

Learning-Aligned Employment Program

Virtual Roundtable Convening



MEETING SUMMARY

March 21, 2022

BACKGROUND

In partnership with the California Student Aid Commission, the California Postsecondary Funder Collaborative and Education First hosted a virtual roundtable convening in support of the Learning Aligned Employment Program (LAEP). In the 2021-22 State Budget, California developed LAEP as an innovative approach to provide students with both additional financial resources toward paying for higher education, as well as opportunities to gain valuable professional and career experience. Between investments made in 2021 and those proposed in the 2022-23 state budget, an unprecedented \$500 million in state funds would be allocated through LAEP to provide students at public colleges and universities with high quality work-based opportunities and to strengthen relationships between campuses and local employers.

This roundtable engaged diverse stakeholders across multiple sectors, including campus leaders, students, employers, work-based learning program leaders and philanthropic partners. Roundtable participants had the opportunity to hear from a panel of various work-based learning models and participate in group discussions to generate thought-partnership on how to best support campus participation and management of LAEP funds, as well as strategies to engage current and prospective employers. Specifically, roundtable participants began tackling the following key questions:

- How should “learning-aligned” employment be defined?
- What does effective employer engagement look like?
- How can we ensure equitable student access and success?

MEETING OBJECTIVES

The virtual roundtable convening was designed to ensure that participants would:

- **Build community and share best practices across sectors** on work-based learning programs and employer engagement partnerships to inform the design and launch of the Learning-Aligned Employment Program
- **Center the voice, needs and experiences of students**, including first gen, current/former foster youth and current/at-risk homeless students in roundtable thought-partnership and discussion
- Share strategies for **supporting campus participation** and proper management of funds
- **Identify partnership and relationship-building opportunities** with other mission-aligned work-based learning programs, as well as philanthropic partners

MEETING AGENDA and SPEAKERS

- Overview on Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP)
 - + Ben Chida, Chief Deputy Cabinet Secretary; Varsha Sarveshwar, Executive Assistant Cabinet Affairs, Governor’s Office
 - + Jake Brymer, Director of Government & External Relations at California Student Aid Commission
- Work-Based Learning Spotlight Panel
 - + Lisa Feldmann, Work Study Manager, UC Davis
 - + Marcie Kirk Holland, Executive Director and Ami Tripp, Assistant Director, Internship and Career Center, UC Davis
 - + Doris Cortez, Student, UC Davis
- Pursuing Solutions Together

PLANNING TEAM

The planning team consisted of various members representing the following organizations:



PART I: LAEP OVERVIEW AND SEGMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE INSIGHT

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) kicked off our roundtable convening with an overview on the Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) including historical framing and the key questions that frame panel and roundtable discussion.

The Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) offers eligible students at public colleges and universities the opportunity to earn money to help defray their educational costs while gaining education-aligned, career-related employment. LAEP allows a participating student placement in an educationally beneficial position that relates to the student's area of study, career objective, or the exploration of career objectives. The program includes and emphasizes positions for students with employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities after graduation, or opportunities to connect with other employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities after graduation, within their areas of study.

Between investments made in 2021 and those proposed in the 2022-23 State Budget, \$500 million in state funds would be allocated for LAEP. Funds will be allocated to institutions based on their proportion of Pell Grant recipients. Funds will be available to participating campuses until June 30, 2031. Institutions may use up to 5% of allocated funds for administrative cost allowance, which puts 95% of allocated funds in the hands of students. For complete and up to date information about LAEP, please visit CSAC's website:

<https://www.csac.ca.gov/learning-aligned-employment-program>.

LAEP IN PRACTICE

The Learning-Aligned Employment Program is designed to meet the needs of both students and employers by:

- **Enhancing the affordability of higher education**, so that students are paid at a comparable rate to that of comparable positions within the employing organization;
- **Promoting equity by giving priority to eligible students** who are first-generation college students, current/former foster youth, homeless, or at risk of being homeless;
- **Better aligning higher education with workforce needs** by giving priority to eligible students majoring in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) discipline; and,
- **Bridging the gap between college and career**, by ensuring that each LAEP position is educationally beneficial or related to a particular career interest or the exploration of career options

Marcie Kirk Holland, Executive Director, UC Davis Internship & Career Center, discussed how UC Davis has worked to implement work-based financial aid programs and make them available to students. UC Davis has collaborated to develop a number of innovative programs to ensure affordable, career-focused options for all students, such as Avenue E for engineering students who transfer and summer internship opportunities for student athletes on scholarship.

Lisa Feldmann, Work Study Manager, UC Davis, discussed how new programs align with existing federal work study programs and how UC Davis is already participating in a similar experimental program with the US Department of Education. That pilot is already up and running, building momentum for California's LAEP. UC Davis works closely with employers to help them navigate the system for payroll, workers compensation and general liability, so that the program can benefit both the student and the employer

Ami Tripp, Assistant Director, Internship and Career Center, UC Davis, discussed how UC Davis works to develop relationships with employers, by visiting employer workplaces, walking them through the use of job posting sites. She emphasized how important face to face interaction is especially when working with employers.

