and ESL.

5. **Provide technical assistance to community colleges.** This can include professional development for academic, adult literacy and remedial faculty, as well as models of successful integration of adult education and ESL students into the college mainstream.
6. **Enhance financial access for students enrolled in career pathways.** Options include waiving tuition and fees for low-income students, capping the cost of non-credit programs, providing tuition waivers and supplements for part-time students and those in non-credit programs, and aggressively marketing scholarships, living stipends and work study resources.
7. **Build a statewide structure to provide support services** that uses both resources from existing student services budgets for career pathways programs and new resources, such as federal VATEA dollars.
8. **Develop performance standards to reward colleges that build effective career pathways programs.** States might also provide small bonuses and rewards to colleges that show exemplary performance in serving low-skilled adults and other educationally and economically disadvantaged groups of students.

FOR CALIFORNIA POLICYMAKERS

Due to the size and importance of the state's community college system, we have identified specific recommendations that are relevant to California.

1. **Policy makers should develop a career pathways vision and model for the state.** The state's

community college system, in its Board of Governors Career Ladders Framing document, has offered a guiding set of principles; other key state agencies, such as the Workforce Investment Board, should take similar steps.

2. **Policy makers should allocate current resources to stimulate and sustain a career pathways strategy.** Options include expanding the \$20 million allocation of WIA 15 percent dollars, encouraging county welfare offices to follow the example of Los Angeles County in using TANF funding, and expanding efforts to promote the use of ETP funds.
3. **The community college system should explicitly support career pathways partnerships.** Policy and resource allocation should be a priority, including using the current \$40 million in economic development funding to develop sectoral career pathways, creating partnerships with local Workforce Investment Boards and other public funding sources, and developing branch campus models with community providers.
4. **The community college system should encourage colleges to develop preparatory basic skills programs linked to career pathways.** These programs can be delivered on college campuses or through community-based branch campuses. The state should also encourage colleges, Workforce Investment Boards and county welfare agencies to partner in development and support of these programs.
5. **California and national funders should invest in community college-centered career pathways.** To help institutionalize previous substantial investments, foundations can provide seed funding, support technical assistance efforts for both the college system and individual institutions, support research on the impact and effectiveness of career pathways, and develop and support networks to link community colleges with other partners developing career pathways.