CCCCO Student Employment Outcomes: California Landscape Analysis

November 2022

Debra Bragg

Barbara Endel

Colleen Pawlicki

Calista Smith

Maggie Snyder

The Big Picture

1920s - 2000s	2005-current	Starts Now
Enrollment	Completion	Career

Work Scope

This project is:

- Exploratory qualitative research focused on career mobility through opportunity structures
- Produced for the internal CO team and their continuous improvement cycle to support Vision Destination strategies
- Providing important but modest data collection focused on patterns, trends, and themes
- Using purposeful college sampling
- Designed to shift CA and national college mission narrative toward career mobility

This project is not:

- An impact study
- Produced as a stand alone, external publication
- Utilizing predictive validity
- Driving toward a stand-alone initiative or pre-conceived interventions

Project Focus

Examine a purposeful sampling of California Community Colleges and the services, support, career readiness, and opportunity structures that impact student job placement and transition into the labor market.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
National landscape of evidence-informed postsecondary student employment outcomes	California community colleges landscape analysis	ESLEI co-design strategic directions from evidence base
January-August 2022	February-September 2022	October 2022-February 2023

Framed by Opportunity Structures

Opportunity structures refer to "**a matrix that relates personal characteristics** (e.g., age, disability, race, gender, education, financial status) **to the cultural and social opportunities and options that are available to an individual** throughout his or her life." Inadequate education and job availability are elements that can serve to block a particular opportunity structure for certain segments of the population (APA Dictionary of Psychology).

National Landscape Brief Research Question

Research Question 🔍

1. What evidence-informed policies and/or practices affect college student employment outcomes in the US?

Purpose ☑

1. Identification of data-supported policies and practices will help us uncover interventions and facilitators that support student employment. It will also inform the framework we will develop for the system-level landscape.

Assumptions:
- Researched through the theoretical lens of opportunity structures
- Includes academic and non-academic factors and services
- Focuses on resources with disaggregated data
- Prioritizes resources that link strategies to student employment outcomes
- Considers both positive and negative effects of policies and practices

National Landscape Analysis Findings

Finding 1. Programs that lead to higher wages are less available to students of color

Finding 2. Regional economies impact lifetime earnings

Finding 3. College students' first job is the most critical

Finding 4. Integrated, applied, experiential learning improves employment outcomes and increased wages

Finding 5. Developing and communicating pathways from enrollment to career still matters

CCCCO (System-Level) Student Employment Outcomes Research Questions

Research Questions 🔍

1a. How do campuses organize and deliver their student employment-related portfolios?

1b. What are the outcomes of the student employment portfolios?

1c. What does the available evidence indicate about the effectiveness of campus student employment portfolios?

Purpose ☑

These are the key question for our research project and will help us identify student employment data across the system and what processes, practices, services, and investments contribute to successful outcomes.

From here, we will be able to identify departmental, initiative, and/or programmatic siloes on the campuses and illuminate the system's role in limiting or encouraging student employment outcomes success.

Assumptions:
- Researched through the lens of opportunity structures
- Student employment portfolios include financial and human capital allocations, services, investments, and programs
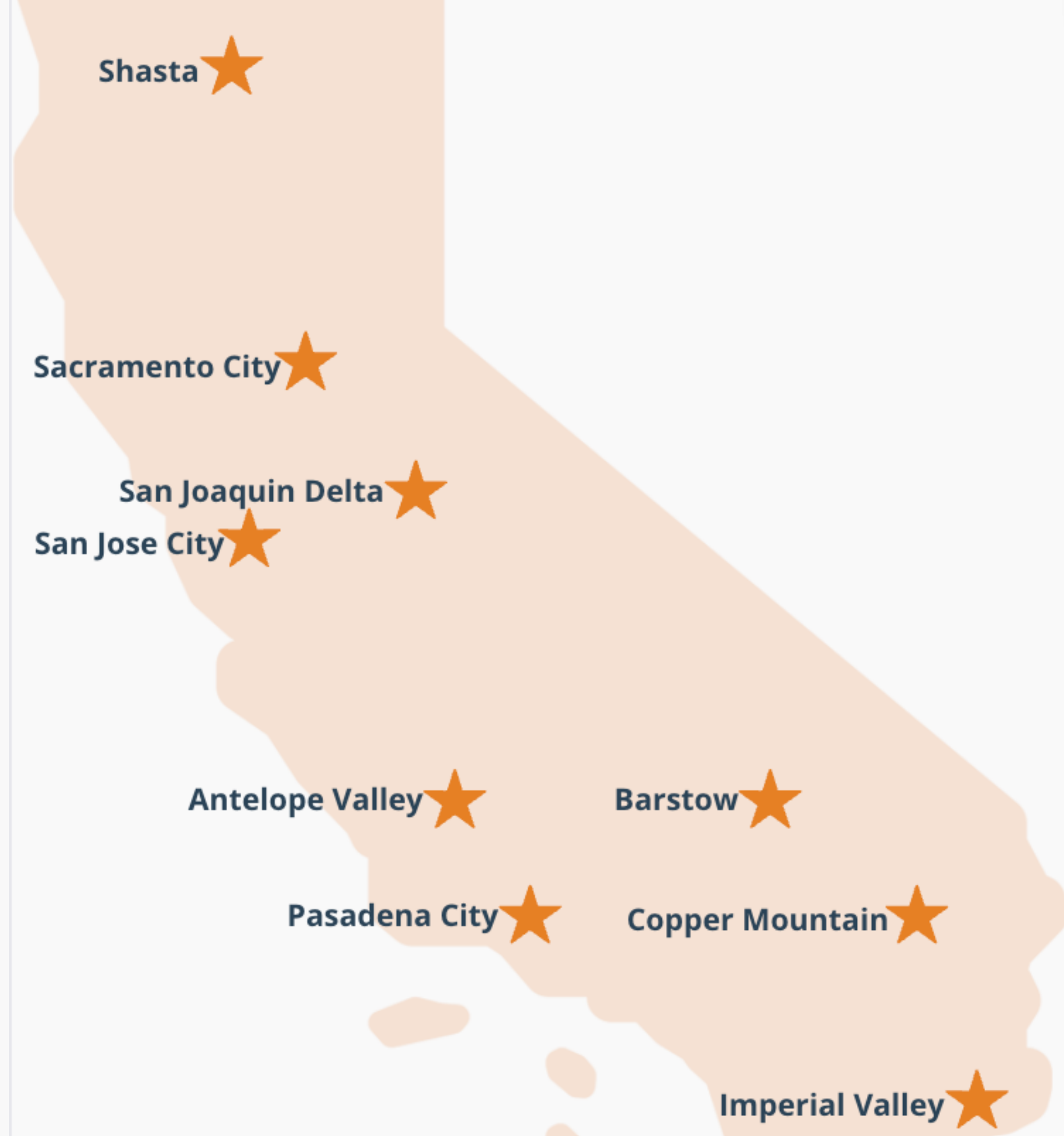- Identifies departmental initiatives and/or programmatic siloes on campuses