Doris Cortez, student at UC Davis, shared her experience as a first generation student transitioning from high school into college and the benefits of her internship. She reflected on how it opened up possibilities she had never imagined and how students benefit from new networks, support for career exploration and paid internships.

Participants shared additional clarifying questions in our communal [Jamboard](#). Questions and reflections include:

- How will jobs be vetted to ensure the work will be "learning aligned" and also have good working conditions for students?
- How will institutions develop the capacity to manage these programs?
- How is this program coordinating with other similar programs?
- How will LAEP and participating colleges provide the wraparound support that is necessary for students to be successful?

PART II: WORK-BASED LEARNING SPOTLIGHT PANEL

The roundtable featured two partner models, Year Up and Growth Sector, as examples of successful work-based programs in supporting the students CSAC wants to serve and addressing the questions it wants to explore – defining “learning-aligned” employment, effective employer engagement and student success and equity. Panel representatives included program leaders, current student participants and/or program alums and partner employers.



Year Up's mission is to close the Opportunity Divide by ensuring that young adults gain the skills, experiences, and support that will empower them to reach their potential through careers and higher education. Panelists: Elainea Goods, Director of Corporate Engagement; Duane Reid, Regional Director of Program; Andrew Alcaraz, IT Client Engineer, Snap. <https://www.yearup.org/>



Growth Sector reimagines the pathway to careers in STEM. Together with educational partners and industry leaders like NASA, Lawrence Livermore National Lab, Lockheed Martin, and others, we make success in STEM accessible for all. Panelists: David Gruber, Director; Caz Pereira, Director; Beth McCormick, Director Strategic Workforce Development, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; John Clifford Ruiz, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. <https://www.growthsector.org/>

Select quotes from panel representatives:

PROGRAM LEADER PERSPECTIVE



- Students need the work experience, business/STEM identity and the financial support to go on to a BS degree or full-time employment
- Training and contextualized coursework provides students real world applications that ensure their success in internships
- We hold students to high expectations, but want to be sure our support and service is equally high
- Important to know what the needs of both students and employers to align student interests, skills and ambitions with employer expectations
- We are focused on restructuring the community college experience for those students who lack STEM identify and math skills, are part time and may not be able to afford the academic commitment needed for a career in STEM

PARTICIPANT/ALUM PERSPECTIVE



- The full range of support - academic, social and physical - was critical to success
- All skills taught in the program were fundamentals. I am taking control of my professional life
- Before this, I was scared and it was intimidating. This made it possible
- This experience is too good to be true. It's not a catch. It's not fake. I am very grateful
- What skills did I learn? Communication skills, job skills - and that anything is possible

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE



- As soon as we saw what the students could contribute, no more funding was needed
- The barrier is that people don't want to try out folks without a high GPA and I'm excited to take on these barriers as an employer
- These programs supports employers ongoing workforce efforts to increase diversity and be more inclusive
- One semester isn't enough and longer term support is critical
- LAEP is wonderful, but to administer well, we are looking at partners to provide infrastructure. That's where philanthropy can step in

PART III: PURSUING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

To wrap up the convening, participants split into small groups to consider relationship-building opportunities, best practices and resources in one of the focus areas CSAC wants to explore to inform the implementation of LAEP.

In their breakout groups, participants highlighted the value of:

- *Providing valuable career-related experiences for students*
 - + Ensuring that the assessment process is reimagined for the student, i.e. engagement along their trajectory and connecting student aid with career services
 - + Incentivizing institutions to work together regionally, so that LAEP can maximize administrative costs (capped at 5%)
 - + Leveraging aligned funding streams (e.g. k-16 regional collaboratives) to help fund the capacity and infrastructure
- *Effective employer engagement*
 - + Including remote working opportunities so that students feel connected to employers and each other
 - + Encouraging regional employer partnerships to expand opportunities and program reach
 - + Focus on outcomes rather than eligibility so that LAEP isn't stigmatized or pigeon-holed as a low-income program
- *Student success and equity*
 - + Building on this historic moment with funding for work-based learning that directly supports student employment
 - + Educating employers on the benefits of the program, such as employee retention
 - + Addressing long held beliefs around GPA
 - + Addressing the varying levels of infrastructure across institutions and knitting together regional access and support
 - + Providing comprehensive, wraparound opportunities for students
- *Existing frameworks that can inform the design of LAEP*
 - + Incentivizing participation particularly for faculty
 - + Encouraging institutional and regional variation in approach
 - + Making connections to K-16 collaboratives and strategies, i.e Linked Learning Alliance and California for All College Service Program, Federal Work Study Experimental Program and Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF)
- *Providing valuable career-related experiences for students*
 - + Integrating this with faculty and programs, so is a coherent part of the student experience
 - + Need for communication, so that students understand the power of this
 - + Creating space for those who are in the workforce to return and complete their degree
 - + Balancing this with the need for basic need services

**THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE LEARNING-ALIGNED
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (LAEP) VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE CONVENING!**



If you have any questions, please reach out to members of the planning team: Peter Ross at PRoss@education-first.com and the CSAC LAEP team at laep@csac.ca.gov

THANK YOU, AND PLEASE STAY CONNECTED!
www.csac.ca.gov/laep