



## Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) General Information and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### General Information

The Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) offers eligible **underrepresented** 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 was established in the 2021-22 State Budget and designed in accordance with [California Education Code Sections 69950 – 69969](#).

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.

Please see the LAEP Overview slide deck and recorded webinar posted at [csac.ca.gov/laep](https://csac.ca.gov/laep) for more information about the program.

### FAQ

#### **General**

##### **Who should be listed as the “LAEP Coordinator” on the LAEP Agreement?**

The LAEP Coordinator is the person on campus who will serve as the first point-of-contact for the program. Each campus should appoint a LAEP Coordinator. The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) will contact the LAEP Coordinator with updates and/or questions about LAEP for each campus. Please contact the LAEP team at [laep@csac.ca.gov](mailto:laep@csac.ca.gov) to update contact information for the LAEP Coordinator.

#### **Student Eligibility**

##### **Can high school students participate in LAEP?**

No, the program is only open to students pursuing an undergraduate degree.

##### **Can graduate students participate in LAEP?**

No, the program is only open to students pursuing an initial undergraduate degree. As with Cal Grant, students enrolled in a mandatory **5-year undergraduate program** can participate. Students in a **teacher credential program** can participate as long as the units toward the teacher credential are equivalent to at least half-time enrollment.

##### **Can a student pursuing a second teacher credential participate in LAEP?**

Yes, but the LAEP position must be related to the specific credential that the student is seeking.

**Can students who completed the CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) participate in LAEP?**

Yes. Students must be eligible to work in the U.S. to participate.

**What is an “underrepresented” student?**

For the purpose of determining LAEP eligibility, “underrepresented” students include first generation college students, low-income students, students who are current or former foster youth, homeless students or those at risk of becoming homeless, students with disabilities, displaced workers, students with dependent children, formerly incarcerated students, undocumented students, students meeting the requirements of Assembly Bill 540 of the 2001–2002 Regular Session of the Legislature, and students who are veterans. Please note that underrepresented students must also meet all of the eligibility criteria to participate.

**Can a dependent student qualify for LAEP if their parent is a displaced worker?**

No. For the purpose of determining LAEP eligibility, the student must meet the qualifications, even if the student is a dependent.

**How is half- time enrollment defined?**

Half-time enrollment is defined by the institution and should be included in the institution’s disbursement policy. Please see the LAEP Handbook at [csac.ca.gov/laep](https://csac.ca.gov/laep) for more information.

**Can a student participate in other work study programs or the Dreamer Service Incentive Grant (DSIG) concurrently?**

Yes, but it may not be in the student’s best interest because it may be an excessive number of work hours in addition to the student’s coursework. The hours would be separate for each program; the student could not use the same hours for multiple programs.

**Can late-start classes be used to determine eligibility?**

This is determined by institutional policy.

**Are students required to apply for LAEP participation?**

There is no statewide application requirement for LAEP; however, institutions may require an application as a part of individual campus procedure.

**What is the maximum number of hours a LAEP student can work? What is the maximum compensation that a LAEP student can earn?**

Both of these maximums are set by the institution and may vary.

**How is the student’s wage determined?**

The student should be paid at a comparable rate to that paid for comparable positions within the employing organization. If the employing organization has no comparable position, the student should be paid at a rate comparable to that paid by other organizations in the field for work involving comparable duties and responsibilities. The positions should be compared on the basis of the nature of the work performed and the background and skills required for the position, and not upon the employee’s part-time or student status. In no event shall the student be paid less than the California minimum wage.

**How does an institution prioritize students for LAEP as described in California Education Code Section 69956(b)?**

In the event that a limited amount of funding or a limited number of positions are available, the institution should give priority to any student who is a first-generation college student, a current or former foster youth, homeless, or at risk of being homeless. If, after prioritizing these students, the number of eligible underrepresented students still exceeds the available funding or number of positions, the institution should give further priority to any student who is also majoring in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) discipline.

### **Can a student participate in LAEP in the summer?**

Yes, LAEP includes summer opportunities in order to provide learning-aligned employment positions for eligible students who may find it difficult to locate meaningful employment because of a rigorous academic program that does not allow them to work during the academic year or because they are required to participate in an intensive work experience that satisfies academic requirements.

To be eligible to participate in a summer LAEP opportunity, the student must:

- be enrolled at least half-time in summer courses required for completion of a degree or certificate,

or

- be accepted for enrollment on at least a half-time basis for the following normal academic term.
  - o For example, an incoming freshman can work the summer before starting classes, as long as they have enrolled at least half-time for the upcoming fall.
  - o An outgoing (summer) graduate cannot work the final summer of their senior year unless they are enrolled at least half-time in courses toward their degree.