💡 Research Participants and Data

- 9 diverse colleges were selected through a purposeful sampling strategy

- More than 40 interviewees participated across the colleges and system

- Participants covered a wide range of roles and functions

- More than 1,000 coded interview segments analyzed using qualitative data software

California Community College Participants

Shasta

Sacramento City

San Joaquin Delta

San Jose City

Antelope Valley

Barstow

Pasadena City

Copper Mountain

Imperial Valley

CA Landscape Analysis Findings

Findings related to:

- Strategy and Structure Surrounding Student Employment
- The Student Employment Portfolio of Services and Programs
- Data
- Equity

1) Strategy and Structure

- There was **limited visibility of student employment outcomes or connections to the labor market** across college strategic plans and/or mission statements.

- Respondents from all colleges agreed that **employment in the learners' field of study is a core college goal**.

- Most respondents were **not able to report how the employment data was being used** by college leadership, even when it was collected and shared.

2) Activities, Experiences, and Guidance

- Career related services are varied, with **personnel largely focused on their siloed intervention with little coordination** across campus.

- Interviewees largely agreed on the connection between students' participation in WBL and **their ease in securing employment.**

- The capacity to build strong relationships appeared to be **personality driven, not necessarily structured by design.**

3) Data

- **Data are scarce, siloed, and under-utilized** to know what is happening on campus and **how to improve services and employment outcomes.**

- **Using data to measure effectiveness against goals is an underutilized practice** in the continuum of services related to careers.

- Colleges are often **unable to access non-self-reported, comprehensive employment information**, missing the final step to understanding student outcomes.

- Colleges have **different resources to access, analyze, and make decisions** based on data, thus limiting student employment effectiveness.

4) Equity

- **Equity is defined in different ways** and is therefore misunderstood, under-appreciated, and ineffective at addressing inequities.

- In contrast to recognizing racial equity, **some respondents offered a race-neutral perspective to our question about disaggregating and using data to improve employment outcomes.** These respondents offered concern for "all students" without referencing racially minoritized groups.

- **Equity solutions require an integrated, relational approach.**

Challenges

1. **Student Voice:** Students are not being engaged in conversations surrounding student employment at community colleges.

2. **Regional Employment:** Regional employment opportunities do not often lead to the highest wages or offer the most in-demand careers

3. **4-Year/2-Year Dichotomy:** There is a false belief that students are pursuing either transfer or career, but not both.

4. **Capacity:** Student employment efforts often fall into the responsibility of career services-oriented departments, instead of cross-college efforts.

Limitations

1 Sample Size

2 Data

3 Positionality

Implications & Further Inquiry

- **Strategic plans and goals:** Additional investigation could be done to understand and assess how colleges talk about student employment work in their publicly available strategic plans and provide them with ways to better integrate this priority across the colleges.

- **Data:** Inquiry into campus utilization of existing data platforms and needs would allow the CO to uncover a path to build a more equitable data access and analysis strategy across the colleges.

- **Equity:** Clarified definitions of equity and how they should look may be helpful to colleges as they work to understand their data and implement practices to better serve students.
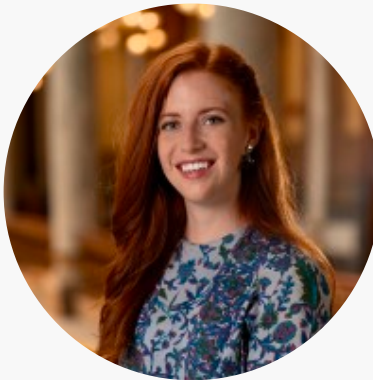
Looking Ahead: Phase 3

Team
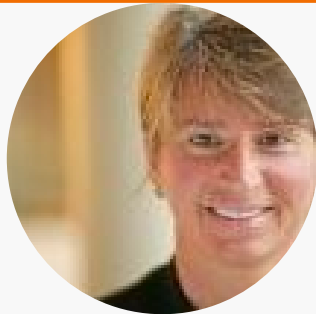
CORE TEAM	ROLE	ADDITIONAL ADVISORS	
BARBARA ENDEL	Principal	**CALISTA SMITH**	Scaling Strategy Advisor
MAGGIE SNYDER	Principal	**JENNIFER CLARK**	Communications Consultant
COLLEEN PAWLICKI	Project Manager		
DEBRA BRAGG	Senior Research Advisor		