### **How can the institution document that a summer LAEP student was enrolled at least half-time for the upcoming fall?**

This is determined by institutional policy. Documentation might include a written confirmation by the reviewing institutional staff or might be an item on a LAEP eligibility checklist.

Documentation should be consistent for all summer LAEP students.

If the student uses fall enrollment to qualify for a summer LAEP position, the fall enrollment confirmation should be documented by the institution. If the student drops their fall classes after the summer LAEP position ends, the institution should document that the student was enrolled for fall during the summer LAEP position. LAEP funds could still be used to compensate the student since the student was eligible at the time the student worked the hours. If the student dropped the fall classes during the summer (to below half-time enrollment), the institution would need to take action as with any other term to alert the employer that the student was no longer eligible for LAEP.

## **Employers**

### **When is an Employer Agreement needed?**

If the Institution is the employer, no agreement is required. The institution may elect to use an Employer Agreement as needed on campus. If the employer is not the Institution, an Employer Agreement is required, even if the job is on campus.

### **Which office on campus should track the employer agreements?**

This should be determined by the institution.

### **If the employer is a campus-affiliated auxiliary/foundation/hotel, is the institution the employer?**

In all instances, the employer should be the official employer of record for the student employee. If the auxiliary/foundation/hotel is the official employer of record and is a legal entity separate from the institution, then the institution likely cannot be treated as the employer for purposes of LAEP. Because there are variables that go into who the employer of record is, institutions should consult with their legal counsel with any questions they have regarding this requirement.

**Can a city or regional government be an employer for LAEP?**

No, only the entities listed in California Education Code section 69954 are eligible to participate in LAEP.

**Can LAEP students work with employers outside of California or the U.S.?**

Per California Education Code section 69954.c, an eligible private employer must be “licensed to conduct business in the state.”

**Does LAEPA Article IV section b. apply to all employers, or only private employers?**

LAEPA Article IV section b. refers to the requirement in California Education Code (CEC) section 69959.b: “The program shall include and emphasize placements for students with employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities, or opportunities to connect with other employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities, within their areas of study after graduation.” All private employers must meet this requirement (CEC Section 69954.c.), but the institution must also “include and emphasize” placements that meet this requirement, regardless of the employer type (CEC Section 69959.b).

**Payment/Reconciliation**

**Are campuses required to use all LAEP funding each year?**

No. Unused funds will roll over to the following year. There is no institutional penalty for unused funds.

**Is there an overaward tolerance for LAEP?**

No.

**Can LAEP funds be used to pay other charges, such as benefits or workers’ compensation?**

No, charges other than wages and the administrative cost allowance are not allowable. Benefits, workers’ compensation and other charges should be addressed in the Employer Agreement.

**If a student becomes ineligible for LAEP does that mean they forfeit compensation for hours already worked?**

The student will not forfeit compensation for hours already worked. The student should always be paid for hours already worked. However, the institution should alert the employer that the student is no longer eligible for LAEP.

**Which entity directly pays the student, the institution or the employer?**

This should be determined by the institution and the employer and should be included in the employer agreement.

**Are wages earned by LAEP participants considered income?**

Yes. Wages earned by students participating in LAEP are considered income. Students who meet the income threshold for filing taxes will be required to report LAEP income. The income earned must also be reported on future financial aid applications (such as the FAFSA and CADAA. Institutions should consult with their legal counsel to determine whether a taxable income offset applies to LAEP income in the need analysis.

## **Should LAEP earnings be included as a source of aid in enrollment files for the Middle Class Scholarship (MCS)?**

Please see the most recent Middle Class Scholarship Handbook and/or MCS Eligibility Programs document to verify if LAEP earnings should be included as a source of aid for MCS awarding:  
[Middle Class Scholarship - California Student Aid Commission](#)

## **ACA (Administrative Cost Allowance)**

### **Will unspent ACA roll over?**

Yes. Unspent ACA will roll over to the following year.

### **Is the ACA determined by LAEP funds received or funds expended?**

ACA is 5% of the LAEP funds received by the institution. ACA will not be calculated based on projected or expended LAEP funds. The Institution is not required to spend ACA proportionately to the expended student funds.

### **Can an institution collect a surcharge from the LAEP employer?**

No. LAEP does not allow the institution to collect surcharge from external employers in addition to ACA.

### **Can the institution elect to use ACA to cover things like workers' compensation and benefits for students?**

CEC 69969(b) states, "A participating... institution may use no more than 5 percent of the funds it receives... on its administrative costs of participating in the program." ACA can cover the institution's costs, not the employer's or the student's. Therefore, if these are costs that the institution would typically incur, then the institution can use ACA to cover them. However, if these are costs that would typically be borne by the employer or the student, then the ACA may not be used to cover them.

**Didn't find what you were looking for? Please email the LAEP team at [laep@csac.ca.gov](mailto:laep@csac.ca.gov).**